

# ERAS News

EAST RIDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,

No. 102 SEPT. 2024



*Peter Halkon guiding members around Scarborough Iron Age cemetery site on a Field Studies visit. Photo: M. Walker*

*Petuaria Revisited ~ Bone puzzle ~ Pocklington District Heritage Trust ~ Dave Haldenby on Metal Detecting Work ~ York Iron Age Conference ~ Obituary, Alan Williamson ~ Field Studies Group ~ Excavations at Skipsea ~ Flamborough Visit ~ Lecture Programme*

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## **ERAS LOCAL NEWS . . .**

### ***Heritage Open Days in the East Riding***

Beverley Civic Society is running this year's Heritage Open Day events in conjunction with East Riding of Yorkshire Council between 6<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> September. Events will take place at Beverley Beck, the Friary, Bishop Burton walled garden, Norwood House, Queensgate and Kitchen lane allotments, Beverley St. Martins cemetery, Butt Farm WWII Battery, No. 2 Highgate, Beverley Minster secret garden, Barges on the Beck, East Riding Theatre and many more places. You can access further details online.

### ***Skiff Lane Roman Pottery***

Apologies if my article in the previous newsletter on the complexities of dealing with the vast amounts of pottery recovered from the Roman kiln site at Skiff Lane near Holme on Spalding moor was not clear. It seems that one or two people misunderstood what I was saying. I was not suggesting the project should be shut down and was most dismayed that anyone would even think that. I was trying to show the sort of things we have to juggle with at committee meetings and the sort of decisions which have to be made in dealing with long, ongoing research projects, as many Archaeological Societies similarly do. Here's hoping the project can be successfully completed.

### ***Committee***

We are so lucky to have a strong committee with everyone working away individually at whatever it is they are good at. It is quite a large committee nowadays, so a full meeting can be a bit unwieldy but we do not need to meet very often. There is the editing and publication, the finances, the membership list maintenance, the bookselling, the answering of enquiries, the programme planning, the record keeping, the curating of our archives, the Field Studies organising, the chairing, the publicity and social media stuff. Such a lot to do ! Some jobs require flexibility and good 'people skills' whilst other positions can be worked on quietly in the background, but what we do need is a few more people to be learning the ropes and perhaps even telling us how things could be done better (we would not mind being told!). It is important to encourage a young and fresh outlook in the society so next year, please think about volunteering to help keep us on the right lines.

### ***Next volume of East Riding Archaeologist***

Our Honorary Editor, Matthew Reeves says that the next major ERAS Volume of East Riding Archaeologist is already at the printers and he is

hoping it will be ready to distribute at the September lecture meeting, but he can't promise!

### ***Indexing of Newsletters***

Many years ago, Helen Fenwick of Hull University (and a former chair of ERAS) slogged her way through the old ERAS newsletters - Issues no.1-49 and produced an index which is still, even in this digital age, a useful tool for accessing information. It would be very useful if someone would volunteer to index Newsletters 50 - 100. It needs someone with a methodical mindset and a certain amount of archaeological knowledge, but I am sure there are lots of people in ERAS who could beaver away at this little task! Any takers?

### ***Alan Williamson***

I was very sorry to hear about the recent death of long-term ERAS member Alan Williamson, aged 91. His funeral will take place on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> August at 11 am at Toll Gavel Church, Beverley. In response to my request for further information, I am most grateful to Alan's old friend, Dave Evans, who hurriedly put together the obituary on page 7. We send our sincere sympathy to Alan's family.



*Beautifully decorated piece of Samian pottery from this year's Petuaria Revisited excavations at Brough – see report on next page.*  
*Photo: P. Halkon*

### ***Antiquarian and History Book Fair at Hull Minster. Saturday 14 September***

ERAS will be having its usual stall at this event, so please come and support it, either by buying books or helping to sell. Its usually quite a jolly affair especially now that the old 'Holy Trinity' has been so beautifully refurbished into the magical space that is Hull Minster. There are usually lots of interesting stalls by various local organizations that have any connection at all to history and heritage.

*Editor*

## ***Rough Haven***

*Here, where they say the Romans crossed  
The river is raw, a mangy dog  
Chewing at its flank; great gobs of grass  
And mud, slewing and shouldered  
Field by sly field, off the north bank.*

*All that is left for the beleaguered sheep  
And lambs, is one thin strip, between  
A dousing and the trains.  
This farmer's loss will be another's gain  
As mud flats shift and shift again.*

*Carol Coiffait*

*(Reproduced by kind permission of the author.  
Copyright remains with the author.)*

I love this little poem by Carol Coiffait and whenever travelling by train, past that distinctive strip of riverside at Brough, I always think of the poem and of the Roman occupation. Geophysical work, using ground penetrating radar, magnetometry and resistivity has been carried out this year, on the area close to this spot, where it is thought that part of the old Roman harbour wall might still remain, beneath the gardens of houses on Cave Road. We look forward to seeing results at some point in the future, although the ERAS resistance meter is needing to be sent in for repair, shortly. Meanwhile, Peter and James have very promptly put together the following summary, for the newsletter, of this year's 'Petuaria Revisited' excavation – another site close to Brough Haven. Peter will be out of action for a while due to his imminent and much delayed knee surgery and we wish him well.



## ***Petuaria Revisited - Excavation & Geophysical Survey at Brough in 2024***

***Peter Halkon and James Lyall (Directors)***

The fifth season of excavation jointly run by the Elloughton cum Brough PFA and ERAS began on the 20<sup>th</sup> July continuing every day until 11<sup>th</sup> August. Unlike the 2023 season, when a marquee had to be hired to enable digging to continue due to heavy continuous rain, this time the weather was fine. The aim of the excavation was to continue to investigate the northeast corner of the Roman defences on the Burrs playing field. The section of wall and D shaped bastion uncovered in 2023 was left alone as we wanted to concentrate on getting a better idea of the construction of the rampart first excavated by Philip Corder in the 1930's. Four new areas were opened within the trench, leaving balks between them to allow the sections to be observed and recorded. The topsoil was removed by machine. Until 1971/2, the playing field had been arable farmland, and the top of the rampart was immediately visible below the plough soil once the latter had been removed. One disadvantage of the hot weather was its effect on the clay layers of the rampart as it was baked solid and took longer than expected to dig through with mattocks and shovels – it was hard work! The laminated layers of clay and other material were clearly apparent in the section and the original spadeful's of clay and possibly turf could be seen in plan, although there was no obvious coherence, and the impression was that the rampart had been constructed quickly. Under this was a layer of irregular blocks of limestone, derived from the local Cave Oolite quarries, forming a solid foundation or consolidation layer for the rampart above.

Finds were relatively few, but included oyster shells, animal bone and small pottery sherds. The pottery within and above the clay rampart consisted of local greywares, Nene Valley colour coated wares dating from the third century AD and small sherds of samian, which were almost certainly residual. At regular intervals, deposits and spoil were metal detected and sieved when it was deemed appropriate. Finds included a coin, pictured left, of the Gallic Emperor Victorinus (AD269-271) the obverse of which was in good condition and showed the curly bearded head of the emperor with a radiate crown.

Below the stone base was what Corder had labelled the sand rampart. This too was laminated with layers of sand and clay and contained many more



*The stone base of the clay rampart. Photo: Halkon/Lyall*

finds than the rampart above. There was a relatively high proportion of samian, both plain and decorated with two stamped bases. Coarse wares included oxidized Ebor wares, Black Burnished ware and sherds of a rusticated vessel generally dated to between AD70 and 120. Finds from this deposit were a circular copper alloy plate brooch, a fragment of blue glass bangle with a white trail, a die and a copper alloy nail cleaner, which would have formed a set with a pair of tweezers and ear scoop. What was probably the base of the sand rampart was only reached on the last day in a small area.

In the 2022/2023 seasons, trenches were opened in gardens immediately to the east of the Burrs. In one of the gardens on Wrygarth Avenue the owner had some years previously found what he thought was the surface of the Roman road leading into the east gate of the walled enclosure on the Burrs Playing Field. The 2023 excavation uncovered an upper surface of larger stones with a camber which was thought to be part of the road. The aim this year was to try to find the road surfaces in the neighbouring garden to the south. Under a thick layer of topsoil was a sandy deposit which contained several sherds of medieval Humberware pottery, including a bung hole from a cistern. This deposit had been cut by a field drain. Below the sandy layer was a random cluster of crude limestone blocks. At the western end under a layer of larger stones was a surface which resembled the possible road surface excavated in 2023. This had been truncated by an irregular pit. Roman finds

were scarce but included part of a tegula (roof tile) and sherds of greyware. Under the stones at the eastern end of the trench the ground became waterlogged, and beneath the stone layer were substantial pieces of wood. It is not clear at this stage whether they were worked or just natural branches or roots. Although the stone surfaces were on the correct alignment, it is still not clear, given the lack of finds, whether this was the Roman road.

During the current year's excavation the radiocarbon dates awarded by the Community Archaeology Radiocarbon Dating Fund sponsored by Archaeological Research Services came through with some surprises! A piece of field maple from above the Roman road surface found in 2023 was dated to 421 – 572 cal. AD (95.4%) (SUERC-127052). The red deer antler found in what may be the upper surface of a Roman ditch in the northernmost of the two gardens excavated in 2023 was also dated to 420 – 567 cal. AD (95.4%) (SUERC-127053). If these dates are correct, they present an intriguing picture of post Roman Petuaria.

This year's dig was greatly helped by a grant from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, through the East Riding of Yorkshire Council. One of the criteria for the award was community engagement and this target was certainly achieved as 84 wonderful volunteers actively took part in the excavation, with a core team of 21 more experienced diggers, many of them being ERAS members. Participants ranged from primary school age to people in their eighties. It was particularly encouraging to have a keen and able group of school students and undergraduates with us. We held a very successful open day attracting over 300 people and at least a further 300 showed interest in our onsite display and were given tours of the site.

The UKSPF grant has enabled for the first time a permanent display panel which is to be sited just outside the Burrs playing field. The highlight of this is a reconstruction by illustrator Mark Hoyle of the latest Roman phase of the walls showing the rectangular bastion excavated by Corder and the D shaped example discovered in 2023. This was picked up by the popular press and even covered by the Daily Express!

We are very grateful to the Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society and Dulverton Trust for their grant aid, to the whole committee of the Elloughton cum Brough PFA for all their support and special mention must go to the

## ***Petuaria Revisited (continued)***

owners of the respective gardens who supplied regular cups of tea and coffee for those in the garden trench. We were even supplied with cakes by local residents. This was a real team effort, however particular thanks must be given to Lucy Crosbie, Colin Parr, Alison Spencer, and Jennifer Wilson who took on supervisory roles.

A successful application to the Hull Maritime Community Grant Scheme has also enabled geophysical surveys on the larger properties to the west of Cave Road to be conducted. The extensive gardens and paddocks behind these houses back on to the former tidal inlet of the Humber which became Walling Fen and was subsequently drained for farmland. So far, a team led by James Lyall (magnetometry) and Colin Parr (resistivity) have surveyed a considerable area. Most recently we have been given a boost by Richard Gibson who is undertaking GPR (Ground Penetrating Radar) surveys and although the surveys are ongoing, the initial results are very promising.



*Photo showing the drying effect of the hot weather on the clay layers of the rampart, making progress in getting down to the lower levels more difficult.*

*Photo: Valerie Fairhurst*

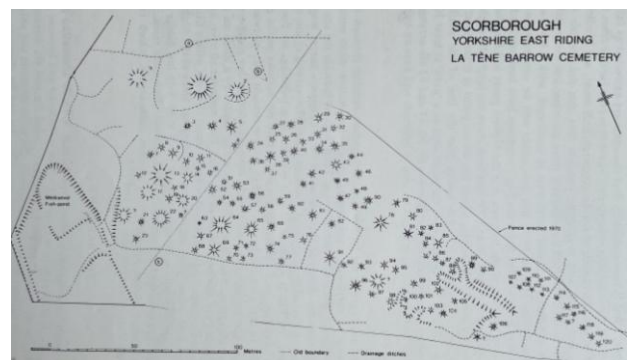
## ***Field Studies Group News*** ***Matthew Walker***

One of the last winter study evenings was a talk and demo, by myself, about photogrammetry and its use in archaeology. We built on knowledge gained on previous evenings when I had talked about GPS and GIS software and the evening was a practical session where members made 3D images of a T.rex skull.

More recently we have had a busy few months making the best of the light summer evenings. Turnout at Field Studies has been great lately, with consistently at least 15 people. Outdoor trips included the tour by Richard Myerscough, looking at the geology of the Flamborough area, which was a major hit (pictures next page). We also had another tour of the Scarborough Iron Age square barrow cemetery, for which Fiona Wilson arranged access and Peter Halkon was the guide. The picture below shows how difficult the features on this little known but important site can be to see, especially when the grass is long.



*Square barrows, Scarborough. Photo: Matthew Walker*



*Plan reproduced from the ERAS's East Riding Archaeologist Vol. 2, 1975, showing the large number of barrows originally recorded. Photo: K. Dennett*

We went to the Brough excavations one evening, with Peter Halkon and Colin Parr staying on late to show us round. Some members miss out on visits to digs as they tend to be during working hours, so this was much appreciated. On another occasion, a walk around the Beverley Town Trail, whose varied and interesting plaques and sculptures you might have noticed, attracted a good turn out and ended up very sociably at the pub.



*Learning about the chalk tower at Flamborough  
courtesy of Richard Myerscough*

*Photo: Matthew Walker*



*Learning about the chalk formations at Selwicks Bay,  
courtesy of Richard Myerscough.*

*Photo: Matthew Walker*

## ***Obituary:***

### ***Alan Williamson***

***By Dave Evans***

A long-term ERAS member, Alan grew up in Lincolnshire, although many of his family were from Beverley. He became interested in archaeology in the 1960s and took part in ERAS's Walkington Wold Barrow excavation (published in Volume 1, part 2, of *East Riding Archaeologist*). Alan was the former Deputy County Planner for the old East Riding of Yorkshire Council, but when Humberside was created, his old department was incorporated into the new County Council and he served as Deputy County Planning Officer there until he retired in the mid 1980s. He was sent as the delegate from the Council to the newly formed HIJAC – the joint committee running archaeology within the County, before the Humberside Archaeological Unit was finally taken into the Council in 1980.

Alan was the person who suggested that what the new County clearly needed was some sort of basic inventory of what archaeological sites existed and whether they might be under threat. He pointed out that planners could hardly be expected to protect such sites, unless they knew exactly where they were and what they represented. It was his intervention which prompted the setting up of the project which produced the well known Loughlin and Miller gazetteer of archaeological sites.

Military archaeology was always a passion of Alan's and he was a major local mover in CBA's Defence of Britain project, undertaking a huge amount of photographic recording. He also produced the standard reference work on the Secret Army in Humberside (a resistance plan in case of invasion). Alan was also instrumental in getting English Heritage to take an interest in Fort Paull and ensuring it was not too badly damaged by the proposals to turn it into a visitor attraction. He worked tirelessly to record WWI and WWII military structures on both sides of the Humber and also recorded the underground structures at the Humberside Police building in Queens Gardens, Hull.

Alan was generous with sharing his information and always tried to ensure that books and other paperwork went to where they would be most valued and used. All in all, we owe him a huge debt of gratitude for his contributions towards safeguarding the heritage of this area.

## *Conference Report*

# *Iron Age Lives: Exploring Social Dynamics in Later Prehistoric Britain and Europe*

*The Hospitium, York Museum Gardens, Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024*

This conference was hosted by the Commios Project (part funded by the European Research Council) and the University of York. I attended with friends Valerie Fairhurst (ERAS) and Belgian researcher Dr. Greta Anthoons, also Dr. Peter Halkon. I was intending to produce a short summary of the most interesting presentations, but I think we all agreed that although the presentations were excellent and showcased the most recent scientific research on Iron Age mobility, kinship and diet, it was a very intense conference experience. I think we all found that without being familiar with the details of each research project, it was quite difficult to pick up the trends and conclusions whilst also trying to follow sites, dates, and complex graphs, which were often on screen for a very short time.

The conference was very well-chaired and organised and it was good to see so many younger people attending. It was an excellent occasion for researchers from across Europe to meet and discuss their work, but, as a non-specialist archaeologist with an interest in the pre-historic period I found it quite difficult to absorb everything, thus I have only been able to produce a ‘bullet point’ list of key points, which interested me. My main impression was - what a privilege to be among such knowledge!

The Keynote Lecture by Prof. David Reich of Harvard University was a fascinating race through the Genomic History of Great Britain, looking at hunter-gatherers and first farmers and ‘ghost populations’ who contributed to the spread of people, but no longer exist. We romped rapidly but expertly through the Neolithic population replacement and the Beaker phenomenon. Prof. Reich - absolutely dedicated to his topic – was keen to stay around afterwards, over a glass or two of wine, and answer questions and learn of any possible local evidence that was new to him. It was a most excellent end to the conference. There is definite value in going to live events like this, as it is much easier to ask a casual question of an expert in the ‘chat time’ afterwards, than it is to do so in an online forum, which can be rather stilted

## *Key Points which interested me*

- Death and disposal was a messy affair in the European Iron Age. There was much curating of bodies and re-opening of storage places. There might have been a relationship between cause of death and method of burial.
- Wetwang Slack, with 391 genomes, is the first site in the Ancient DNA record to have a definite matrilineal bias. We should perhaps not be looking for a related ‘village’ as people seemed to have been brought back from many different places, to be buried there.
- At Wetwang, the size of one’s grave was less important than where you were buried and who you were placed next to. One was more likely to be buried with siblings than with a spouse.
- We still do not understand what constituted a European Iron Age ‘family relationship’ as adoption and fostering may have been common.
- The United Kingdom has the best modern and ancient DNA data. There has been a boom in data and a reduction in costs. Method improvements mean that only one milligram of material (dentine, for example) is now required rather than 10 mgs. The process of extracting DNA from the bone, in the inner ear, now costs 30 times less than it did at first.
- Using bone collagen and sulphur isotopes, as well as strontium isotopes, the movement of people and animals can now be tracked throughout their lifetime, because these materials occur and persist in different ways and rates in different parts of the body.
- There was a rapid rise in lactose persistence and the reason is not fully understood, but it may be that in times of stress the ability to digest milk beyond babyhood may have been useful.

## ***A Little Summer Puzzle*** ***What is this bone?***



Following on from the animal bone feature in the previous newsletter, I thought a little summer bone puzzle might be appropriate. The bone pictured above was found by my teenage grandson Rowan, on a beach in Ireland recently. Now - is that a clue or a red herring? Rowan made a fairly good attempt at guessing what it is – indeed his guess was, I think, closer than my initial conclusion, but after consulting ERAS member and retired vet Claudia Telbis, she quickly had the answer and it seems we were both wrong. Can you (or your children) identify it? The scale is in centimetres and the answer will be in the next newsletter. *Editor*

## ***Hull Historical Association Talks***

Venue – The Nordic Centre, (formerly known as the Danish Church) Osborne St. Hull HU1 2PN  
7.30 pm. £3 Students, free.

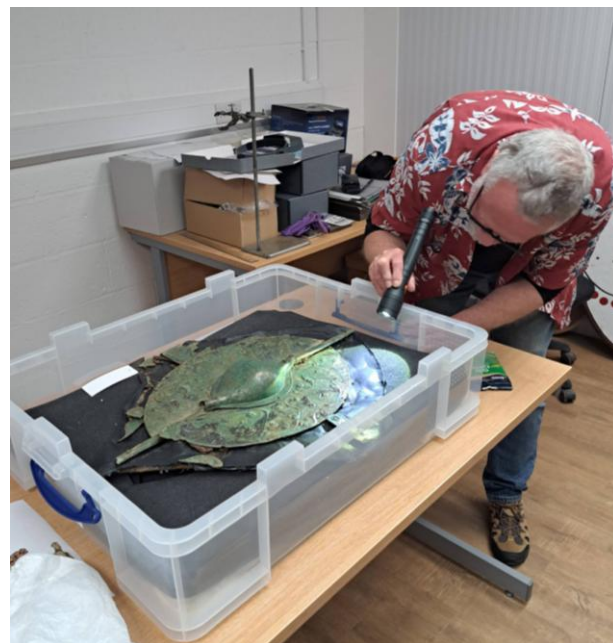
Thursday 10 October - Dr. Alan Deighton  
‘Long Shadows’ A Hull journalist has written the first book to highlight the injustice shown to Ist World War amputees, who were largely ignored.

Thursday 7 November, Dr. Marianne Gilchrist  
A King’s Murder – A King’s Ransom: A 12<sup>th</sup> century adventure (with music). A crusader kingdom disaster which has links with Meaux.

Thursday 27 February - Dr. Helen Fenwick.  
Deserted Medieval Settlements: Re-evaluating lost villages –

Thursday 27 March - Prof. Alexandra Walsham.  
Remembering the Reformation: Recent research on the significance of family traditions which affected the spread of the English Reformation.

## ***Pocklington District Heritage Trust*** ***Update - Phil Gilbank*** ***(Chair, Pocklington District Heritage Trust).***



*Roland Williamson examining the Iron Age Pocklington Shield, prior to making a replica.*

After treading water for so long, Pocklington District Heritage Trust (PDHT) is moving forward again with its plan to create a museum in the town. The pre-development excavations of 2015-2020 at Burnby Lane and The Mile uncovered artefacts of national importance and the housing developers backed community pressure to display the artefacts close to where they were found.

The two excavations lifted upwards of a thousand finds, mainly Iron Age but some Anglo-Saxon, including weapons, jewellery and domestic items, plus two unparalleled chariots. BBC’s Digging for Britain, 2018 described one grave as ‘Iron Age Britain’s most spectacular grave’ and Prof. Melanie Giles, in 2019, described the exceptional repousse decorated shield as ‘the most important British Celtic art object of the Millennium.’ Pocklington district’s rich heritage within a historic landscape has long been recognised – the Council for British Archaeology reporting in 1972 that ‘Pocklington has a great deal of potential in answering some of the questions about the emergence of towns in Britain’.

In addition to the chariot burial and associated grave goods, the Mile dig revealed a rare mid-Anglo-Saxon grubenhaus settlement. The 21<sup>st</sup> century discoveries are set within an already acknowledged hinterland of prehistoric features. Within five miles of Pocklington are the sites of

Hayton's Roman fort and roadside settlement, several Roman villas, Grimthorpe hillfort, numerous Bronze Age barrows, stretches of Iron Age earthworks, plus a couple of recently determined Viking Great Army encampments and the Nunburnholme Cross. Identified finds from earlier eras include fossils, a Palaeolithic hand-axe and Mesolithic microlith and scraper collections. In addition, several village churches have extensive Norman stonework; while Pocklington's All Saints began as an Anglo-Saxon minster, with the place noted as one of Domesday's five Yorkshire towns.

Doing justice to all this, with a self-funded, volunteer-led, community museum is a major challenge. PDHT identified Burnby Hall (the Victorian house, not the adjacent Gardens) as its preferred premises; and after several years of stop-go negotiations this plan is finally coming to fruition. East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC) is handing the building over to Pocklington Town Council, which is planning a transformation into a community hub with the museum at its heart. PDHT has decided to focus on the archaeological heritage from the Palaeolithic to Domesday, with a working title of: 'Chariots, Swords and Shields, The Museum of Invaders and Settlers'.

Refurbishing the building is likely to take another year, and PDHT has the small matter of raising sufficient funding for the museum. A fund-raising campaign will be launched as soon as the Burnby Hall arrangements are formally completed; but in the meantime PDHT is about to unveil a 'transportable museum' exhibition thanks to a UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund grant managed by ERYC.

The project is titled: 'Pocklington's Ancient Heritage - Towards a Permanent Museum'; and PDHT is working with exhibition experts to produce moveable display cases containing ancient artefacts and information boards covering five themes of 'Tools and Weapons', 'Dress and Accessories', 'Housing & Home', 'Travel and Trade' and 'Religion and Ritual'. An accurate as possible full scale replica of the Pocklington Shield is also being made by Roland Williamson, who forged the Treasure House's South Cave sword replicas. Everything should fit into the back of an estate car and be quickly set up in schools and village halls to deliver talks and pop-up museum displays that can engage and inform the public while the main museum is being worked on. The first outing for the project should be the next Pocklington & District Heritage Festival in Burnby Hall 14-16 November 2024.

If anyone is interested in being involved on the Pocklington Museum initiative, or would like more information, they can speak to Peter Halkon, one of our trustees, and archaeological adviser or email us on [pocklingtonheritage@gmail.com](mailto:pocklingtonheritage@gmail.com).

#### ***PDHT Forthcoming Events –***

for details and ticket prices check out the PDHT Facebook page

#### ***Sunday 22 September***

**'Footsteps of the Parisi' Walk** (part of the East Yorkshire Walking Festival'). Starts 11.45am from outside Burnby Hall. Led by Phil Gilbank.

7.5 mile route from Pocklington over Chapel Hill and its two chariot sites, then heading up to Givendale and its hillfort, and along the valley to Millington. The walk is scheduled to end at Millington. and walkers can return to Pocklington on the 16.53 Wolds Explorer bus service.

#### ***Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October 6.30pm***

**'Nunburnholme's Archaeological Heritage'**,

Talk by Dr Peter Halkon. St James Church, Nunburnholme. This is run jointly by the Nunburnholme Jubilee Committee and the PDHT.

Ticket includes cheese & wine supper. (TBC)

#### ***Thurs 14<sup>th</sup>. - Sat 16<sup>th</sup> November.***

**Pocklington District Heritage Festival and Pop-Up Museum. Community Hall, Burnby Hall, Pocklington**

#### ***Thurs 14<sup>th</sup>: Daytime Conference***

10am - 4pm. The main theme this year will be the Anglo-Saxon and Viking eras with special emphasis on the Yorkshire region. Topics will include The Anglo-Saxon settlement at the Mile and the Burnby Lane cemetery, Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in North Yorkshire, The Nunburnholme Cross, Anglian York, The Great Viking Army's progress in the East Yorkshire region through metal detected finds, The Battle of Fulford.

#### ***Fri 15<sup>th</sup>: Evening.***

Our ever popular 'Beanfeast' featuring Viking re-enactors, a Viking themed meal and music by folk group Shiftipig.

#### ***Sat 16<sup>th</sup>: Family activity day.***

10am-4pm. Travelling Museum, re-enactors, crafts, archaeological displays and many activities geared for children

*Occasional Series No. 2*

## ***A Spotlight on Interesting ERAS Members - Dave Haldenby***



### **Which archaeological period are you most interested in?**

Having had the good fortune around 1980 to metal detect on a couple of important local Early Medieval sites, this sparked my interest in the period. This focus narrowed and intensified over the next decade and a half, as I and friends discovered similar sites on the high Wolds, dating from the Middle Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian periods (c. 650 to 1000).

### **What is the main focus of your research?**

Archaeologists dubbed the above new type of settlement - 'productive sites' in view of the large number of dress accessories and coins made. A considerable onus of responsibility clearly came with the privilege of exploring such sites and for over 40 years I have painstakingly maintained catalogues of finds (including accurate find spots), made by myself and friends, and ensured they are published. These datasets and the Portable Antiquities Scheme database form the basis of much of the research I have subsequently undertaken, both independently and in collaboration with academics, leading to around a dozen peer reviewed papers in YAJ, Medieval Archaeology, Antiquity and Internet Archaeology.

Subjects have included: my assessments of the newly discovered site of Cottam B in the early 1990's; the chronology of copper alloy pin types; charting incremental plough damage to artefacts over time; small finds reports relating to York

University's excavations at Cowlam DMV and Cottam A; the first ever study of a group of Viking bullion weights (those from Cottam B); the Viking Great Army and its legacy, based on a full review initiated by myself, of the Cottam B detected and excavated finds; the scale and impact of the Viking settlement of Northumbria; identification of dress accessories exclusive to Northumbria in the first decade following the Viking overthrow of York. Other papers include my classification of Early Medieval pins, and much work around the classification of Saxon and Viking strap ends. Recently a draft paper based on three years of research which demonstrates the weight standards underlying the Viking bullion economy in England, has been provisionally accepted by the editor of Medieval Archaeology. With luck it will now be published as I have succeeded in enlisting the support of a top Viking specialist, Jane Kershaw (who co-authored the paper on the Cottam B weights), who will again become co-author and help to make refinements.

### **How did you first get into archaeology and was there anyone who first encouraged your interest in artefacts?**

A Petuarian childhood sparked a lasting interest in history and since then many archaeologists have influenced me. Peter Armstrong's dedication and rigorous approach to archaeology helped me aim for high standards, and Kevin Leahy, another archaeological powerhouse, has always been an inspiration and source of constant reassurance and assistance. Dr Butler, editor of YAJ (Yorkshire Archaeological Journal) gave much help in getting news of Cottam B out there through the YAJ. Prof. Julian Richards of University of York followed these early papers with interest, and we have worked in close collaboration ever since.

### **Which is the most interesting or rewarding dig you have been involved with?**

It was in the early 1980's during John Dent's archaeological rescue work at Brantingham Roman Villa, that I offered metal detecting assistance, and he was ahead of his time in accepting, which was fortunate as many interesting finds were detected. Prof. Richards at York also realised the crucial role of controlled detecting on digs and in the 1990's sought the support of myself and friends on digs on sites in Cottam C.P. I remember metal detecting a particularly valuable piece of dating evidence, a Saxon strap end in a post hole fill, extracted by Juian's trowel. I had introduced Julian to the landowners, paving the way for these digs. For well over a decade, I and friends have provided Martin Millet with detector back-up on his annual excavations at Thwing and now Aldborough. Metal

detecting has greatly increased the number of finds made over the last four years on the 'Petuaria Revisited' digs.

### **Is there anything you think needs to change in archaeology?**

I believe that just as it has become commonplace for detectorists to assist archaeologists on archaeological digs, there is scope for the opposite with perhaps ERAS members reaching out to detectorists with a view to gaining a better understanding of the context of their finds, for instance by offering to organise geophysical surveys, study their finds and even pursue joint publication.

### **Do you think the Portable Antiquities Scheme is working well?**

PAS has transformed archaeological study and most research now relies heavily on national and regional patterns of finds distribution. The availability of GPS has enabled FLOs (Finds Liaison Officers) to expect higher find spot accuracy from detectorists, so that study of localised distributions of finds now has the potential to reveal a site's evolution. As with many public services, PAS is underfunded, leading to too few Finds Liaison Officers and thus a limit to the numbers of finds which can be recorded. This leads to certain categories of find, such as low denomination Roman coins, not being offered for recording and therefore being under-represented on the PAS database. Assisting FLOs to increase the intake of finds by contributing to identification and recording might be another interesting role for society members.

### **What do you do with finds from your own detecting work?**

Nearly all my finds are in Hull Museum, where for 25 years I have donated all finds. Roy Doughty, friend, fellow ERAS member and Hull Museum volunteer has donated the whole of his collection, and one of our volunteer roles is to accession our own donated finds! Our metal detector collections are complemented by three others, all acquired by Hull Museum in the last 30 years and curated by keeper of Archaeology Paula Gentil, whose knowledge of all the museum's collections must rival that of anyone since Tom Shepherd.

### **Cheesy question, to finish, but what is personal favourite find?**

My most exciting find was made in 2016. Whilst searching for Viking lead weights at Cottam I stumbled on a hoard of 14 almost identical Bronze Age socketed axes, along with ingots! Five days later, whilst detecting around the find spot to try to understand its context, I found a second and

undoubtedly related hoard of 59 axes and accompanying ingots, weighing around 60 lbs! Both hoards are now in Hull Museum and together comprise the largest fully attested Bronze Age hoards ever found in Yorkshire.



*Very unusual 9<sup>th</sup> century Viking lead bullion weight – 160 gms - inset with a fragment of a Viking oval brooch (formerly referred to as Tortoise brooches) found in 2024 at Cottam B*

*(coin for scale only) Photo: D. Haldenby*



*8<sup>th</sup> century gilt chip carved pin head from Cottam B*

*Photo: D. Haldenby*

*ERAS Lecture summary*  
***Excavations at Skipsea***  
***Jim Leary and Elaine Jamieson***  
***21 February 2024***

Dr. Jim Leary pointed out that in Mesolithic times, Holderness would have had a whole string of lakes or ‘meres’ and would have been a very attractive place for hunter-gatherers. Star Carr in North Yorkshire has attracted much archaeological interest, but Holderness has hardly done so and deserves to be better known. Maglemosian ‘points’ of bone or antler found in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were the subject of much controversy and were thought by Tom Shepherd of Hull Museums, to be fakes. The three former meres, in the area, which we know about are Skipsea Baille Mere, Skipsea Withow Mere and Skipsea Low Mere. The last vestiges of the inner edge of Skipsea Withow Mere have been eroding out onto the present beach for many years and have been surveyed and studied to some extent, with evidence such as beaver fur having been recorded.

The long term excavation at Skipsea started last year as a training dig for University of York archaeology students, supervised by Jim Leary and Elaine Jamieson and the site covers a large area with scope for examining evidence from very different time periods. The 2023 dig was described in a lecture to ERAS in February. Although the edge of one lake was identified, and excellent preservation of Mesolithic layers was noted, including leaves and a damselfly wing, there has so far been no evidence of the sort of structures found by Thomas Boynton in his 1880s excavations.

The excavation site is very close to Skipsea Castle – the English Heritage site of the Norman ‘Castle’ mound, overlooking what was Skipsea Baille Mere. The Norman mound is thought to have Iron Age origins, and a nearby wet area, possibly a former pond, with peat preserved within it, yielded Iron Age pottery encrusted with food remains, which will be subject to further analysis. The team is interested in dating the large enclosure of the castle. Thirteen metres high with an elliptical enclosure, the castle appears to have been sitting in a lake. Two baileys are being looked at, but very little of any stonework is left, the site having been robbed out. It is thought the castle may have faced east at first, with early settlement evidence having been cut off by the bailey bank. Evidence also remains of some very regular 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century burgage plots.

Close by and predating the Norman mound, there appears to be evidence of a timber hall with buildings and tools which could date back to the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century. This is an exciting development as it is rare for evidence from this period to be found in the area.

*The York University students are lucky to be learning on a site which offers such a range of timescale and environment.*

*K. Dennett*

### ***EDITOR’S GENERAL MUSINGS***

***Publicity*** - Why is it that our archaeological and historical sites in East Yorkshire are so little known? Wetwang Slack has perhaps made some impact on the scene, but think of the wonderful Duggleby Howe and of Huggate Dykes linear earthworks on the Wolds – no signboards and not even legally accessible any more. And what about Scarborough Iron Age square barrow cemetery, visited by ERAS recently - no information on-site and largely unknown to the general public. True most sites are not spectacular but one can’t help having the feeling that if they were in the south, they would be far better known, investigated, cared for and publicised. In the case of Skipsea, perhaps it is a good thing that the site has hardly been explored in the past, because archaeological science is now so good that we will be able to get unadulterated samples and some reliable evidence.

***Research*** – During the recent York conference, I managed to have a chat with a few luminaries of the archaeological world and asked the question – In the UK, do we have a National Research Agenda and who is responsible for deciding what really needs to be looked at next? It seems that Scotland certainly does and England did start a programme of such agendas in the 1990s, the updated one for Yorkshire being available free at <https://archive.org/details/yasoccasionalpaper03> But I still wonder how, when certain features or processes, such as crop dryers, salt making, bronze casting or chariot burials are found on commercial sites, the details of the physical remains are communicated to interested researchers, who might benefit from seeing them in situ? There is still so much to learn about how things worked.

### ***Nothing surprises me***

Having watched a lot of Olympic TV sport this year, nothing would surprise me about the ancient world. What amazing potential human beings have and what drives them to observe, perform, build and endure the most weird and wonderful things?

## ***ERAS Lecture Programme 2024/5***

### ***18<sup>th</sup> Sept. – Peter Halkon – Recent Discoveries in Roman Brough***

This year marks the fifth season of excavations as part of the Petuaria ReVisited Project. Discoveries on the Burrs Playing Field have included a large well-appointed courtyard building, hitherto unknown defensive features such as a late Roman D shaped tower on the outside of the wall. In the surrounding gardens the Roman road surface has been uncovered, along with waterlogged deposits. Geophysical Surveys as part of the Hull Maritime project along Cave Road have revealed exciting new evidence for buildings and structures close to the Walling fen, once a tidal inlet of the Humber. Thanks to a UK Levelling Up grant, information boards, leaflets will provide opportunities to find out more about this important but often overlooked Roman centre.

### ***16<sup>th</sup> Oct. Gigi Signorielli, Excavations at Sewerby***

Gigi of York-based LS Archaeology has been working in the region for many years, on York University Archaeology training excavations, at Aldborough, and on predevelopment sites. Discoveries near Sewerby have included Neolithic settlements, Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, and Romano-British activity. In 2023 prior to the construction on a holiday park near Dane's Dyke, Gigi's excavation uncovered a large Iron Age enclosure and Mesolithic and Neolithic stone tools.

### ***20<sup>th</sup> Nov. – David Petts – Lindisfarne – Recent Discoveries***

Dr David Petts is an Associate Professor in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Durham and an expert on the archaeology of early Christianity in the late Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods. Working with DigVentures, he has directed a team on the iconic Holy Island of Lindisfarne, making important discoveries, relating to the early monastery, which fell victim to Viking raids in AD 793. These have included an inscribed stone grave marker, stone structures, and an underlying ditch. Apart from the usual finds, remains have included part of the skeleton of the now extinct Great Auk and even part of a turtle!

### ***18<sup>th</sup> Dec. – Matt Reeves – Recent Excavations at Swanland, East Yorkshire***

ERAS Editor, Matt Reeves, has been directing excavations on behalf of MAP Archaeological Practice at Swanland prior to development. Within a wider area of dense archaeological landscapes, this dig has revealed evidence for Iron Age activity and RB agriculture including large crop driers (or malting ovens). Dumping of Roman material

suggests the presence of a significant site nearby, perhaps relating to the villa at Welton.

### ***15<sup>th</sup> Jan. – Ed Dennison – A Second World War bombing decoy on the N. Yorkshire Moors.***

2025 marks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WW II. It seemed appropriate to commemorate this event on a related theme. Ed Dennison of Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd. has been conducting a survey of a bombing decoy on Sneaton Low Moor. Such decoys were meant to deceive Luftwaffe night bombers into thinking they were flying over centres of population and industry, in this case Middlesbrough. A similar decoy was built east of Hull.

### ***19<sup>th</sup> Feb. – Peter Connelly – The Seeds of Change Project in Hull***

In ERAS we try to cover the full range of archaeology and this lecture by Peter Connelly, Archaeology Manager, Humber Field Archaeology, focuses on part of Hull's industrial heritage, the oil seed crushing industry. This is being researched through the Seeds of Change project funded by Historic England as part of their Everyday Heritage grant programme. Perhaps the most prominent survivor of this industry is the Grade II Listed British Extracting Co. silo on Foster Street to east of the river Hull.

### ***19<sup>th</sup> March – Jane Richardson - The Garforth Cemetery Excavations***

Jane Richardson, Manager, Archaeological Services, WYAS, presents the results of a major excavation near Garforth on the outskirts of Leeds, which produced surprises, including a late Roman burial in a lead coffin. This was part of a cemetery of more than 60 people, comprising two contrasting rites. The East-West graves were late Roman, and probably Christian, whereas those aligned North-South were Anglo-Saxon, with typical Anglian style grave goods. These are the first Anglo-Saxon graves to be found in W. Yorks, and are in the post Roman British Kingdom of Elmet.

### ***16<sup>th</sup> April - Mary Anne Slater – Excavations at Skeffling, Holderness. Also ERAS AGM***

During the Outstrays to Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme, a joint initiative by the Environment Agency and Associated British Ports, excavations undertaken by York Archaeology revealed a surprising amount of archaeology, from prehistoric to medieval. What caught media attention was a possible Roman oyster processing site near Skeffling. Mary-Anne Slater of York Archaeology will present an account of these fascinating discoveries.

***Autumn - Winter Lecture/Field Studies Programme***

All lectures start at 7.30pm in Lecture Theatre LT.1 in the Wilberforce Building of Hull University, Cottingham Rd, Hull. There are usually *British Archaeology* magazines to loan and second hand books for sale.

**Weds 18 Sept. Peter Halkon - Recent Discoveries in Roman Brough**

**Weds 16 Oct. Gigi Signorelli – Excavations at Sewerby**

**Weds. 20 Nov. David Petts – Lindisfarne, Recent Discoveries**

**Weds 18 Dec. Matt Reeves – Recent Excavations at Swanland, East Yorkshire**

**Weds. 15 Jan. Ed Dennison – A Second World War Bombing Decoy on the N. Yorks Moors, in Context**

**Weds 19 Feb. Peter Connelly – The Seeds of Change Project in Hull**

**Weds 19 March Jane Richardson – The Garforth Cemetery Excavations**

**Weds. 16 April ERAS Annual General Meeting at 7pm, followed by lecture at 7.30pm  
Mary Anne Slater – Excavations at Skeffling, Holderness**

***FIELD STUDY MEETINGS***

These are usually held, throughout the year, on the **first Wednesday of each month**, at 7.30 pm in the upstairs meeting room at St. Nicholas Community Centre, Holmechurch Lane, Beverley. In the past we have worked on sorting and cataloguing pottery sherds or learning to do site drawings, but the meetings are pretty flexible. In the summer months outdoor trips or site visits might be held instead of the indoor meetings. No experience is necessary, everyone is welcome, you don't have to join the group, just turn up and enjoy whatever they are doing, but some activities or visits may have limited numbers, so please check our website first, or contact our organiser, Matthew Walker m.walker\_1985@hotmail.co.uk

Please note, you can now join or renew at any time of the year. You do not have to wait until January .

Cut here -----

**Renewal / Membership Form,**

I would like to join ERAS **OR**  Please renew my ERAS membership

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Post Code ..... Tel. No. ....

Email .....

I enclose cheque for **£20 single / £25 family/ £10 fulltime student** made payable to East Riding Archaeological Society . Or join via our website and pay digitally.



*Drawing sections of the clay and sand ramparts at Brough*

*Photo: P.Halkon/J. Lyall*



*Fragment of a Nene Valley ware hunt cup, with a dog's head. Brough*

*Photo: P.Halkon/J. Lyall*