

# ERAS news

No. 18

August 1984

The excavators report Once again it has been a summer of archaeological excitement and once again ERAS members can get the stories direct from the horses' mouths (unbridled revelations?) at the Reports Meeting on 19th September when the Society's 1984/85 lecture programme gets under way.

Wetwang Slack refuses to lie down, thank goodness. There is no full-time archaeological presence at Wetwang any longer, but the links between the Clifford Watts quarry and archaeologists have been strongly forged over the years which has ensured the recovery of two more Iron Age chariot burials excavated by John Dent. The graves were even more remarkable than the first one excavated by Tony Brewster thirteen years ago. You know about it through the media, now hear it from the excavator.

There are surprises too from the Bursea House project with the chance discovery of a pre-historic dug-out found during field drainage operations at nearby Husholme. Peter Halkon and Martin Millett aim to get wet in the relict bed of the River Foulness and reveal all at the Reports meeting.

And that's not all! Hull Museums' work in the field will be described by Dave Crowther, and Humberside's Field Archaeology Unit will be bringing you up to date with work at Eastgate, Beverley, and summarising the results of excavat-

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ions at the Bishop's Palace at Howden. All this and coffee too! Why not take this opportunity to introduce a friend to the Society. The Hon. Treasurer will be only too pleased to enrol new members for 1985.

Keeping up with the changes We have now entered the age of English Heritage. No I don't altogether know what it heralds either but we shall. The Department of the Environment's responsibility for archaeology has passed into the hands of a super-quango known as the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England. The Commission came into being in April of this year replacing the old order under the terms of the 1983 National Heritage Act. English Heritage is something of a subtitle for the Commission by which we shall come to know and love (?) it. So be prepared for the new abbreviations which will take the place of the time-honoured D.o.E. which has hitherto bespattered newsletters like this one. H.B.M.C. doesn't sound too promising (the letters, I mean, not necessarily the anticipated performance), and E.H. sounds uncomfortably like a deaf ear. English Heritage I think it will be.

Lord Montagu of Beaulieu is the Chairman of the Commission and archaeological interests are represented - one hopes forcefully - by Professors Colin Renfrew and Rosemary Cramp. There is a feeling in some quarters that the Commission's attention may tend to concentrate on existing monuments and major sites to the detriment of rescue archaeology. Amateurs and professionals alike must continue to argue the case strongly for archaeology and the need to step up support for work in the field.

South Bank Letter Firstly allow me to apologise for the non-appearance of this epistle in the last ERAS News. This was not, as some might assume due to me having nothing to

report but to the reverse situation with so much going on that I forgot to write anything.

As seems to be coming the rule I spent the worst months of the winter digging, only this time I had the sense to become involved in a site that was inside Winteringham Church. Some building work was being carried out there and the faculty called for an archaeological excavation. I was only supposed to be there for a couple of weeks with a watching brief but in the end spent over two months digging. There was some considerable pressure to finish the job from the Curator of the Museum: she was to be married in the church and three weeks away from the Day there was still a yawning chasm at its west end. I pointed out that when soldiers marry they walk under an arch of swords, so what could be more natural than for a Museum curator to climb over an excavation? She was not very impressed with this modest suggestion.

The excavation was successful and much useful information was gained about the church's history. Architecturally the church is rather odd with a pair of mongrel Norman transitional arcades between the nave and aisles. The excavation showed, not surprisingly, that these aisles were built onto a standing nave. We went through 0.90m of earth floors and burnt layers which gave superb "Technicolor" sections. Finds were almost non-existent as is usual in churches, but we did get three really fine furnaces - two for melting lead for the roof and one for melting bronze for casting bells.

The shortage of finds from the church has been more than compensated for by the Museum acquiring a massive collection of material from Mrs. E. Rudkin. She had worked with A.L. Armstrong on his excavations at Grimes Graves and Creswell Crags and carried out much fieldwork in this area between the wars. Her massive collection was almost too much of a good thing! Hundreds of flint points and implements.

In his Prehistoric Lincolnshire Jeffrey May mentions four sites as being possible hill forts in the county, one of which is Yarborough Camp. Yarborough Camp was first mentioned by Stukeley who saw it in the 1720s, but it has never been properly recorded so one Sunday myself and the stalwart Chris Dyson set off to do the job. It was awful. The site lies in a thick wood, a sort of Lincolnshire equivalent of a tropical rain forest. Eventually the job was completed. When I first went out to see the site I was expecting to be able to write it off as medieval but now, looking at it on plan, I am not so sure. The earthwork is trapezoid and consists of a chalk bank and ditch. At each corner of the enclosure is a fairly high mound which is very strange and difficult to parallel.

Work will soon begin again at the Winterton Roman villa on what is their 26th year of excavation. Could we claim that this is the longest continuous series of excavations in the country, or has Wharram been going on longer? I sometimes get the feeling that work started there before the peasants moved out!

John Sills will be doing what should be his last year at Weelsby Avenue, Grimsby, on his Iron Age enclosure. Last year he found more human skulls in the ditch where they had fallen after being used to decorate the gateway. 2000 years may pass but Grimsby will always be Grimsby!

Kevin Leahy

Lecture summaries The final two from last years outstanding programme of lectures.

21st March - The death of a landscape: the .....  
 the Somerset Levels. John Coles  
 .....

The 140,000 acres of the Somerset Levels are flatlands fed with the run-off waters from the Mendips and the Quantock Hills. The area floods

in the winter and has done so from time immemorial so that the Levels are rich in peat. The Somerset Levels Project exists to search for and record evidence of prehistoric occupation. Over the last 125 years commercial peat diggers have made many discoveries including part of a bow of yew dated to c.3000BC. The pace of peat extraction is faster today, the "mumps" cut by a number of large machines. A typical discovery would be a hurdlework panel track of Bronze Age date which would be exposed and recorded over a few days by the Project's field archaeologists. The Project runs on an annual budget of £40,000 from the Universities of Cambridge and Exeter, the Department of the Environment and the Society of Arts. A portocabin HQ is provided free of charge by Fisons. Professor Coles chose to describe work on two sites to illustrate the archaeology of the Levels.

The Sweetrack is an early neolithic pedestrian track over a reedy swamp from the Polden Hills to Westhay Island. The structure is uncovered by hand - literally so: metal implements are out! Once exposed, there is rapid decay and it is essential to keep the structure wet. Everything is photographed, drawn, catalogued and lifted for study. Processes include species identification, dendrochronology, coppice evidence analysis, implement use assessment, entymology and fungus examination. The track was constructed as a horizontal bottom rail, pegged by two or three criss-cross pegs cradling a plank 30 to 40cm above the level of the marsh. The track length was 1800m requiring a lot of material and effort in preparation; but the process of building was itself a simple one and rapidly executed, as experiments have demonstrated. The planks were fashioned from oak, ash, lime and elm, felled and cleft by stone implements of course. Holly, alder, hazel, birch, apple and willow were also used in the work. Woodworking techniques are well represented in the perfect preservation of the members.

Conservation is undertaken by Project staff using polyethylene glycol impregnation. Sieving of samples has produced evidence of the raft spider in association with the Sweetrack. Reed-swamp conditions lead to the unretrieved loss of items that belonged to both the builders and users of the track. These include pottery, sometimes with their contents - hazelnuts in one example - pins of yew, which are unique in the record of the British neolithic, and flint implements, sometimes with resin still adhering. Analysis of microwear evidence from the flints indicates usage: so far wear patterns analagous with effects of wood cutting, reed cutting and hide cutting have been distinguished. One other identifiable pattern which recurs has not yet been attributed. The earliest jadeite axe from the British Isles came from the Sweetrack; it was in pristine condition and handleless. Peat cutting over the years has removed all the upper levels later than the early neolithic and consequently the value of the excavation can be measured by the close dating of associated artefacts alone. Since the excavation, a 500m length of the Sweetrack has been acquired and enjoys protection as a SSSI. It is necessary to pump in water in the summer to prevent the area drying out.

Meare Village and Glastonbury Lake Village: In the 19th century part of the Iron Age Glastonbury Lake Village was excavated and published in two volumes by Arthur Bulleid and Harold StGeorge Grey. Artefacts from Meare Island were subsequently brought to the excavators' attention, and two more villages were recognised. 45 years of work followed. Excavations of Iron Age material from Meare West were published in three volumes following work on the site between 1910 and 1935; at Meare East 20 years of work ensued during which time Bulleid died and only interim publications appeared. In 1979 the Somerset Levels Project turned to this area. At Meare West work was designed to check the presence of animal bone

which was not kept by the original excavators. Abundant finds were made on a tent site with hearths and a midden set on a raised bog, identified as such from plant and insect remains. An environment of acidic pools and cottongrass was indicated. (The natural evolution of the Somerset Levels can be seen to be reed marsh progressing to fen woodland and ultimately raised bog.) Possibly as many as 50,000 pots had been made and broken at the site; objects of stone, bone, antler, bronze, shale, iron, tin and glass were present. Two glass beads were found still in the process of manufacture, and it is probable that all the items found were made on the site. Sieving of soils produced evidence of food waste in the form of seeds and bone. The camp is thought to be a meeting site used in the summer months.

In 1982 Meare East was examined. Remarkably, the site hut used by Bulleid and StGeorge Grey, which still stands today, contained remnants of the last lot of excavations. The site itself was found to have suffered from later flooding and animal disturbances.

The advantages for prehistoric man in settling the area of the Somerset Levels and the rising ground on its margins are fivefold: the area was readily exploitable in fishing and gathering, fodder and cereal production, woodland grazing, timber supply, and hunting game. Today the Levels are drying out, attacked simulataneously by peat cutting and drainage which together threaten to destroy both the archaeology and the existing flora and fauna. In every respect, therefore, the Somerset Levels are dying.

18th April - Roman London. Harvey Sheldon  
 .....

Roman London occupied an area north of the Thames together with Southwark on the southern side, 35 miles upriver from the river mouth. A full understanding of the Roman town is far from

complete. References to London are frequent in the sources and indicate its political importance in the province in both the early and late periods of Roman rule. Archaeology is an essential means of examining the historical development of the town as well as retrieving details of its buildings and life. In the past archaeologists have suffered from development pressures so that only small excavations were possible. These tend not to produce conclusive evidence of shape, age or function of structures encountered. London's archaeology also suffers from cellarage which has removed vast amounts of stratified deposits, particularly the later levels, so that a bias has accumulated in the archaeological record towards the early period.

Topographically reading west to east Roman London comprised the River Fleet, Ludgate Hill, the Walbrook, which bisected the settlement, and Cornhill, whilst on the south bank Southwark was marginal land of mudflats and sand threaded through by Thames channels. Here Mesolithic finds have been made, and Iron Age burials have been discovered beneath Roman roads. Pits and gullies are also present of Late Bronze Age/Iron Age date. An approach road made on timber rafting across the mudflats from the south-west converges with Stane Street near Westminster. Invasion routes may have been directed through the site of the town because the Thames was bridgeable here, and legionary equipment has been found at Southwark. But other finds suggest that 50AD rather than 43AD was the earliest period of Roman activity, and Watling Street approaching from the east can be seen not to be directing itself to the city, all of which might indicate an earlier focus to the west of the main London site which was perhaps not developed until the third governorship (Aulus Didius Gallus). The discovery of a ditch indicates an early fort in the city area, but this cannot be closely dated to resolve the

question.

In Cornhill a basilica and forum has been identified and dated to the late 1st century AD. In the 2nd century it was redeveloped and occupied an area of six acres. The Governor's palace has also been recognised. The 11 acre fort in the north-west edge of the town at Cripplegate was not built until the late 2nd century. Stamped tiles and writing tablets of the Procurator's office attest the administrative importance of Roman London. An early Flavian timber revetment indicates the development of the waterfront, and an amphora whose contents are described on the outside - liquamen (fish sauce) - has been recovered from Southwark.

Strip buildings in Southwark with clay walls of late 1st/early 2nd century date are probably multi purpose, with domestic, retail and manufacturing functions. Some are more grandiose in plan, built of stone with timber wall partitions. Hypocausted structures with frescoes are also known. A further example of the limited interpretive value of some excavation work is provided by a site in Southwark, Westminster Palace. This produced a hypocausted building with an associated inscription giving a list of names, probably cohorts. The building therefore may have served as a sort of military clubhouse. Without the inscription it could not have been given an identity.

The evidence gathered to date points to London as a populous trading and administrative centre at this period. But overlying late Antonine deposits on both sides of the river is a sterile dark earth which has not been satisfactorily explained. Does it mean the collapse of urban life? If so, then there must have been a resurgence since London is an important 4th century centre. And there is evidence of 3rd century activity: the town walls were built some time between 180 and 220AD of Kentish ragstone on flint foundations, and a major wharf was constructed

in the late 3rd century on dendrochronological evidence. Bastions on the east wall also employ reused masonry indicating the preexistence of major public buildings. Warehouses at Pudding Lane set behind the waterfront are the only buildings so far examined, however, which indicate continuity. The Mithraeum is also now thought to be of mid 3rd century date. Four out of five contexts excavated in London are dated to the late 1st/early 2nd centuries, and a similar proportion exists for pottery vessels associated with trading activity (eg amphorae). The proportion of pits and wells also indicate a shrinking population in the later Roman period, so some form of decline seems to be indicated although it remains little understood at the present time.

Take a course Hull University's Department of Adult Education includes a number of archaeological courses in the coming session, and they all share the outstanding merit of not being on Wednesday evenings! There is a variety of subjects and locations: course titles, tutors and venues are as follows...

From Field to Shelf \* an Introduction to History and Prehistory through Fieldwork. Tim Schadla-Hall (University of Hull)

The English Village. Olga Reckitt (Hornsea)

Archaeology. Derek Gore (Scarborough)

Roman Rural Settlement in Eastern Yorkshire. Dominic Powlesland (Kirby Grindalythe)

Past caring: the Case for Archaeology. Peter Armstrong (South Cave)

... and if your interests extend to industrial archaeology Dr. Michael Lewis is offering two courses...

Mining and Quarrying (Bridlington) and The Industrial Archaeology of Power (University of Hull)

... and on the south bank there are attractions too ...

British Prehistory. Kevin Leahy (Scunthorpe)

Did They All Wear Woad? Eastern England Before the Romans. Tim Schadla-Hall (Great Grimsby)

Landscape Archaeology. J. Appleby (East Halton) ... still on the south side of the Humber two WEA courses of interest to members are being offered by Geoff Bryant ...

English Castles (East Halton) and The Roman Conquest (Winteringham)

For further details of these and of all the other courses write to: Hull University, Department of Adult Education, 195 Cottingham Road, Hull, HU5 2QE; or phone 0482 46311.

Arnold again It might be long odds on finding a prehistoric boat or three Iron Age chariots, but if you want to go digging this autumn the Society's excavation at Arnold, Long Riston will be resuming in September. The site gives good value for money in that ostensibly it is a medieval moated site but there is Iron Age occupation there too! In the clay lands of Holderness the site is reluctant to cooperate in summer, which is why the second season has been delayed until moisture returns to the soil -- although at the time of writing there seems little prospect of change in the immediate future. If you are interested in taking part in this weekend only excavation, get in touch with Peter Wilkinson who will provide the details. The phone number is 0482 447944.

Take a course Part II Sorry about this! You should try compiling a newsletter out of the instalment plan postal service. Valuable new information has been brought to light in the form of several WEA courses in the East Riding beginning this autumn They are ...

Yorkshire Castles and Abbeys. G.W. Sellers (Selby)

Anglo-Saxon and Viking Yorkshire. Peter Halkon (Bubwith)

From Deira to Humberside: a Study of East Yorkshire from the Saxons to the Present Day. Faith Mann (Long Riston)  
Looking at the English Landscape. Susan Holt (North Newbald)

... and there's more besides, but I'm not going to tell you. Instead contact the WEA Tutor Organiser, Mrs Valerie Wilton-Ely, 1 St John Street, Beverley, (0482 867341).

And now ... It is always a thrill - no, let's be honest, a relief - to introduce a new regular column to ERAS News. The doubters said it couldn't be done; the feckless said don't even try; but it can, and we did. And so at last, from the firm that has brought you such heady stuff as the Suzie Small Finds Spot, and still retains exclusive rights to Kevin Leahy's South Bank Letter, comes that well-kept Keeper, David Crowther, a man of many parts and all of them working, and his ...

Hull Museum Notes It is now over seven months since my arrival on the scene, and it's about time the not-so-new Keeper of Archaeology put pen to paper and attempted a sketch of the story so far, or at least one small but significant part of the story.

Firstly, let me record my thanks for the warm welcome I have received from ERAS members various. Frankly, the enthusiasm of the Society has been something of an eye-opener, and the level of co-operation in fieldwork that exists between amateur and professional has been both fun and rewarding to witness. Common sense dictated that the best way to get familiar with the local geography was to get out into the field and get to know the "feel" of the place. My introduction to the field archaeology of the area could hardly have been more pleasurable, thanks to the Field Study Group of this Society. This "hard core" of Society fieldworkers meet on the first Wednesday

of the month in the Archaeology Study Room in Castle Warehouse on Chapel Lane Staith; during normal working hours this is the heart of the Archaeology Department where cataloguing and collections studies are carried out. On one Wednesday evening in four it gets covered in Peter Halkon's maps!

This group has in effect given the museum a much needed flying squad, and to date the field-work activities have been pretty impressive: excavation and survey work at and around Greylees Avenue, Hull; fieldwalking at Shiptonthorpe; lifting several tons of structural timbers from Skerne; excavation and survey work at Winestead. These are pre-Roman, Roman, and post-Roman operations conducted on a deliberately limited scale to tackle specific problems or answer specific questions. Largely conducted at weekends, all this has been of immense benefit to the museum. When the Keeper can't take the pace, they may be found assisting in the Holme-on-Spalding Moor survey, digging for the Unit at Beverley, Wetwang, or wherever, or processing material that they themselves have helped generate. It's exhausting just writing about it.

I am forced to the conclusion that the next seven months are likely to be as action-packed as the last. There are plans to build on the initial work at at least two sites, and for developing a strategy to examine and decode part of that enigmatic foreshore. Whatever transpires, it is unlikely to be predictable or dull. But then how could it be when the Group counts among its numbers an insurance loss adjuster wearing a foam-filled, felt-feathered parakeet perched on his head (weather permitting)?

David Crowther.

T.C.M. Brewster Tony Brewster died on 27th July at his home in Wintringham at the age of 70. This is a sad loss to East Riding

archaeology, and those who had the good fortune to know him and work with him will miss his unique qualities. An excavator for 50 years, Tony was years ahead of his time when he began to operate as a one-man rescue archaeological unit. The East Riding Archaeological Research Committee provided the base, the Ministry of Works, subsequently the D.O.E., provided the cash, and the mobile office - a single decker, engineless bus towed from site to site - provided the field HQ from which he undertook excavations on the Yorkshire Wolds and in North Yorkshire. There was not a period of history or prehistory in the region that he did not illuminate by his tireless efforts, and he was a ready and willing communicator of his excavation work. A teacher in his early years, he continued to teach throughout his long career in archaeology through adult education courses, inspiring his students with his enthusiasm and commitment to the study of the past.

He will be remembered for many things, but most of all for his tenacity and singlemindedness in pursuit of his goals whilst setting new standards of recording accuracy in the field. His work at Staple Howe and its publication was, and remains, a cornerstone for the study of the Early Iron Age in East Yorkshire, and a decade of work at Garton and Wetwang Slack in front of the advancing quarry is a memorable achievement that few have emulated in rescue archaeology. Noone was more delighted than Tony when his successor at Wetwang was able to excavate two more Iron Age chariot burials to add to his own "find of a lifetime" 13 years earlier. His faith in the importance of the site never wavered, and how fitting indeed that he should have lived to enjoy and share in its most recent outstanding discoveries.

The esteem in which T.C.M. Brewster was held by his colleagues and students was given public display at a conference in York to celebrate his 70th birthday, as it transpired only five weeks before his death. Few of us anticipated on that

memorable day that he would not survive to see in print the essays presented in his honour. A remarkable man, Tony Brewster will be remembered with affection by all who believe in and care for the archaeology of the Riding.

ERAS Committee At the AGM in April some changes to the membership of the committee took effect, and it was also agreed to extend the number of officers of the Society by two with the addition of an Hon. Meetings Secretary and an Hon. Newsletter Editor. This will in effect rationalise an existing situation and ensure for the future an equitable distribution of responsibilities which in the past have tended to add to the burden of the Hon. Secretary. This essential office of the Society remains vacant at the present time, although the Committee members between them continue to ensure that the ground is adequately covered in the interim. It is nonetheless a matter of some urgency that the office be filled as soon as possible.

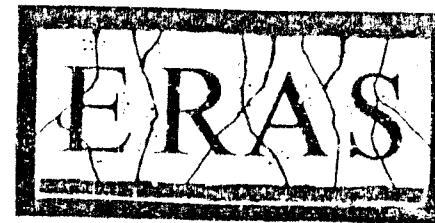
Your Officers and Committee are:

- |                         |     |                   |
|-------------------------|-----|-------------------|
| Chairman                | ... | Keith Simcock     |
| Vice Chairman           | ... | Peter Halkon      |
| Hon. Treasurer          | ... | Robert Edwards    |
| Hon. Secretary          | ... | office vacant     |
| Hon. Meetings Secretary | ... | Tim Schadla-Hall  |
| Hon. Newsletter Editor  | ... | Peter Armstrong   |
| Committee               | ... | Derek Brooks      |
|                         |     | Peter Cottingham  |
|                         |     | David Crowther    |
|                         |     | Valerie Fairhurst |
|                         |     | Mary Hanby        |
|                         |     | Peter Jackson     |
|                         |     | Ray Ketch         |
|                         |     | John Knowles      |

Archaeological information The discoveries at Wetwang and Husholme serve to highlight the importance that we must



attach to encouraging the reporting of finds so that their archaeological value is not lost. In the case of Wetwang, it was the skill and diligence of the quarry face digger driver, Mick Ward, who found the first of the chariot graves ( and now at the time of writing has done it again with number three! ) that has enabled this unprecedented group to be rescued and recorded. At Husholme, the prehistoric boat, fortunately for all concerned, was recognised for what it was by Peter Halkon who was on the spot. But in this case, what might have been the outcome had he not been working in the area? Not every landowner, farmer or face worker - or gas board trenchman, pipelayer or machine driver for that matter - is anxious or concerned to report archaeological finds, we know, but there are a great many who are more than willing to do so. It is essential therefore that those at the sharp end know who they can contact, and ERAS members can do a great deal to help in this respect by reminding them. Included in this mailing is a sheet which gives contact addresses of the resident professionals who are able to respond quickly to reports of finds of any sort, either still in situ (preferably) or after removal, as well as providing details of ERAS itself. So please use this yourself and also bring it to the attention of anyone you know (or make multiple copies, charter a helicopter and drop them over the Riding!) The more widely distributed our members are throughout the working community of the area the better placed we will be to provide non-archaeological heritage.



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