

Get well soon! Bad news is not something to dwell on when it is accompanied by good. I am happy to be able to report therefore that our Chairman, Keith Simcock, is making an excellent recovery following a heart attack in November. We send him all good wishes for a speedy return to full health and hope to have him back in our company in the New Year.

Gold cuts after Christmas The first grant-aided field operations to be undertaken by the Field Archaeology Unit of the County Architects Department will soon be taking place -- and this in spite of it being traditionally the closed season for archaeological excavation. The explanation of the timing is too tortuous to recount, but suffice it to say that the reasons lie in the fluctuations of cash availability during difficult times.

Ben Whitwell is leading a team to work on the Bishop of Durham's manor house at Howden. A measured survey of the building coupled with selective excavation will be stitched into the refurbishing programme on this important medieval building. The work will begin early in January.

Also with a January start, excavations are expected to begin again in Beverley close by the Minster and the Dominican Friary on the site of the former County Council offices in Eastgate. Four and a half acres of land are now cleared for housing development in this area, and there are great hopes for middle Saxon and Viking period finds from the excavation to throw light on the early growth of the town in the shadow of the monastery of John, retired Bishop of York. Peter Armstrong will be directing at Eastgate.

and E.R.A.S. members are invited to participate from Easter onwards; the work will continue into the summer.

Back from the grave Tim Schadla-Hall sends the following report on the notable discovery of a Roman coffin at Bishop Wilton.

As a result of a series of phone calls on November 5th, I was asked to investigate a Roman stone coffin which was found in a field near Bishop Wilton. The following day I was accompanied by E.R.A.S. members Ray Ketch and Peter Wilkinson to look at the coffin which lay in the middle of a ploughed field not far from the village. The lid had been struck by the plough and it was possible to observe in the coffin the remains of what appeared to be an adult male. Although the farmworker had already dug a fair hole round it, it was decided that as the coffin had been exposed it would be wise to see if there were any traces of a pit around the coffin cut into the gravel subsoil. After clearing round the coffin there was in fact no trace of a pit immediately visible, and at this stage we must assume that any pit line has been destroyed by the attentions of the farm labourers.

On the 9th November the party returned to the site to lift the coffin, excavate the skeleton and any other material in the coffin, and remove the base. The lid, which weighed approximately one ton, was lifted with considerable assistance from the farmer and now resides in Hull Museums. The skeleton was drawn and photographed by Phillip Kendall. It was found to be virtually intact, and the coffin although containing a residual deposit of fine silt was at first sight undisturbed. The skeletal material itself, however, seems to have been disturbed at some stage in antiquity, although further investigation will be necessary to prove this. The burial was unaccompanied, and there was not even the

the expected coin in the mouth! The skeleton has been lifted and is now in the process of being cleaned prior to being sent to Mrs. Jean Dawes, our ex-Chairman, who has kindly agreed to provide a report of the interment.

The coffin is approximately 2.30m. in length and 0.75m. wide at the south-west end and 0.65m. at the north-east end. The top of the coffin lid lay some 0.30m. maximum beneath the surface of the plough soil, and it seems likely therefore that there was some accompanying monument with it. It is certainly conceivable that it was visible in the Roman period. The coffin box presented some signs of burning, and tooling marks on it were clearly visible. Preliminary examination of the coffin stone suggests that it comes from the middle Jurassic series and its most likely origin is somewhere north of Malton. It presents the appearance of a relatively coarse unbedded sandstone.

The discovery is particularly significant as it represents the first recorded Roman coffin find in the East Riding. Thanks to the generosity of the owner, Mr. Richard Flint, the coffin will go on display in Hull Museums sometime in 1985.

R.T.S-H.

Reinforcements As the last piece demonstrates, traditionally the links between Hull Museums and E.R.A.S. are close, rightly so, and over the years they have proved stronger at times than at others. The appointment of a new Keeper of Archaeology, who will be arriving on the scene early in the New Year, is therefore of more than passing interest to members, and Mr. David Crowther has responded to an invitation to introduce himself through the columns of ERAS News. A graduate of the University of London Institute of Archaeology, David Crowther has worked for five years in Cambridgeshire as a field archaeologist investigating prehistoric

and Roman material in the Welland Valley and Fenland. He has also worked on sites of mesolithic to medieval date.

So much for the thumbnail sketch, now for the body painting!

"I had better admit at the start that I'm no 'Yorkshire Tyke' (as I heard someone say on the radio the other day; where do these expressions come from?) I am not even a 'Lincolnshire Yellow Belly', nor yet could I even call myself a 'Fen Tiger'. I suppose I can comfort myself with the thought that at first I was just as much an outsider here around Peterborough as I shall be in Hull. Just how much of an outsider, you can judge for yourselves: previous field experience in Yorkshire - age 6, summer holiday at Scarborough (lovely hotel by the way), and my first introduction to a bit of east coast bad-weather-for-the-time-of-year; a bitter north-east wind cuts like a knife and sandcastles get forgotten ("It's Eastbourne next year, my lad." Yes please!) So much for solid, on the ground, local knowledge; I have got a lot to learn.

However, any archaeologist like me who has studied the subject at university and since found himself actively involved in the direction and publication of prehistoric field studies, has a picture of Yorkshire in his mind. Like Wessex, Yorkshire has a habit of taking over the text books; as Andrew Selkirk wrote some years ago, "Yorkshire is always different!" It has witnessed some of the greatest pioneering fieldwork from which archaeology as a discipline was able to develop at all. Today the area provides raw material of a characteristically distinctive quality, and often provides the data for radical new research. Of course, the Yorkshire heritage is not just prehistoric; the richness and diversity of the archaeological record in East Yorkshire alone spans millennia, and offers opportunities barely equalled elsewhere for the study of our past. As members of E.R.A.S., an

outsider like me would say you were privileged to be living in the midst of such an extraordinary resource.

The Wolds, of course, are well known and have long enjoyed their fair share of the archaeological limelight, and with good reason. One wonders whether Holderness can offer new insights into those prehistoric communities that left their mark on the modern upland landscape; Holderness would seem to bear comparison with parts of Fenland (for example, Varley 1968, and Pryor 1983, perhaps?) Here in Fenland, our archaeological record is often buried beneath a protective blanket of peat or silt. Whilst this causes some pretty awful headaches for the archaeologist trying to work in such a difficult area, the rewards can be truly remarkable. Thousands of years of waterlogging and burial far away from the dangers of the plough and building development alike have given us an "intact" prehistoric landscape that spans four counties. Modern farming and drainage means the protective peat blanket is quite literally shrinking, so as well as looking for new sites or areas worthy of detailed study, one must try to monitor the rate at which key areas are decaying. As "threats" go, this one is particularly horrific because the stakes are so high. The evidence likely to be lost reads like an archaeologist's dream (or nightmare): pollen, seeds, insects, molluscs, food residues, wooden structures, wooden artifacts, woodworking waste, textiles and other organic remains, artifact and animal bone microwear, micromorphological and geochemical evidence from buried soils, a myriad of pockets of human activity - a scatter of material debris or a few shallow features perhaps - which lie between "sites" in the conventional sense ... The list goes on and on, but is only as great as the archaeologist's willingness to ask new questions, or his readiness to recognise the unexpected.

So much for the wetlands. Any archaeologist, "wet" or "dry", has at the back of his mind a

wish to quantify or measure a given archaeological resource and the threat posed to it, so that hopefully his response will be the appropriate one. The name of the game is cost-effective conservation - not mindless preservation, excavation or whatever. The archaeologist cannot be everywhere at once so has to make choices depending on the circumstances of the situation: preserve it; dig it; survey it; or forget it. The Americans (typically enough!) have a snappy phrase for it - Cultural Resource Management. However, a lot of the bite goes out of the management of the resource if no one - save a stout few like yourselves - regard it as worth cherishing. Goodness knows, money is scarce enough these days, and who needs archaeology? Public apathy is the real threat to the heritage, and makes a farmer's pan-buster seem like a lollipop stick by comparison.

And so (at last!) we get to the reason why I view the prospect of working at Hull with real excitement: I happen to believe that that threat can best be tackled in a good provincial museum, given dedicated and motivated staff - the Museum of Transport and Archaeology at Hull, for example? As you know (better than me, I hope!) Hull's collections are quite superb. Used wisely, they may help to bridge that yawning gap between Archaeology and The General Public. We have so much to offer, I am quite sure we'll "deliver the goods", given a bit of money, a lot of work, and a liberal dose of common sense. I cannot pretend to have the answers as to how best to give the citizens of Hull and its surroundings the kind of service they deserve. I am an archaeologist by training, a field archaeologist by experience; I have not worked in a museum before, though for me collections management and exhibitions work, cataloguing and communication, are pretty familiar territory.

Many problems and experiences will be quite new to me, and doubtless I shall make some

splendid howlers in the coming months, so be warned! The challenge is really to make those collections work for archaeologist and public alike. A museum is a "centre of learning" at many different levels, whether for academic research or for the Reithian principles of providing a service of information, education and entertainment. Under the circumstances, I suppose it is only reasonable that one of the quickest learners is going to be the Keeper!"

David Crowther

Refs:

Pryor, F.M.M. 1983 "Down the drain; or how we discovered a Bronze Age "Crannog" at Flag Fen" Current Archaeology, 87, 102-6.

Varley, W.J. 1968 "Barmston and the Holderness Crannogs" East Riding Archaeologist, 1, 12

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Lecture summaries

21st September - Reports Meeting
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Peter Halkon reported on the progress of research into the Romano-British pottery production centres around the River Foulness. The first of four seasons of excavation -- a collaboration between E.R.A.S. and Durham University's Department of Archaeology -- was at Bursea House, and revealed pottery kilns and a complex of ditches.

Dr. Ben Whitwell described the excavation of part of an Anglian cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber, where forty burials of the 6th to 7th centuries AD had been examined. Grave goods included a Frankish pottery vessel, a rock crystal bead, beaded gold wire, and a garnet.

John Dent summarised the results of excavation

in advance of quarrying at Brantingham Cockle Pits, the site of a Romano-British villa. Society members helped to expose a building of the early 3rd century AD, which had opposing curved ends. An underlying Iron Age ditch system was dated by Belgic wheel-thrown pottery in the fill. 4th century AD buildings were characterised by stone footings bonded in clay.

Peter Armstrong outlined the results of excavations at the Dominican Friary, Beverley, where the west end of the church had been examined to reveal two phases of building. The position of the western precinct boundary was also established. Mr. Armstrong also described the Society's survey and excavation of the medieval moated site at Arnold. An earlier phase of occupation, either of Saxon or of Iron Age date*, was identified in the form of ditches beneath the platform of the moated enclosure.
(* Stop Press: Iron Age!)

19th October - The Archaeology of Modern Death.
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Professor Philip Rahtz
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Latecomers to Professor Rahtz's lecture would be forgiven for thinking that they had stumbled unwittingly upon the opening address of a W.E.A. refresher course for jaded undertakers. The approach, however had its point: In an archaeological context, death may only be studied through the residues of ritual. Ethno-archaeology on the other hand offers insights into ritual through the study of human behaviour in relation to a material culture. The study of modern death, therefore, can demonstrate the diversity of attitudes and responses which lie behind the funerary practices of Britain, Europe and America and which leave little or no trace in the long term. Professor Rahtz offered a number of acute observations on the subject, drawing upon the experience of his own travels, and encouraged his audience to consider aspects of

the subject for themselves.

In spite of preparedness, death still comes to a household as a shock and trauma. Death-bed scenes are common in art and literature, and the gathering of relatives goes some way to provide an alleviation of grief. In English society today cremation is an accelerating practice and may ultimately replace inhumation totally. Why should this be? It is certainly not a matter of economics or religion. Is it an aesthetic choice, or a practical one?

The form of memorial to the dead was considered, and the copying in durable materials of perishable memorials was noted. Death leads to a redistribution of wealth, and memorial celebrations are used to keep the memory fresh. The undertaker is a respectable figure in society, but the excesses in mourning display which characterised the Victorian era have produced a reaction toward simplicity. The ephemeral nature of these former excesses was stressed. Pomp is not restricted to leading figures in society, as funerals in Sicily demonstrate.

There are archaeological implications for some practices at grave sites. Graves may be marked by both head and foot stones, and pottery vessels placed to hold flowers can become broken and incorporated ultimately into the grave fill. So too may artificial covering materials, like synthetic chippings or the cheaper alternative, broken glass. Painted sea shells are placed on top of graves in Iona, and with time these too will settle into the grave filling to puzzle archaeologists in the future. Perishable items abound in association with graves. Flowers are an obvious example. French graves are often elaborate in this respect; a lock of hair will often be found. In Yugoslavia the place of death may be identified by a memorial, such as those erected by the side of motorways at the site of fatal accidents -- a salutary reminder for passing motorists! In Hungary elaborate wooden markers

are carved with symbols denoting the sex of the buried person. Grave stones may be simple or bear life-like representations of the deceased or even of a prized possession.

The difference in attitude to the dead in different parts of Europe was noted, and the example of the Capucin catacombs was cited where mummified corpses are displayed. Professor Rahtz finished in the United States where in the space of a lifetime some cemeteries have become places of recreation and are developed as heritage trails.

16th November - The Neolithic Funerary Monument
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at Street House, Cleveland. Blaise Vyner
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Cleveland, a county occupying the lower Tees valley, has a variety of landscape with limestone uplands and a drift geology of boulder clays and gravels. The northern fringe of the North York Moors falls within the county. A survey of Bronze Age burial mounds demonstrates the concentration on the poor quality soils, whilst Bronze Age settlement centres on the lighter soils in the southern part of the county. The Street House barrow site, a conflation of long barrow and round barrow, lies above the 500ft. contour on top of the highest cliffs in England.

The Bronze Age round barrow, which was grafted onto the neolithic monument, survived only partially and was found to have a clay core mound with a stone kerb set out as a series of straight lines buttressed at the change of angle. The mound produced three collared urns. Conical buttons of jet with V-perforations were also recovered.

The neolithic mortuary deposit survived as a slot filled with burnt stone, bone and charcoal fired to a high temperature. A semi-articulated skeleton was present. Burnt timbers lay at the base of the slot. Post holes with carbonised timbers cut into the slot show its structural nature and can be compared with 19th century

antiquarian descriptions of other examples less well recorded. The slot terminated at the facade trench of the monument which faced east. Large post holes lay within the two arms of the trench with smaller ones in the middle. Clear evidence of destruction by fire was provided by charcoal and the red-burnt edges of several of the post holes. The pattern of fire destruction indicates the use of brushwood and a prevailing north-easterly wind! Other posts were set out in the forecourt. At the opposite end of the mortuary structure was a curved enclosure of stone with paving in two parts. The monument could be seen to have been constructed in segments comprising three elements -- an enclosure for the exposure of the dead, a mortuary house into which the remains were ultimately placed, with a facade of timber approached from a forecourt.

The deliberate firing of the structure is dated by radiocarbon to 2770bc. The monument was subsequently extended at its western end with stone to create a trapezoidal cairn 25m. long with a flat front and one long side slightly concave. A minimum of nine individuals were identified from the bone. This taken together with the evidence of the condition of the structure inferred from its burnt remains suggests a short span of perhaps only twenty years for the mortuary house before its translation into a cairn. A radiocarbon date of c. 1200bc indicates the wide space of time between the two funerary monuments.

South Bank Letter The advantage of being a museum archaeologist is that one is spared the horrors of winter digging. While my less fortunate field archaeologist brethren are lopping off the odd frost-bitten digit, I can sit in my warm office thinking how lovely the snow looks! This last year, however, things seem to have gone a little wrong. February was spent digging at West Halton in conditions which would make Siberia

seem like the Riviera, and now in November I find myself digging in the Templar's Bath field at Bottesford.

The "Templar's Bath" was believed to be a "dipping well" used by the Knights Templar who, it was thought, had a preceptory at Bottesford. The local press, as ever laws unto themselves, could not be prevented from always referring to it as a "Roman ruin".

When recently planning permission was granted for the field to be developed there was some local consternation, but not nearly so much as when Keith Miller of the County Architects Field Archaeology Unit not only found out who built the bath but came up with his photograph!! A public meeting was called, which Mr. Miller took the wise precaution of not attending! At the meeting I pointed out that there was in fact never a preceptory at Bottesford, but that the field in which the bath lay did contain some interesting earthworks. A committee was formed to carry out an excavation on these, with David Williams, of Barton Museum, and myself acting as advisors.

When the earth was taken off our selected areas we found destruction layers datable by clay pipe finds to the early 17th century. When this layer was removed we found more rubble and yet more rubble. Eventually we decided to cut a trench across one side of the site to try to find out what was going on. At a depth of 0.80m. we found the remains of massive stone walls. Nowhere on the site did we find anything that could be dated earlier than 1500 and, in spite of the "medieval" earthworks in the field, we got not a scrap of medieval pottery.

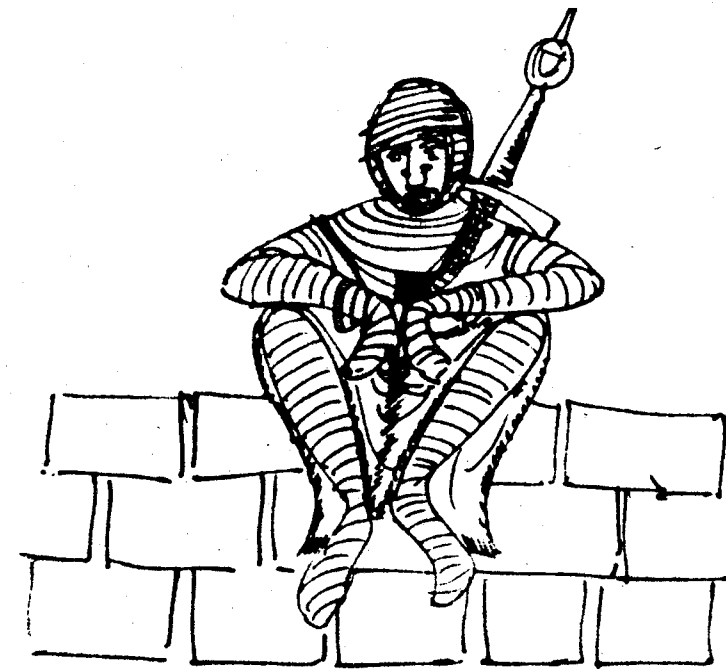
So what is the answer? We think that we have located a range of buildings which were erected immediately after the Dissolution when Bottesford passed into secular hands and when there may have been a move from an absentee to a resident landlord. Perhaps the documentary search now

underway will tell us more about what we have found!

Kevin Leahy

1984 Excursion Thinking ahead to the longer, warmer days yet to come, the Committee would be very pleased to receive any suggestions that members may have for the summer excursion. If you can make any recommendations for places to go, or are perhaps nursing a long felt want to visit a particular site of archaeological interest, then we would be very pleased to have your comments or requests. It would be most helpful if suggestions are routed through Peter Cottingham, 9 Kirkway, Kirkella (0482-656516).

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A Knight on the tiles!

Annual Dinner All the details of the yearly feast are enclosed, and another extra-special event it looks too. One or two dates have gone awry in this year's published programme, including the dinner. So please note that the date is 24th February 1984, not the 3rd as advertised on your membership cards. At £6.25 per head, a great value-for-money evening is in store for "The Pye Divided", a sample of 17th century fare authentically recreated. (The cheese should be nicely matured anyway!). Peter Brears, Director of Leeds City Museum and formerly Curator of the Castle Museum in York, is our guest. The annual dinner is an event rapidly becoming a special occasion in the Society's year, and so we look forward to seeing you all there at Staff House for another "original".

Archaeology on holiday The Peak National Park Study Centre at Losehill Hall near Castleton in Derbyshire has several residential courses in 1984 which will almost certainly appeal to E.R.A.S. members. Three in particular are worth bringing to your attention: Practical Field Archaeology in the Peak District is a weekend course (£47 all in), April 13th-15th, involving practical field surveys, site visits, and work on material collected from fieldwalking. Villages and Churches - a walking holiday (£118 + VAT), 28th July-4th August, involves walks up to nine miles to enjoy the sacred and secular architecture of the Peak District, as well as all the scenic attractions of Dovedale, the Derwent Valley and the limestone plateau. The Archaeology of the Peak District (also £118 + VAT), 4th-11th August, also involves walking to visit some of the best relict landscape in the area, with tuition on hand in reading its history. Sites to be visited include Peveril Castle, Mam Tor Bronze Age Hillfort, Brough on Noe Roman fort, Arbor Low Neolithic Henge, and many others.

The courses/holidays are very attractively priced, since full board - even to the extent of packed lunches! - is included. So provided you haven't already booked a flight to the Costa Plenty, why not enjoy Losehill (in its 27 acres of parkland, it says here!). For booking forms and of course further details of all that is available in 1984 write to: Peter Townsend, Principal, Losehill Hall, Castleton, Derbyshire, S30 2WB, (tel. 0433 20373).

I tell you this in the true spirit of education and greater fulfilment; I'm not getting any commission - honestly!!

And finally A very happy New Year to all our readers.