

ERAS news

No. 17

March 1984

From tentative beginnings in the Spring of 1979 ERAS News is five years old -- reason enough perhaps to treat itself to a slightly brighter image! Same old stuff inside of course, but there's no mistaking it now for the parish magazine.

And whilst we are in the business of breaking new ground ERAS News is happy to introduce its readers to one another by publishing for the very first time the list of Society members. And in the time-honoured tradition of dispatching a pair of avians with a single missile, the opportunity is taken to save the Hon. Secretary some work by indicating (discreetly, of course!) those who through sheer oversight, we are sure, have not yet remitted their subscription for 1984. Allowing for the rapid adjustment to the Society's treasury which we confidently anticipate, membership stands at 165, an encouraging increase in numbers over last year, and it is a pleasure indeed to welcome our new members. We very much hope that you will find the Society, its activities and publications, stimulating and that membership of ERAS will help to enlarge your interest in and understanding of archaeology both generally and in particular at the local level. Whether you become actively engaged in fieldwork or not, as members of ERAS you are providing essential and valuable support to the archaeology of the Riding. The Society is as strong as its membership will allow, and the Officers and Committee

EAST RIDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

are happy to receive your suggestions and comments which will help to provide the kind of archaeological society that members want. And please remember, the columns of ERAS News are open to you all.

To the best of our knowledge the following members list is correct to 6th March 1984. If there are any errors of compilation or if you have any queries about it, please notify the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. R.J. Edwards, 12 Davis's Close, Kirkella, (Tel. Hull 654166).

- Miss L.Ainsworth, 11 Silverdale Rd., Hull (£!)
- Mrs H.L.M.Archer, 26 Beechfield Dr., Hull
- Mr&Mrs P.Armstrong, 37 West End, Swanland
- Mr W.Armstrong, 79 Tilworth Rd., Hull (£!)
- Mr B.S.Ayers, 47 Branford Rd., Norwich (£!)
- Mr F.Banks, 1 Hastings Ave., Hull
- Mrs N.E.Bateson, 1159 Holderness Rd., Hull (£!)
- Mr J.E.Bartlett, City Museum, Sheffield
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- Mr P.Boynton, 48 Faraday St, Hull (£!)
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- Mr D.Brooks, 40 West End, Swanland
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- Mr D.A.Brown, 26 Hall Close, Nafferton
- Mr M.Brown, 31 Wellesley Ave., Hull (£!)
- Dr J.H.I.Bruce, 972 Holderness Rd., Hull
- Mr R.Butler, Moor Edge Hall, Brandesburton
- Mr&Mrs T.Buxton, 64 Birklands Dr., Hull
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- Mr G.H.Clayton, 1 Orchard Lane, Hutton
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- Mr J.M.Chapman, Old Road, Leconfield
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- Mr J.B.Cooper, Quaker House, Main St., Skipsea
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- Mr B.Cowan, 61 Thoresby St., Hull (£!)
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- Miss S.Crabb, 596B Exeter House, Hull
- Mr A.C.Credland, 25 Colville Ave., Hull (£!)
- Mr N.Crosby, 34 Westgate, North Cave (£!)
- Mr D.R.Crowther, c/o 68 Westbourne Ave, Hull
- Mrs G.M.Crowther, 9 Sandwood Park, Hutton Lowcross
- Mrs J.Dawes, 27 The Esplanade, Hornsea
- Mr J.S.Dent, 2 Lockwood St., Drifffield
- Mr C.J.Dunn, 106 Cherry Wood Crescent, Fulford (£!)
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- Mr D.Haldenby, 17 Main St., Elloughton
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- Mr A.P.M.Halkon, 207 Blenheim St., Hull
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- Mr M.E.Ingram, Reighton Hall, Filey (£!)
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- Mr C. Johnston, 18 Minster Moorgate, Beverley (£!)

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 Mr I.Wright, 8 Grayburn Lane, Beverley
 Mr R.A.Wywill. 3b Richmond Street, Hull
 Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Claremont, Leeds

Diggers wanted The Beverley Eastgate excavation is now well-advanced having been blessed with clement weather after a baptism of sleet and snow. Timber and mud buildings of 13th century date and better quality structures of the 14th century have been identified so far. A substantial depth of 12th century waterlogged organic deposits currently await attention, with the promise of late Saxon occupation to come. The site is hidden from general view behind the board fencing erected around the Eastgate Development, a situation which it is hoped to remedy shortly as spring approaches and the warmer weather will entice the public to visit the site without the fear of that sinking feeling in a sea of mud! Members of the Society are also invited to take part in the excavation, and to this end the site will be open for work on Sundays as well as the normal Monday to Friday routine from April 15th onwards. "Onwards" means until at least the end of June when on current projections excavation funds will be exhausted. The orchestrator of the event (P. Armstrong) hopes that as many members as possible will take advantage of the opportunity to begin or further their digging experience whilst at the same time providing valuable and much-needed support to the excavation, which promises to be very exciting in its later stages (well, he would say that, wouldn't he? Yes but it's true all the same!)

Access to the site is via the entrance to the Friary towards the end of Friars Lane, where parking is possible unless volunteers turn out by the score. Friars Lane meets Eastgate at the east end of the Minster and leads to the foot-bridge over the railway line. Sunday starting time is 9.30am (to give the director a bit of a lie-in!) Although not absolutely essential, it would be appreciated if volunteers could provide their own small hand tools, particularly trowels. For the latter, the smaller the better, and if you are venturing into a whole new world of practical archacolgy the advice in this department

is that it is false economy to buy anything but the best.

Journalists eat words ERAS News 16 carried a piece entitled "Back from the grave" in which it was stated that "the skeleton was drawn and photographed by Phillip Kendall". As an irate correspondent writes, "who the hell is Phillip Kendall? The name is Hampel, with only one l in Philip" adding "no wonder the British press is going to the dogs!"

The ERAS News Commission of Enquiry into Fair and Just Reporting upholds the complaint. The Hon. Editor issues an unqualified apology and is taking steps to ensure that Mr. R.T.Schadla-Hall eats Hampel pie.

Friendly user sought For the student of the microprocessor an opportunity to expand one's skills and help the Society at the same time presents itself. The Hon. Treasurer has a computer and would like to create an extra program for the Society's use. As he admits to having little programming experience, he is looking for help. He assures me that it is a fair-sized business micro, so should anyone be able to offer assistance please telephone Robert Edwards on Hull 654166.

Lecture summaries

14th December - The West Heslerton Parish Project.

 Dominic Powlesland

The best preserved archaeology in the Yorkshire Wolds is to be found in the dry valleys, not on the heavily ploughed tops. The West Heslerton parish survey embraces a large block of land containing many different land types, including a tract of blown sand which has afforded good preservation of the buried prehistoric remains and which is now being quarried. An Early Bronze

Age round barrow without a central grave but covering six primary burials lay beneath the sand. Field boundaries were sealed by the barrow and a secondary beaker burial predated the erection of the mound. Neolithic post holes have been found, and a pit alignment running for several miles has associated evidence of occupation on both sides.

The project offers a greater understanding of Early Iron Age settlement in the north which hitherto has rested largely on the evidence of Staple Howe. Iron Age features cut through the buried soils, and houses are seen to be post-built round structures with porch posts and no drip gullies. Four poster structures are present. Field systems have been examined and the blown sand preservation has allowed the identification of pasture and ploughland divided by a ditch. Ard marks in certain areas are being reevaluated and where these extend over long distances are now thought to be rutting caused by Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age wheeled traffic. Acid conditions have dissolved the entire grave contents of a Square barrow cemetery.

Romano-British occupation is minimal but interesting. Ring ditches are interpreted as haystack positions, and pit alignments (the pits smaller than prehistoric equivalents) are unexpected features for the period.

88 inhumations of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery have been excavated constituting a large sample for the north of England. More metalwork is present than is usual, even for the south of England. A cruciform brooch with a runic inscription found with a burial has textile remains on its underside. A headless horse with an iron bridle bit was also found! The Saxon settlement covers 16 acres and timber buildings which have been examined are of some sophistication.

In total the "site" is an area of land 8 x 10 kilometres, of which every part of the landscape requires examination. The area is one in which

archaeologists have worked in the past. The work of T.C.M. Brewster, for example, has opened the field, and archaeologists have the support of the local farmers -- a very important and essential ingredient for success.

18th January - The Prehistoric Farmer. Martin Jones

The material goods of the prehistoric farmer are largely of a biodegradable nature and do not survive into the archaeological record. How then do we examine the lives of the bulk of the population in prehistory? Field systems, animal remains and environmental evidence are three areas of profitable study.

Field boundaries of stone have been identified, and fields can be seen to be small, say 1/4 acre, and square having modern day parallels in the Third World. The square shape is determined by the method of ploughing. Because of inefficient implements ploughing is done twice, the second time at right angles to the first. Cross ploughing of this type is therefore most economically performed in fields of equal dimension in two directions. The prehistoric plough was an ard, or scratch plough, made of wood. Waterlogged conditions in the Low Countries and Denmark have preserved some Iron Age examples, and in the Upper Thames Valley a Roman ard fragment was found in a 3rd century AD well. Ards might have an iron capping, or share tip, to counteract wear, and these too have been found; in other instances their presence is inferred from a groove on the ard where it was once affixed. The marks of the plough will sometimes survive in a subsoil, and the South Street long barrow, near Avebury, seals neolithic ard marks in a criss-cross pattern. Another example in a clay subsoil survived under a Roman road in Avon, indicating the exploitation of heavier soils before the Roman conquest. The irregular profiles of the marks show the difficulty of handling the light plough which was not as

forceful an implement as the medieval mould board plough, for example, which ploughs a straighter furrow. The use of prehistoric ploughs and their form are depicted in rock carvings in North Italy, Scandinavia and Spain.

At the Butser experimental farm, ards have been reconstructed and tested. Ox pairs of long-legged Dexter cattle are used and have to be trained to work together to make ploughing possible. An old and a young animal need to be paired. This indicates the importance of stock management and suggests the raising of herds by the prehistoric community rather than single family holding of beast in order to achieve the right balance of appropriately aged animals.

The study of animal bone gives more than an indication of stature; it gives also information on animal use for traction. Arthritis can be recognised indicating stress on certain joints which itself indicates the way in which cattle were driven. Tooth eruption data can age cattle and patterns of slaughtering, and therefore animal husbandry, can be identified. A preponderance of young cattle in death assemblages, for instance, suggests meat production. The same is true with sheep where small bones indicate small, slender animals like Soay sheep, the nearest surviving equivalent breed. Roman and Saxon sheep remains from excavations at Porchester Castle tended to be from old animals, suggesting the importance of wool production. At Balksbury, an Iron Age site, the sheep were killed young, indicating meat production. Animal farming therefore can be seen to change with time.

At Fyfield Down there is the best preserved prehistoric field systems. The fields are defined by lynchets, soil built up by movement during the cultivation process. The excavation of the lynchets demonstrates that household refuse was thrown out as fertiliser and can be seen to be stratified from the neolithic to the medieval period! Snails from the sequence indicate

environmental conditions. Seaweed-associated molluscs in another example demonstrate an alternative source of fertiliser.

The evidence of pollen and plant remains is also valuable. Normally seeds will not survive unless charred. In Oxfordshire three species of wheat - bread, emmer and spelt - have been found as charred grains in Iron Age contexts. It can be shown that a wide variety of cereals were grown in prehistory as an insurance against crop failure. Emmer wheat is the longest-standing food resource throughout agricultural history, having double the protein of bread wheat. Emmer and spelt can still be found in certain parts of Europe grown as a crop today but bread wheat has largely ousted the other forms because they are not suited to modern farming methods, particularly harvesting techniques. Field weeds also tell a story. Up to 60 species of weeds grew in an Iron Age wheatfield, and they can be used as indicators of an area's ecology. Weeds are precise monitors of soil type and condition. Stinking mayweed is typical of heavy clay soil cultivation and becomes more common in assemblages of the Roman period after its first recognition on Iron Age sites -- a further indicator of the utilization of clay soils for arable farming beginning in the Iron Age. The growing improvement in techniques of information retrieval of this type has opened up to us a better appreciation of the prehistoric farmer and his life.

15th February - The Wharram Percy Research Project.
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John Hurst.
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Wharram-le-Street lies at the head of the Great Wold Valley in the north-west corner of the Wolds, half-way between York and Scarborough. The settlement at Wharram took advantage of the valley and its stream and the chalk plateau above it. The church lies on the terrace. The area

was settled from the prehistoric period; Barrows occur on the ridgeway, and Duggleby Howe, a neolithic monument with a ditch 350m. in diameter encircling a central mound, lies only one mile from the village site and indicates the focus of a substantial neolithic occupation. Three linear earthworks meet where the medieval village traces concentrate, and there is five metres of deposit on the terrace from the prehistoric period to the present day. North of the church a Late Bronze Age house has been found and an Iron Age crouched burial in the north-west corner of the church yard was respected by medieval period graves, isolated with a six foot space all round. The landscape was fully developed in the late Iron Age and Romano-British periods with pasture and arable, and the earliest occupation which survives as a flint scatter has been identified at the source of the Gypsey Race.

Geophysical surveys show a palimpsest of features of Bronze Age, Iron Age and, predominantly, Roman date. The focus is a villa within an enclosure, but a second is anticipated at the northern Manor House because of the presence of reused masonry there. (Two Manor Houses existed at Wharram Percy in the medieval period.) Another certain villa is known at Wharram Grange and so there is the possibility of three villas within a mile of one another. The Langton villa is also only $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant, and a connection with Malton seems likely. The close spacing of farming settlements is also demonstrated in the Thixendale/Fimber valley where Iron Age settlements occur at $\frac{1}{2}$ mile intervals. In the Wharram Percy valley Romano British farms occur at 150m. intervals and probably owe their concentration to the set of seven springs here.

An 8th century AD grubenhaus has been found in the area of the north Manor House, and in Area 10 (the villa site) middle Saxon period settlement is represented by an enclosure con-

taining a building. This seems to be an iron-smithing site and produced on excavation 1000 sherds of middle Saxon pottery, probably as many as from the whole of the north of England put together! Fieldwalking has demonstrated the scattered nature of Anglo-Saxon settlement.

In the 12th century the manorial enclosure lay at the north end of an eastern and western row of tofts 60ft. wide. The pattern on the eastern side was broken up following depopulation in the 14th/15th centuries. The original layout has only recently been recognised as taking this form, but it remains to discover how the plot divisions first came about.

The ridge and furrow field system has been surveyed, although it is now under modern agriculture. Manure heaps were identified close to the village where refuse was also disposed of; in the village itself rubbish pits are virtually absent, only two having been found in 30 years digging! The strip pattern is unlike the cross patchwork of the midlands. At Towthorpe and Southburn the strips are set out in long lines running in the same direction. The shape of the parish of Buckrose also suggests a north/south layout of ridge and furrow. This landscape change probably came about in the 10th century when an influx of population would have allowed the exploitation of the area. Place names are also Scandinavian in origin, suggesting a re-organisation at this time. Waterlogged deposits at the mill dam produced environmental evidence indicating coppicing and mixed farming in the late Saxon period.

The excavation of the church has shown that a timber structure was replaced in sandstone on heavy limestone footings. Graves on the south side gave radiocarbon dates of 10th/11th century. An 8th century cross shaft fragment of sandstone from the North York Moors was found in a ditch on the western edge of the plateau, and reburials nearby with radiocarbon dates of 10th to 12th centuries suggest the possibility of a second

church; this problem is yet to be resolved. In the early 12th century a Norman church was built and this developed with added aisles and chapels to north and south. The church was demolished after the desertion in the 1500s. Three late Saxon burials of lords, either the Percies or the Chamberlains, were found with grave slabs and head and foot stones. Of the peasant burials from the late Saxon period to the present day, 1000 skeletons have been excavated providing data for comparison with urban assemblages, such as from York, on physical characteristics, nutrition, disease, etc. The continuity of boundaries between the mill and the ecclesiastical enclosures was noted.

The Norman Manor House had an undercroft cut 10ft. into the chalk and a solar block 10ft. x 40ft. Dressings were in sandstone. A storage pit was located nearby. A second Manor House to the north has been inferred from a survey of the documents made by Jean le Patourel, but this has not been tested by excavation. In the late 14th century the Percy family bought out the Chamberlains, demolished the Manor House and used the area as a quarry.

The peasant houses were built of chalk and were kept scrupulously clean. House styles varied between small dwellings and long houses, and differing construction techniques were employed. The presence of locks and hinges in the finds assemblages indicate a strong sense of private property. Of the animal bone retrieved a high proportion, 10%, was of horse and this may suggest the use of horse for ploughing or indicate a tradition of horse breeding. In the early medieval period pottery from Staxton, York and Scarborough, distributed probably through the market at Malton predominates. In the later medieval period Humber wares take over and continental imported wares appear.

10 years of excavation have been completed on the mill pond area, and the dam has now been reconstructed. The 18th century vicarage

has been examined where two flagged floors and brick supports for deal floors of a third room accord with documentary evidence.

Today the village is depopulated and the present farm lies on the upland -- a return to the original prehistoric beginnings. The site covers 40 acres, only 5% of which has been excavated in the 30 years of the project. Its many complexities are being examined by 100 specialists. Wharram Percy is a guardianship site now and appropriate sections of the village are being consolidated for permanent display. The site is open for the public to visit.

The Medieval Village Research Group The admirable work at Wharram prompts the following advertisement of the work of the Medieval Village Research Group (M.V.R.G.) which ERAS members may be interested in and wish to support.

The Group was founded in 1952 with the object of coordinating work on deserted medieval villages (D.M.V.) by archaeologists, architects, geographers, historians, and others.. It was then called the Deserted Medieval Village Research Group, but the word deserted was dropped in 1971 to emphasise the Group's interest in all aspects of medieval rural settlement.

In 1954 Professor M.W. Beresford published his book The Lost Villages of England in which he identified 1,353 D.M.V. By the late 1960s a further 900 sites had been discovered and a complete national list of D.M.V., together with a series of essays on the work done in each part of Britain was published in 1971 as Deserted Medieval Villages, edited by Maurice Beresford and John Hurst (Lutterworth Press, £9.50).

The Group produces a report each year outlining progress in Britain and on the continent, and detailed gazetteers for Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire have been published. Provisional lists of D.M.V. in typescript form for all

English counties are available from the Assistant Secretary (address at end) on receipt of a self-addressed, stamped, foolscap envelope.

Volunteer assistance to the group is encouraged. Visits may be made to the sites identified by fieldwork, documentary sources and aerial photographs. The Group has a large collection of vertical air photos taken by the R.A.F. in the 1940s, and more recent oblique air photos purchased from the Cambridge University Collection. In some years the remains of over twenty D.M.V. sites have been obliterated by ploughing, building, quarrying, roadwork, etc., and so sites need frequent visiting. Even if a proper measured survey cannot be attempted, a sketch survey will prove useful. A detailed questionnaire form is available for making site reports. The surrounding fields should be searched as well as the site itself, and once a member is familiar with the characteristic earthworks he or she may well discover new sites. There are many to be located either because no documentary evidence has been found of their existence or because the earthworks may be slight or covered by gardens or woodland.

In a few selected cases a site may be excavated if expert supervision is available. Past experience teaches that small-scale excavation is profitless. Each July since 1952 the Group has excavated part of the extensive D.M.V. site of Wharram Percy (for summary, see pp.11-15 above. ed.) Any member wishing to take part in this excavation should write to Professor Beresford, School of Economic Studies, The University, Leeds, LS2 9JT. The results of the research at Wharram Percy are being published in a series of monographs by the Society for Medieval Archaeology; the first volume "Wharram: a study of settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds", Vol. I, 1979, deals with two tofts, Areas 10 and 6, and is available, price £7 including postage, from Mrs. A.F. Morley, 6 Church Grove, Little Chalfont, Amersham, Bucks.,

HP6 6SH. For a recent summary of progress at Wharram, see M.W. Beresford and J.G. Hurst "Wharram Percy: a case study in microtopography", in: English Medieval Settlement, edited by P.H. Sawyer (Arnold, London) 1979, 52-85. A popular survey of lost villages of all periods in the British Isles is Lost Villages of Britain by R. Muir (Michael Joseph, London) 1982; and a useful short introduction to D.M.V. is Deserted Villages by T. Rowley and J. Wood (Shire Archaeology, Aylesbury) 1982.

Membership of the Medieval Village Research Group is £3 per annum. Application forms are to be had from the Assistant Secretary, Mrs. M.E. Ewins, 51 The Avenue, Kew Gardens, Richmond, Surrey.

ERAS Annual General Meeting The A.G.M. is on 18th April. Our Hon. Secretary, Peter Wilkinson, sadly will not be standing for reelection owing to increasing professional commitments. The loss of Peter's services is a serious blow to the Society, but one which has to be faced and a situation to be resolved to ensure that the Society's work continues. A number of vacancies on Committee present themselves too, and so this year will inevitably see a substantial change in the composition of the Society's executive body.

Nominations for office are required in writing no later than 10th April; nominations for Committee can be made from the floor at the A.G.M. itself. It would, however, be helpful if nominations (duly proposed and seconded, please) could be made in advance in case ballot papers need to be prepared.

The business meeting will be followed by a lecture given by Harvey Sheldon on excavations in Roman London.