ERAS news

No 28 December 1988

You may not have eaten your Christmas dinner yet, but the Society's annual dinner for 1989 has already been arranged, so the first date to go in your 1989 diary should be Friday 7 April. The venue is to be the same as last year - Thwaite Hall - while the theme takes us further afield, as well as back in time, to the Ottoman Empire. Further information and booking forms will be sent out with the next newsletter in early March.

It is now the time of year to think about next year's excursion(s). In 1988 the trip to Ilkley Moor proved most enjoyable, but the proposed Chester weekend had to be cancelled because of lack of support, so if you have any destinations/sites you've always wanted to visit (and never dared ask!) now is the time to collar a member of the Committee with your suggestions. Here is one for you to consider. You may remember Francis Pryor's excellent lecture to the Society, which included the discovery and early excavation of Flag Fen, a Bronze Age site discovered in the late autumn of 1982. A major excavation of the remarkable timbers preserved in the waterlogged fenland conditions began in 1984 and continues in 1989. With a Visitor Centre now provided on the site an ERAS

EAST RIDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

excursion in 1989 would be an excellent opportunity to see how the story has developed since Francis Pryor's lecture.

And for those who find a day trip only whets their appetite for more - it might also be possible to arrange to visit some of the classic Wessex sites. This would probably take a long weekend and hence would inevitably be more expensive, but it could be the ERAS equivalent of the Grand Tour. Think of it: Avebury, Stonehenge, West Kennet, Waylands Smithy, Maiden Castle - something to look forward to during the long winter nights.

To return nearer home, there is a slight alteration to the Field Study Group arrangements for a trial period. Instead of meeting every month at Castle Warehouse, there will be a different venue on alternate months, with a particular topic. The first of these will be the Sites and Monuments Record, the function of which Mary Lakin has kindly offered to demonstrate on Wednesday 7 December at the Humberside Archaeology Unit. You could find out not only how to obtain information from the SMR but also how you might be able to to contribute to its records. See the diary of events at the back of this newletter for details of this and other Field Study Group meetings.

It's always a pleasant task to report success. The archaeology of the region - and its archaeologists - were well-represented among the British Archaeological Awards, presented by Magnus Magnusson on 17 November at the Royal Geographical Society. Peter Halkon, with the Holme-on-Spalding Moor project, was runner-up in the prestigious Pitt-Rivers Award for a voluntary group or individual. The Illustrated London News Award for the best industrial sponsorship went to the sponsors of the Hasholme Boat : Sangwin Plant Hire of Hull (transit and installation of the boat), Delavan Ltd of Widnes (spray and support

system), G.R.T. Massey Ltd of Market Weighton (Boatlab display structure) and B.P. Chemicals (who supplied the Breox wax). These companies, whose sponsorship amounted to some £70,000, were nominated by Hull Museums, who were themselves highly commended by 'Country Life' for the preservation and conservation of the Halsholme Boat in the category for the best project by a professional or mixed professional/voluntary team or unit.

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EXCAVATIONS AT SIGGLESTHORNE — Peter Didsbury

The rescue excavation at Sigglesthorne announced in the last newsletter started in late September, and, at the time of going to press, is in its closing stages. Work has been carried out by the Field Study Group under the direction of the writer, valuable assistance also having been rendered by village residents, members of various archaeology evening classes, and the County Archaeology Unit's Holderness Survey Team. One of the main aims of the excavation was to try and establish the date at which this part of Sigglesthorne was abandoned, and post-excavation work on the range of pottery recovered from various features should allow us to suggest an answer to this question. Perhaps the most unexpected result of the work has been the discovery of a substantial Romano-British ditch underlying some of the medieval features. It contained pottery probably dating to the second century, and is a welcome addition to our knowledge of Holderness in this period. A more detailed account of the excavation will appear in the next newsletter; in the meantime, thanks and congratulations to all concerned for a valuable piece of work.

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BEVERLEY GATE UPDATE

Phil Hample,
Hull City Planning Dept

On 14th September work began on the Beverley Gate theatre, Hull, with the digging of a trench between the north and south guard chambers of the gate. The purpose of this trench was to remove any obstructions which might hinder the sheet piling operation. It was during these works that a large quantity of timbers was disturbed approximately 2m to the west of the barbican; the majority of these are sparsely worked, bearing numerous peg-holes but little finishing. Similar sparsely worked timbers were found at Chapel Lane Staith, Hull, in 1978 and these formed part of the revetment for the medieval waterfront. It is possible that the Beverley Gate timbers served a similar function but for the town moat.

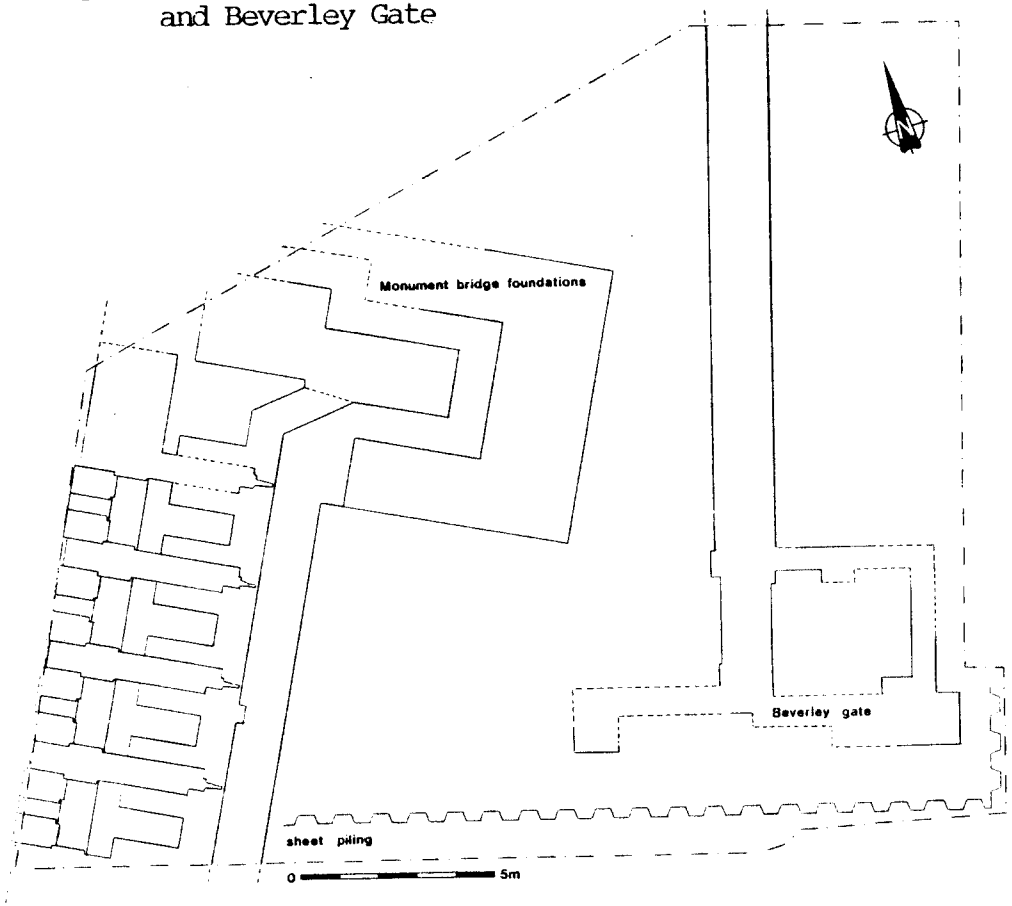
The timbers recovered from the piling trench are currently with the Humberside Archaeology Unit. From here, after they have been drawn and photographed, they will be submitted for dendrochronological dating when funding becomes available.

The piling trench when completed was approximately 19m long and 1m wide (reaching a depth of c.3.60m at its deepest point). It was intended to dig the trench c.25m long, but this proved impractical when the massive foundations of the former Monument Bridge were encountered on the western side of the site (fig. 1).

The original bridge and foundations were built in c.1829. These were replaced, however, in c.1905 and the elements currently exposed relate to this later Edwardian structure (which was demolished in 1932).

Upon completion of the sheet piling, work then commenced on removing soil from between the Beverley Gate and the Monument Bridge foundations. This work

fig. 1 Monument Bridge foundations and Beverley Gate



led to the discovery of more brickwork adjoining the barbican and of several bridge timbers still in situ.

The brickwork adjoining the barbican, which may represent some form of bridge footing, appears to have been added some time after the construction of the barbican itself. Contained within this brickwork are

two rectangular slots with the vestiges of timber uprights inside. A third timber post is also present to the west of the latter two timbers and brickwork.

Timber bridges are shown leading to the town gates on both the 16th century Cottonian Manuscript and the Hollar plan of 1640 (fig. 2). A drawbridge is also

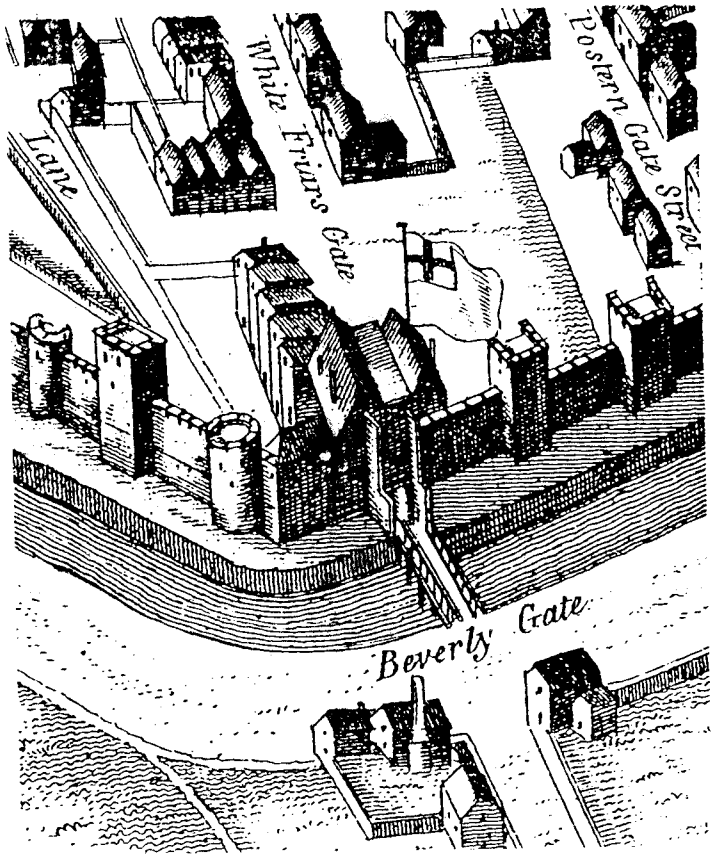


fig. 2 Beverley Gate from Hollar's plan of 1640

recorded at the Beverley Gate in 1662. Little is known, however, of the earlier medieval bridges across the town moat.

It is unclear at present whether the timbers currently exposed at the Beverley Gate represent a medieval or early post-medieval construction. Martin Foreman, of the Humberside Archaeology Unit, informs me that timber bridges of the medieval period survive only rarely even as partial archaeological traces. This is borne out by the fact that only one medieval timber bridge has been excavated, to date, in the entire county of Yorkshire. This was at Hall Garth, Beverley, in 1980.

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SOUTH BANK LETTER

Kevin Leahy,
Scunthorpe Museum

One odd but interesting aspect of my work at Scunthorpe Museum is my involvement with police with regard to the discovery of human remains - I am quite often called out to help and advise when skeletal material is found. The first question the police ask is: are these human bones? and, secondly: what date are they? The first question is easily answered, and while it may be impossible to answer the second on archaeological grounds, it is often possible to give some useful clues.

A case in point was provided by the bones of a man found beneath the outhouse of a pub in Messingham. A piece of 19th century brick in the fill of the grave showed that the outhouse was standing when the body was buried. As there was no legal means by which he could have been buried under the floor it was likely that foul play was involved. As it turned out the dirty deed was done more than a century ago so there was little point in starting a man-hunt!

One afternoon in December last year I had a 'phone call from the police, who had a report of human bones being found in a garden at Whitton, a village near the point where the Trent and Ouse join to form the Humber. When I got to the site we found the police hard at it and the score had reached three skeletons. The owner of the garden stood watching all of the activity in some dismay - she had wanted a country garden, not a country cemetery!

We took over and carried out a small excavation, ably assisted by the Scenes of Crimes Squad (good lads these, I wonder if I could get them out to my excavation at Manton?). At the end of the second day we had dug an area 2.5m x 3m and had got the remains of eleven individuals laid in very shallow graves, some of which were overlying, or cut into, earlier burials. The cemetery had been in use for some time. The householder was insistant that they all be removed from her garden. I pointed to a pair of feet sticking out of the section and said that there might be a problem as the whole garden was likely to be full of skeletons.

What date were the bodies? There were no grave goods with any of them, the only find being a piece of Roman pottery. All of the skeletons were extended burials aligned east-west and were undoubtedly Christian. As they were 70m away from the Norman church they are likely to pre-date it and so are probably late Anglo-Saxon.

In the end the police persuaded the owners of the garden to allow the bones to be re-buried where they had come from, which is a very satisfactory outcome. I expect that any plans the owners might have had for a swimming pool are now well and truly scrapped!

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ROMAN COINS FROM SHIPTONTHORPE

Bryan Sitch

The purpose of this short article is to place on record the discovery of a collection of metal-detected coins of the Roman small town at Skelfrey Park, Shiptonthorpe. Members of the Society will be familiar with the programme of fieldwalking and excavation undertaken at Skelfrey Park in recent years by the University of Durham and Mr Peter Halkon (Millett, 1985; Millett and Halkon, 1988). One of the causes of the discovery of this site was its obvious popularity with members of the local metal-detecting fraternity. The farmer, Mr David Stephenson, was given some 500 Roman coins by the detectorists in fulfilment of a prior agreement to give the landowner half of what was found. These coins, together with coins recovered during the University of Durham excavations at Skelfrey Park, were studied by Mr Sean O'Connor in an undergraduate dissertation (1987).

Sean O'Connor's study of the metal-detected coins from Skelfrey Park produced some intriguing results. The information from the coins was summarised conveniently in the form of a histogram (see fig 1). Following Mr John Casey's lecture to the Society last December, readers will be familiar with the use of coin histograms in numismatic study (see ERAS News 26, 29-35). When compared with histograms of well-known sites with long coin lists such as Silchester, Caerwent and Corbridge (Casey, 1980, 30-1), the first Shiptonthorpe histogram revealed a broadly similar pattern of coin loss; however, there were a number of significant differences, and Sean O'Connor was able to show that coinage of the British usurpers Carausius and Allectus (period 18, AD 286-96) was under-represented (1987, 20), and, most telling of all, that issues of the Roman Republic and the Flavian emperors (AD 69-96), unusual on a rural site in the later 1st/2nd centuries AD, were over-represented. O'Connor suggested that the 'early' coins might have

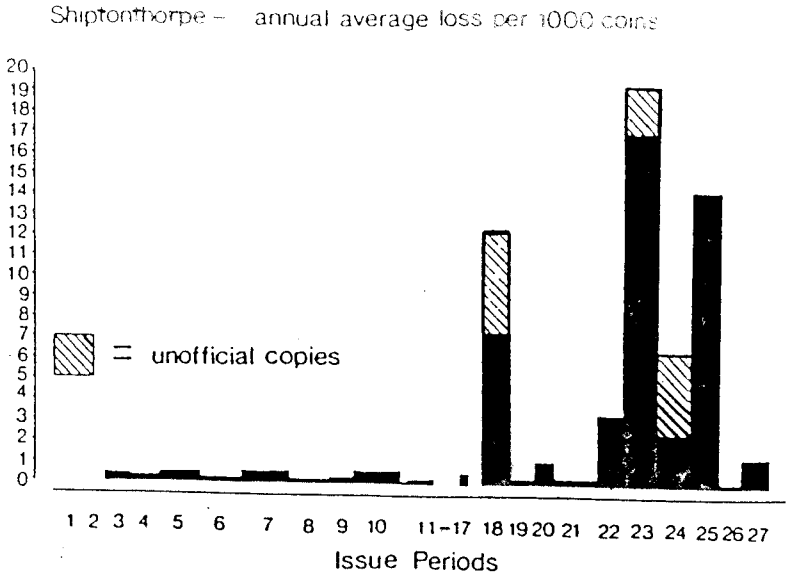

Fig 1: Histogram of the first batch of Roman coins from Shiptonthorpe

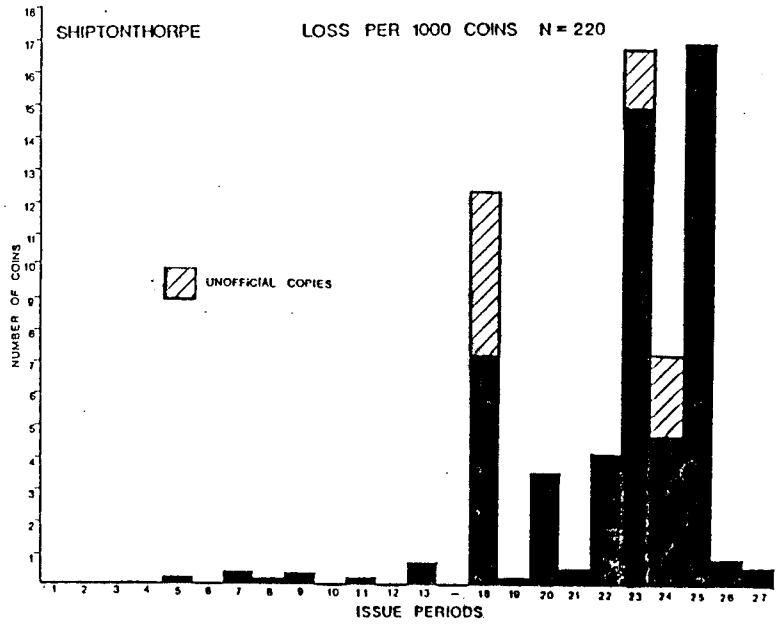

Fig 2: Histogram of the second batch of Roman Coins from Shiptonthorpe

been detected on the nearby Roman fort site at Hayton and attributed to Skelfrey Park as a 'dummy' provenance (ibid, 13).

Consequently there was no way of knowing how representative this first Shiptonthorpe histogram really was, and O'Connor concluded that 'metal-detected finds should be evaluated with caution, especially with regard to provenance' (ibid, 15). Therefore it was most interesting to learn of the existence of another collection of coins from Skelfrey Park, this time in the possession of a responsible metal-dector user. The distinction between responsible and irresponsible detecting is not often made, but it is clear that responsible detectorists do exist and that they have made a significant contribution to excavation at Manton, Redcliff and Shiptonthorpe over the last few years. The use of metal-detectors by archaeologists as a tool for field survey is an obvious corollary, though many detectorists still try to claim that unstratified finds have no archaeological significance and are therefore 'fair game'. In fact unstratified material can be very informative and should be carefully recorded, as Sean O'Connor's dissertation showed.

The second batch of Roman coins from Skelfrey Park (220 in total) produced a histogram which could be compared with that of Sean O'Connor (see fig 2). Both histograms show similar patterns of coin loss, with a scatter of losses up to the mid-third century AD, and the usual sequence of alternating 'peaks' and 'troughs' in the later third and fourth centuries AD. However, the second histogram supported Sean O'Connor's theory that the more lucrative coins had been removed from the batch given to Mr David Stephenson. Of even greater interest was the absence of coins of Claudius (period 1, AD 43-54), Nero (period 2, AD 54-68) and the Flavian emperors (periods 3-4, AD 69-96) in the second batch of coins. With the

exception of a very worn serrated Republican denarius depicting the Dei Penates and struck about 102 BC (Reece, 1973, pl.4.63-4) the second coin list starts with issues of Trajan (period 5, AD 98-117) and Antoninus Pius (period 7, AD 138-161). The coin list prepared by Sean O'Connor starts with two Republican denarii and 7 issues of the Flavian emperors (1987, 8). No Republican, Neronian or Flavian issues were found during the 1987 excavation at Shiptonthorpe (Sean O'Connor pers.comm.), suggesting once again that either Shiptonthorpe is not the true provenance of the 'early' coins in the first batch or that a scattered first century hoard was discovered by the detectorists. Since very few pre-Trajanic coins have turned up in excavation or have been reported by reliable sources, it seems that the former is the more likely explanation, and Hayton is an obvious candidate for the true provenance of the coins.

The Skelfrey Park coins illustrate many of the problems of studying metal-detected finds of uncertain provenance. We are fortunate indeed that the public-spirited action of a responsible detectorist in allowing his coins to be catalogued and studied provided a rare opportunity to test the veracity of the first Shiptonthorpe histograms.

This article does not pretend to be a definitive treatment of the Shiptonthorpe coins which must await full publication of the excavations. Moreover, other methods of analysis such as those developed by Reece (1987, 71-97) to measure the degree of similarity between the two Shiptonthorpe histograms might be used. It is hoped that this brief discussion may be of interest to members of the Society who participated in the Shiptonthorpe excavations and the programme of fieldwalking in the area.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr Ernest Arnold for kindly allowing me to catalogue and study his collection of coins from Shiptonthorpe. Thanks are also due to Mr Sean O'Connor for allowing me to reproduce the first Shiptonthorpe histogram and to Mr Peter Harrison who drew the second coin histogram.

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HEDON MUSEUM SOCIETY

Martin Craven

Last May, a group of interested people gathered in the Town Hall at Hedon and resolved to form a Hedon Museum Society, now known as "H.M.S." for short.

The main objective of the Society is to set up and run a museum, within the Town of Hedon, which will illustrate the historical development of Hedon over the ages and also display objects and documents of relevant interest.

The project has received the full support of the Hedon Town Council. Not only has the council agreed that the Mayor in office will become the President of the Society; the old Caretaker's Cottage at the rear of the Town Hall has also been offered to the Society as a museum site.

Meetings of the Society now take place, every third Tuesday of the month, in the Town Hall at Hedon, starting at 7.30 pm. Anyone interested in helping to set up and run the museum is most welcome to attend the meetings and membership of the Society is by donation with a minimum annual subscription of £1.00.

It was recently decided that initially we shall only mount displays in the two ground floors of the cottage and this will afford us the opportunity to make regular changes and thus maintain the interest of the viewing public. Mr Colin Bayliss is currently leading a Working Party to formulate plans for our museum layout and carry out research into all aspects of Hedon's history. Colin would welcome new members who wish to join the Working Party - please ring him on 890008.

Inevitably one of the first priorities is to raise funds in order to bring the cottage up to the required standard. The next event, which is still in the discussion stage, is to mount an exhibition of historical objects and documents relating to the Borough of Hedon. It is hoped that this exhibition will be sited in the Alexandra Hall and be open to the general public early in 1989.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK, XANTEN, WEST GERMANY

Peter Halkon

As readers no doubt noticed, there was no Durham/ERAS excavation this year, which meant that my wife Helen and myself had the opportunity to go to Germany on holiday in August. It did of course turn into a bit of a 'busman's holiday', containing visits to museums, castles and churches, punctuated by the odd 'Wein Probe' in the Pfalz and along the Mosel.

Perhaps one of the archaeological highlights of our visit was a trip to the Xanten Archaeological Park, which I thought deserved a mention in our Newsletter. Not content with excavating this important Roman town of Ulpia Traiana, which as its name suggests was founded by Trajan, the Bonn and Xanten museums services have embarked on an ambitious programme of on-site, full-scale reconstruction. Imagine being greeted by complete Roman gateways and interval towers and being able to walk along the walkways of a restored curtain-wall which makes the reconstructions at Vindolanda look very meagre. This Colonia was founded near to the legionary fortress from which Varus marched in AD 9, for his ill-fated expedition against Arminius, chief of the Cherusci, in the Teutoburg Forest where three legions were lost. After the Varian disaster, the Rhine became a Limes, or frontier, consisting of legionary fortresses and smaller auxiliary forts. Xanten was one of two Colonia set up, the other being Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippiniensia which eventually became Cologne (Koln). Unlike Koln, which is still today the major metropolis of the Rhine, the present town of Xanten grew up on the site of the Roman cemetery, thus leaving the Roman town free of later buildings. The town, which covered some 180 acres was the home of an estimated 10,000 people.

Although sporadic 'pirating' of the site had been

going on in the 19th century, plus extensive stone quarrying, it was in 1935 that the Rheinische Landesmuseum in Bonn began a full-scale excavation which revealed the foundations of an amphitheatre which they decided to reconstruct incorporating these ruins. The site was threatened in the 1950s and 1970s, the latter being the most serious threat for the authorities planned to build a huge leisure centre, including a deep lake for water sports which would have seriously damaged the deposits. With a stroke of ingenuity, the archaeologists suggested that the excavated Roman buildings should form a recreation park for leisure and culture. With a large grant from the federal district, the present excavations began in 1972 and some most impressive buildings have been reconstructed already on their original sites.

The town was originally positioned to take advantage of a now relict arm of the Rhine and entry to the excavation is made through the Harbour Gate. From there the visitors go to a complex of buildings, including a Mansio and bath-house complex. The Mansio (inn) serves as a modern restaurant and food on offer includes dishes prepared according to Roman recipes, though we were less adventurous, sticking to bratwurst. The interiors and exteriors were plastered and painted with bright colours in Roman style and roofs made out of tegulae and imbrices. There was a reconstructed latrine (not in use fortunately!) but the baths complex was being plumbed complete with hypocaust.

The most impressive section was the amphitheatre which would have had a capacity of 12,000. Just outside the entrance there was a small votive inscription set up by Cessarius Ammausius, a bear catcher in the XXX legion, thanking the god Silvanus for a safe end to his career. The amphitheatre was not completely reconstructed as they wanted to show the method and basis for their reconstruction. This enabled the

erection of a full-sized model crane of block and tackle construction which the Romans would have used to raise stones of up to 4.9 tons.

As with part of the curtain-wall, box hedges were used to show the outline of the buildings in one of the insulae of the Colonia. This conveyed clearly the arrangements of the blocks of apartments, shops and courtyards.

Younger visitors were well catered for. There was a large Roman-style building containing replicas of Roman board games which people were welcome to play. The instructions were, however, in German which meant that we were unable to participate. One criticism which can be made of the whole site is the fact that notices and information in the museum are only in German. Considering the proximity of Xanten to the Dutch border and ferry terminals, I feel that the number of English speaking visitors would justify multilingual labelling. We were rescued by a well-presented English guide book (23 pp) which only cost 3 DM (£1).

A further feature for children was a climbing/adventure area based on reconstructions of Roman military timber buildings. It is impossible to describe in detail all the features of the archaeological park, but mention must be made of the reconstructed bakery, similar to those found at Pompeii, and the massive Harbour temple. The part-reconstruction of the temple is built over the original foundations and podium. Architectural fragments enabled the erection of replica columns and a roof, which towers over the whole site.

Excavations were still being carried out on one insula in the forum area. It was interesting to see that the box/grid method was still being used and that standards of site tidiness didn't quite match up to

some British excavations. It is evident, however, that funding is pretty stretched, which may account for some of the problems. Plans and section drawings were displayed in the information area and colour had been used to emphasize various phases. Palaeobotanical work had been carried out, but the experimental field where Emmer, Spelt and other early varieties of cereal had been grown, looked abandoned.

In conclusion our visit was most enjoyable and rewarding. The number of people present on a weekday showed the popularity of the archaeological park. Perhaps it would be more meaningful and would attract more popular attention to archaeology if a similar approach was used here.

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LECTURE SUMMARIES

16 March: TREASURES OF ROMAN BRITAIN - Tim Potter

Most members of the Society will be familiar with the modest range of anonymous greyware sherds and the odd worn coin which habitually turn up during fieldwalking, but every so often it is nice to be reminded of some of the spectacular hoards of Roman treasure which have been found outside our region. Tim Potter's lecture "Treasures of Roman Britain" certainly stimulated a few jaded archaeological palates earlier this year, even if his lecture was largely devoted to a discussion of the Thetford Treasure.

Tim Potter mentioned many of the most famous hoards of Roman treasure found in Britain in relation to the laws of Treasure Trove. Very briefly, these are laws by which gold and silver items hidden by their owners in expectation of later recovery, are deemed to belong to the monarch or state. Just in case anyone in the

audience wondered how such spectacular hoards ever came to be lost by their rightful owners, Tim Potter read out one of the few accounts of the concealment and recovery of a hoard: that of Pepys' Diary.

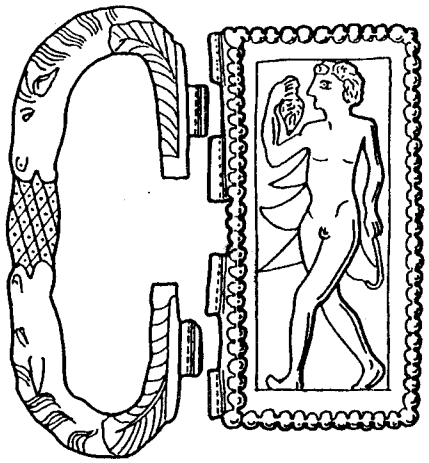
In June 1667, Pepys, worried about the presence of the Dutch fleet in the Thames estuary, sent his wife and father off to the country with as much of his portable and liquid assets as possible, including £1300 and one thousand gold pieces. The hoard was duly buried in the garden of Pepys' country home, but its recovery just four months later was to prove a frustrating and arduous process. To prevent the neighbours seeing him, Pepys tried to recover the hoard at night with a dark lantern. Unfortunately the bags had rotted in the damp earth and many coins were scattered during digging. Eventually Pepys recovered all but a hundred pieces, of which 79 were later rescued by persistant sieving. Clearly the burial of hoards was always a risky business even in the best of circumstances.

This amusing anecdote served by way of introduction to a discussion of some of the hoards found in East Anglia, which must have been a prime source of treasure in antiquity. For example, gold torcs have been found in East Anglia far more frequently than in any other part of Britain. The list of East Anglian hoards begins with the Snettisham hoard - or rather hoards, because no less than five groups of metalwork and coins were found between 1948 and 1950 during ploughing and subsequent excavation.

Of considerable interest was one of the most recent hoards to be found in this area - a Romano-British hoard comprising over a hundred coins dating down to the 150s and over one hundred unmounted gems, as well as silver jewellery and fifty rings. By the law of Treasure Trove, the precious metal items reverted to the crown, and the finder was paid £40,000. The British Museum later purchased the gemstones in order

to keep the hoard together.

However, pride of place in Tim Potter's lecture was reserved for the Thetford Treasure. This, one of the richest, most opulent hoards to be found, even by East Anglian standards, was a 'mixed bag' of items: 22 gold finger rings, 4 pendants, 5 gold necklaces, 3 silver strainers, 33 silver spoons, together with a shale box and lid and a beautiful gold buckle.



Gold Buckle from the Thetford Treasure
Slightly larger than full size
(actual height = 5.9cm)

The Thetford Treasure was found by a metal-detector user but was not reported at the time of discovery. By the time the story leaked out, almost a year later, a factory had been built over the find-spot, thus destroying the stratigraphy and preventing any attempt to answer by archaeological excavation the many fascinating questions raised by the hoard. It would have been interesting to verify whether the items had been stored in a container as was suggested by their

state of preservation and whether the find-spot had been part of a temple. The Thetford Treasure was declared to be Treasure Trove, but in view of the finder's reluctance to declare his find, his widow received only one third of its total value of £265,000.

Study of the Thetford Treasure raised many interesting clues as to the reason for burial. Tim Potter showed, illustrating his remarks with many beautiful slides, that some of the items of jewellery used the same decorative motifs. Common elements of design and decoration seemed to suggest that here were the products of a single workshop. There were one or two unfinished pieces, suggesting that the jewellery was part of the stock-in-trade of a jeweller. It is apparent that some of the items had not been worn because though the gold was of such a high standard of purity, and therefore relatively soft, yet it retained the sharp edges still seen today.

Of the 36 silver items, 3 were strainers for removing dregs from wine while the rest were silver spoons, 31 of which had inscriptions or monograms, including one example of a fish. The latter was thought to be a Christian motif in this particular case, because many of the pieces of the Thetford Treasure alluded to the old Italian god Faunus. Now what is an otherwise little-known, not to say obscure Italian rural deity doing in an East Anglian hoard datable to the late fourth century AD? And why are two cult objects such as spoons and strainers, associated with a jeweller's stock-in-trade? Two explanations are possible: either the jeweller entrusted his jewellery to the care of a temple devoted to Faunus, or, the jeweller made the jewellery specifically for members of a exclusive cult.

Why was the Thetford Treasure buried? Might it reflect the increasing insecurity of a Roman province

subjected to persistent Saxon raids? Or the persecution of the Roman empire? In the later fourth century AD there were heavy penalties for observing pagan religious festivals, and the Thetford Treasure might, therefore, have been buried to prevent its confiscation by Romano-British Christians.

The people of Thetford are obviously very proud of their treasure, and there were plans to try and display it but it was impossible to guarantee adequate insurance. Thetford, therefore, conducted an appeal to raise money to pay for replicas to be made of the gold and silver items, thus providing one good result, as Tim Potter reminded us, of a story which started unhappily.

The Thetford Treasure has recently been published: Catherine Johns and Timothy Potter, The Thetford Treaure, Roman Jewellery and Silver (British Museum Publications Ltd, London, 1983) price £27.50.

Bryan Sitch

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21 September: REPORTS MEETING

Redcliff 1988 — Dave Crowther

The 1988 excavation area

The work undertaken in 1988, the third successive season at Redcliff, had two principal aims. Firstly it was intended to complete the full excavation of a regular block of land immediately adjacent to the river-cliff just west of the Long Plantation (this being Trench One, first begun in 1986). The threat to this archaeologically productive area has been the raison d'être behind the current excavation and field-survey programme. 1988 saw the achievement of this aim. Secondly it was hoped that targeted topsoil

stripping by machine north of the main trench would indicate how representative the core study area was, as well as possibly establishing the limits of this area of archaeological activity, as fieldwalking had previously failed to identify this.

Pre-excavation survey

As in 1987 the ploughsoil from the area to be excavated and in the trench's immediate vicinity was systematically examinined prior to its removal. This has enabled the potential loss of information due to topsoil stripping by machine to be quantified. Three methods were employed: metal-detecting, phosphate sampling and the hand excavation of a series of test pits. The sieving of samples from the latter has established that there was very little material culture present within the horizon.

Excavation

Of the 742m^2 stripped this season, a trench 50m x 10m was fully excavated. This ran east-west just behind the cliff-face. The area included the western ends of the 1986 and 1987 trenches.

The area east of 1190E produced a long stratigraphic sequence, indicating the remains of intense activity. To the west of this sequence little evidence was encountered, with earth-cut features being absent. However, at the far western end an extensive deposit containing much mid-first century occupation debris was revealed.

The stripped but unexcavated area lay to the north of the eastern concentration of material. Following machine stripping this area was carefully cleaned. The presence of archaeological deposits was identified across much of its extent though their precise nature could not be defined. Resolution was only possible by manual excavation. However, material of mid-first century date was encountered up to the margins of the

stripped area, establishing the further extension of the site north from the cliff.

The stratigraphic sequence

At least four major phases of activity may be provisionally identified. The evidence of the material culture indicates that the first three of these at least date to the mid-first century A.D. and suggests intense use of the site during that period. The fourth and final phase, revealed in two substantial earth-cut features cannot, at this provisional stage of the post-excavation work, be closely dated since the relevant fill deposits yielded only a few artefacts.

Phase I

This phase consisted of a slightly irregular ditch aligned north-south, paralleled closely on its western side by a series of pits, all cut to a similar depth. To the west of these was nothing for 30m; and to the east, any remains from this phase would have been destroyed by the subsequent phases.

Generally the fill contexts of the ditch were sterile, except at its southern terminal and a late fill just to the north of this which had the character of a rich midden. Two Corieltauvian coins were found here.

The five pits lying just west of the ditch were fully excavated during the 1988 season. It is hoped that environmental analysis of samples taken from the pits will characterize their fills, all of which produced large groups of mid-first century pottery together with comparatively rich faunal remains and some fine metalwork. These pits lie at the western edge of the area of concentrated activity.

A wide, somewhat shallow feature cut by a circular pit and sealed by a further series of deposits may also belong to this phase. An intact horse skull in one of these upper fills may have been a ritual deposit.

Phase II

The second phase of occupation is demonstrated in the excavation of an extensive hollow between 1114 and 1145E. This feature, which cuts the ditch of phase one, had been apparent from the 1986 and 1987 seasons. Over $50m^2$ of the western branch of this feature was excavated in 1988, though the cut still continued beyond the northern limit of excavation. At this western end the cut was found to have a somewhat irregular edge, appearing as a series of large 'bowl-shaped' cuts. The reason for this shape is not readily apparent; however, the depth of cut was a consistent 0.80m. The fills sequence was a long one, near the bottom of which was encountered an extensive spread of cobbling consistent with the surfacing found to the east in previous years.

The previous interpretation of this feature as a 'sunken trackway' is not necessarily contradicted by the 1988 evidence. However, its shape and direction as now revealed suggest that alternative purposes and interpretations need to be considered.

Phase III

On stratigraphic grounds phase II was short-lived, and the eastern end of the site was extensively remodelled. This reorganization took the form of a number of associated activites. The eastern end of the hollow was 'levelled' by the deposition of a vast quantity of near-sterile soil. On this new raised surface, spreads of domestic rubbish, a hearth and a fairly deep gully were encountered. The western end of the hollow, however, remained open and was apparently in use during this period, and careful excavation in 1987 and 1988 showed the levelled-up eastern end to have been retained behind a revetment.

If the purpose of the original cutting was to create a sunken access-way it is not clear whether the western branch continued to serve this function and

further consideration is needed before we can be sure on this point. What is certain is that this western end of the cut remained open and perhaps in use for some while, though some parts of the feature had started to fill up by this stage.

Phase IV

The final phase of activity within the excavated trench is shown by two substantial cut features: a ditch and a square crater, which might represent an Anglo-Saxon phase at the site.

Conclusion

An extensive block of archaeology immediately behind the cliff-face has now been comprehensively investigated. Whilst the full extent of the ancient settlement has yet to be established, functional differences between different areas of the site are already emerging. The excavations have yielded a long stratified sequence divisible into a series of discrete phases and sub-phases. Allied to this a large sample of secure environmental, faunal, ceramic and metallurgical assemblages has been recovered. Preliminary work on the dating of the material from the first three phases suggests this episode to be predominately pre-Neronian. Occupation is unlikely to have lasted into the Flavian period, and hence pre-dates the Roman conquest of the North. Already a clearer picture of the Redcliff during antiquity is emerging.

The project has been co-ordinated over the three years by Dave Crowther, and directed on site by J. Creighton and S. Willis. This year the excavation team was made up of undergraduate students from four universities, together with a number of experienced field archaeologists and local volunteers. Financial support was provided by Capper Pass & Son Ltd, The Society of Antiquaries of London, The Royal Archaeological Institute, Hull City Museums, The

British Academy and the University of Durham.

(text adapted from Crowther, Willis and Creighton, 18 Nov 1988)

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John Dent

John Dent reported the recovery of burials on two occasions during the past year. The first of these discoveries was at the Wetwang site before Christmas where the remains of a late neolithic-early bronze age burial mound was found. Almost all of these mounds on the valley floor were ploughed out in the Middle Ages, but of this one there still survived a circular ditch with central burials and another grave cutting across the ditch on the north side. The burial sequence in the centre could be reconstructed: the primary burial was enclosed in a coffin in the side of which a second body had been buried, while a third body had been added in the grave fill. Behind the head of the second burial a decorated beaker had been placed and the already partially decomposed body of the first occupant had been re-arranged over the feet of the second.

The fourth body on site was buried in a grave cutting the enclosing ditch. Like the second burial, a decorated pottery beaker was included, and a further similarity was the presence of charcoal in the grave providing dating evidence important to a study of these Yorkshire beakers. Both the radiocarbon date and a bone report are awaited.

The second burial site described by John Dent had been reported a few days earlier in the paper: the remains of a double grave had been exposed on a building site in Driffield. A foundation trench had cut through the burial leaving only the two skulls in position, though it was still apparent that the bodies had been buried

in a crouched position. There was no dating evidence other than the north-south orientation of the burial, characteristic of the Iron Age; however, there was no sign of a square ditch.

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Fieldwalking on the
Market Weighton By-Pass — Peter Halkon

Work on the first phase of this project has now been completed. The aim was to walk each field cut by the projected line of the road in divided lines, with walkers c.5m apart on the width of the carriageway itself and 10m apart in the rest of the field.

The first session took place on January 19th of this year at Skelfrey Park, Shiptonthorpe, and on the very first line walked, within 20m of the edge of the field, Susie Gibson picked up one of the best finds of the whole exercise, a barbed and tanged arrowhead. Several other pieces of worked flint were found as well, but suprisingly only two sherds of RB pottery considering the field's proximity to the site of the substantial settlement excavated by Durham University/ERAS since 1985.

The major site discovered was near Hawling Road, Market Weighton, directly on the line of the roadway. A concentration of sherds spread over an area of c. 100m square was found on the SE face of a small ridge which sloped towards Market Weighton Beck. Fifty kg of pottery was collected, mainly consisting of Holme-on-Spalding Moor greywares, Crambeck Mortaria and Huntcliff ware. The field next door was walked on 13th March, whilst I was languishing at home with 'flu, by a team led by Helen, my wife, and more greyware was found on the same sandy ridge.

The line of the by-pass cuts across a range of soil

types and it was noticeable that as in the Holme Survey, the clay soils appeared to have few sites on them, preference being shown for the better drained sand and gravel soils. A map showing the drift geology of the Market Weighton area also showed that Market Weighton Beck had been substantially larger. The farm manager of one farm next to the beck described finding well-preserved reeds and other organic matter in the alluvial soils.

Plans are being made for more detailed fieldwalking and surveying on some sites and excavation on the Roman site described above.

Thanks must be given to all those who took part in the fieldwalking, seventeen people in all, and to Mr D Whisker of the Technical Services department of Humberside County Council for supplying the maps and much other information. As in the Holme project, the farmers were most co-operative in allowing fieldwork to take place.

Peter Halkon

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19 October: RECENT WORK IN LANGDALE - Richard Bradley

Professor Bradley's talk was probably the first ERAS lecture to come with a health warning - apparently a member of the audience on a previous occasion had fled the room as the vertiginous topography of some of the axe sites became increasingly apparent. Before testing our "head for heights" in this manner Richard Bradley outlined the background to his work in Langdale.

The technique of petrological thin-sectioning enables the stone axes of the neolithic (of which Hull Museum possesses many fine examples) to be traced back to their parent rock, showing that they originated from a number of specific areas. When the relative

frequencies of these different groups of axes are plotted according to their find-spots, we find that many axes end up far from their point of origin: for example, over eighty percent of Cumbrian axes have been found within 110km of the mouth of the Humber.

In the case of flint axes (also produced during the neolithic) it is known how the material was extracted at Grimes Graves - via vertical shafts and horizontal galleries, with the final processing of the axes taking place not at the mine but up to 30km away. What is less certain is the origin of the flint used for any particular axe, since the technique of trace element analysis, once thought to provenance flint just as does thin-sectioning stone, is now disputed.

The only previous excavation of a stone quarry took place in the late 1960s in central Brittany where there were four metres of stratified debris at the base of a cliff. This site illustrated a succession of different ways of working the stone, suggesting lines of enquiry which might usefully be followed up in Britain. Graig Llwyd in Wales was rejected as a suitable research site because modern stone quarrying has sliced 200m off the mountain, effectively removing both a hillfort and the neolithic quarry. In choosing to investigate the Langdale sites Richard Bradley and Mark Edmonds must have set something of an altitude record for a British excavation at just under 2000 feet.

The volcanic ash used for Group VI axes runs through the central Lake District for fourteen kilometres, with three main quarry sites: Scafell Pike, Glaramara and Pike O' Stickle. These quarry sites are optimally placed for access to the fertile lowlands and major Pennine crossing routes. The situation allowed for high areas where the rock was extracted, lower more sheltered slopes where the axes were rough-shaped, and access to the outer area of the Lakes where the axes

were ground and polished.

The method of extraction varied at different sites: holes might simply be dug into the rock, a flaw in the rock opened up, or ledges on the mountain worked back as quarries. The later more sophisticated sites may be characterised by their flaking debris and by the presence of different rock types brought up on to the mountain for use as hammerstones.

It is obvious that a study of these sites poses particular problems. Mark Edmonds analysed thousands of tons of debris in order to extract the informatioin about the processes that had produced that debris. Each stage in the axe production creates distinctive debris, so an examination of the debris can reveal which stages took place where. It is also possible, by reproducing the techniques today, to determine the level of skill employed, whether the rock was being used economically or not and hence if those working a particular site were specialists. In some cases Mark Edmonds was able to fit together pieces of debris in a similar way to a broken pot being built up.

In the first year of the project samples were taken from as many locations on the mountain as possible. As not all the sites were accessible, because of peat cover, one metre test pits were dug (except in areas where the peat was too deep). As a result of this survey, five sites were chosen for excavation; in the event this number was enlarged to seven by the need for rescue work at two further sites. Those ERAS members in the audience who have dug on sites in East Yorkshire where a house platform may provide the greatest altitude and the steepest contours, could only sympathise with excavation arrangements which involved carrying the equipment up a mountain every day and carrying down not only the equipment but also a total of one ton of samples. The positioning of the spoil heap became more of a problem than usual when

the excavation was sited on a ledge on the side of the mountain.

The excavations encompassed extraction sites, a flaking floor and finishing sites. At the top of Dungeon Ghyll it was found that the face of a gorge had been worked back as an opencast quarry. Wedges had probably been used to assist the extraction, but not firesetting. Ninety percent of the extracted rock was not used and there was no evidence for the later stages of axe-making.

A knapping floor was found in the peat by chance and it was here that the flakes could be reassembled as one block. A roughout from another area was also put together in this way.

The site at Stake Beck involved workbenches (in common with the Breton site). Some of the debris showed signs of retouching and there was evidence that the people stayed for a period and some charcoal was found. However, the level of skill employed was still low.

Further sealed platforms were found to contain axe-finishing flakes and charcoal.

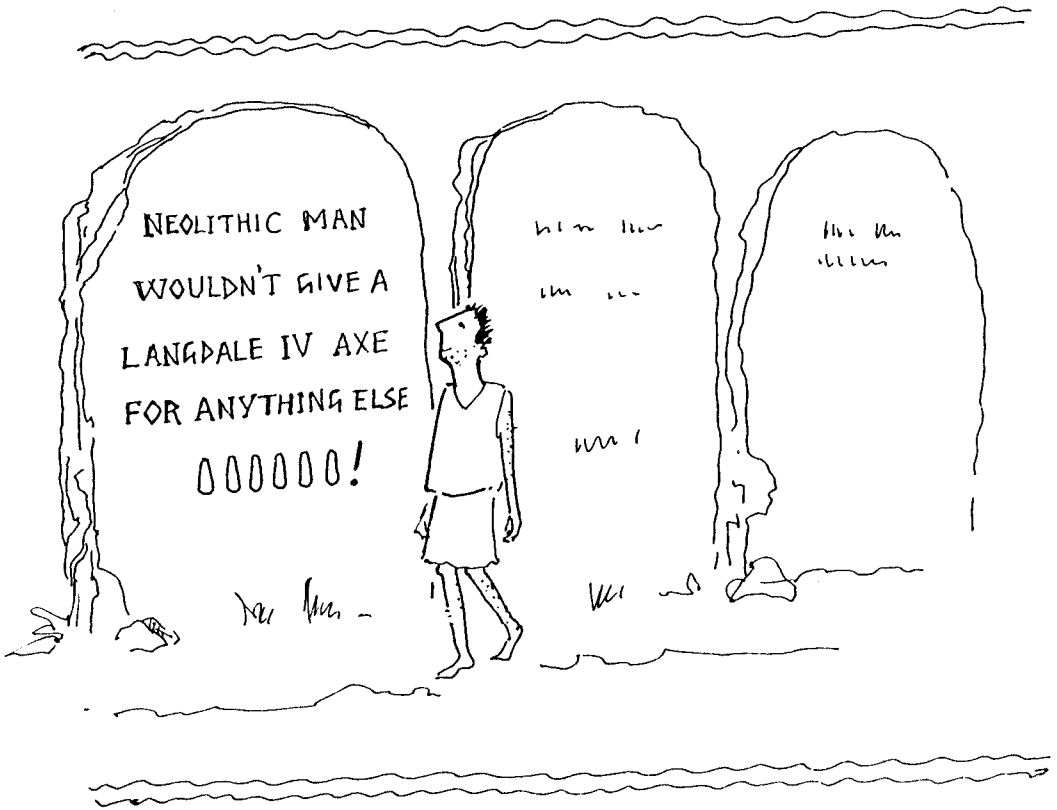
These various sites illustrated a method of axe-making in which the rock was only crudely excavated out of the ground high up on the mountain before being taken down to below the contemporary treeline for the later stages in manufacture. Two excavations on ledges, however, going down as deep as was possible, both revealed a sequence in which all stages of axe production were represented, including woodburning. This represented a more sophisticated method of axe production, with a higher level of skill.

Pollen sampling in Langdale Combe, a former kettle hole, showed a species profile which included birch,

poplar, ?willow, bracken and thorny species. There was evidence that the vegetation had been burnt at regular intervals to improve the grazing - which must have been a summer activity because of snow cover in winter at that altitude.

A study of hammerstones from Langdale shows that the two different types tend to be associated with different quarries, which were therefore probably worked by different communities. Professor Bradley proposed that the earlier, extensive type of quarry was probably an adjunct to grazing, whereas at a later date the process became more efficient and individual quarries may have been owned by separate communities. Why did they extract the rock on potentially dangerous ledges where the rock was no better than in more accessible places? The speaker suggested that the inaccessibility of these sites was the very reason for which they were chosen, in order to control access to the source material and therefore protect the prestigious nature of the axes.

Richard Bradley thought that the specialization of the later phase of axe production may have led to secondary settlement on the fringes of the Lake District where the axes were taken to be ground and polished and where we can still see the big neolithic monuments, such as Castlerigg Stone Circle and Long Meg and her Daughters - areas which were not cleared until the late neolithic. Once the axes crossed the Penines their prestige grew and it is to the role of these axes in East Yorkshire that we must look for a wider context for stone axes.



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HUMBERSIDE'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

The Humberside Sites and Monuments record (SMR) is based at the County Council's Archaeology Unit in Beverley, and contains details of archaeological sites, ancient monuments, historic buildings and other landscape features. Over 11,000 records are currently held, covering Humberside's rich archaeological

heritage from its earliest stone age origins up to significant 20th century buildings listed for preservation.

This variety is reflected in the County's most important sites, designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments and granted statuary protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. There are 230 scheduled monuments in Humberside and these include the prehistoric monolith in Rudston churchyard, Bronze Age barrows and Iron Age earthworks on the Yorkshire Wolds, Roman villa sites, earthwork remains of medieval villages and religious houses, and relatively modern industrial structures such as Ferriby Sluice. For each of these sites of national importance, there are many more of regional and local significance held on the record.

The SMR functions mainly as a consultative and advisory body, both for the Unit's own work programme of excavations and surveys and for external bodies such as District Councils, who send details of private and industrial developments to be checked against the record. If known sites are affected, then the Unit may apply for funding for excavation, as was the case with the recent Beverley Gate and Citadel digs in Hull. The SMR is also available to private researchers, students and teachers who may be setting up shool projects on archaeology or local history. If you want to visit the SMR or require a list of displays, booklets and information sheets produced by the Unit, write to:

The Archaeology Unit
Property Services Department
County Hall
BEVERLEY
North Humberside
HU17 9BA
Tel: 0482 868770

Mary Lakin

DIARY OF EVENTS

	Time and Venue
Wednesday 7 December Field Study Group: Sites and Monuments Records	7.30 pm Humberside Archaeology Unit, Grovehill Road, Beverley
Wednesday 14 December ERAS Lecture: Historic Food in Yorkshire	7.30 pm Ferens Art Gallery, Hull
Wednesday 4 January Field Study Group	7.30 pm Hull Museum's Castle Warehouse, Chapel Lane Staith, High Street, Hull
Wednesday 11 January ERAS Lecture: The Search for Roman Castleford	7.30 pm Ferens Art Gallery, Hull

Wednesday 1 February Field Study Group Robin Thornes: Recording Historic Buildings	7.30 pm venue to be arranged
Saturday 4 February CBA 4: Annual symposium of the region's archaeology further information from: Mary Kershaw, Royal Pump Room Museum, Harrogate Museum Services, Crown Place, Harrogate, HG1 2RY Tel: 0423 503340	Crabtree Memorial Lecture Theatre University of Leeds CBA 4 members: £2.50 others: £4.00
Friday 10 February -Sunday 12 February Medieval Industry Residential weekend school further information from: Mr G Bryant, 8 Queen Street Barton-on-Humber S. Humberside, DN18 5QP	Horncastle Residential College, Horncastle, Lincs.
Wednesday 15 February 7.30 pm ERAS Lecture: Kirkstall Abbey	Ferens Art Gallery, Hull

Wednesday 1 March	7.30 pm
Field Study Group	Hull Museum's Castle Warehouse, Chapel Lane Staith, High St Hull

Wednesday 15 March	7.30 pm
ERAS Lecture: The Anglian Cemetery at Norton, Cleveland	Ferens Art Gallery, Hull

Friday 7 April	
Annual Dinner	Thwaite Hall, Cottingham

Wednesday 12 April	7.30 pm
A.G.M. followed by ERAS Lecture: Environmental Archaeology in East Yorkshire	Ferens Art Gallery, Hull