

# ERAS News

EAST RIDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,

No. 104 SEPT. 2025



*Petuaria ReVisited. The main trench looking south. Note the ditch under the layer of stones* Photo: Peter Halkon

*Petuaria ReVisited ~ St Mary's Church, Beverley ~ Roman Medicine ~Obituary John Dent ~  
Book Reviews ~ Obituary Terry Manby ~ New Programme~ FFWAP News ~ Field Walking*

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

### ***Final Newsletter***

This will be the last ERAS News that I will produce. After more than twenty years as editor and at nearly 81, I feel it is time to pass it on and Paul Brayford has volunteered, so will be proposed as Newsletter Editor at the next AGM in April. I still enjoy writing bits and pieces for the newsletter, but I find the rapid changes in technology are too stressful for me. ( . . .will my Windows10 PC system allow me to complete the issue without playing up, will it suddenly refuse to 'Save' for reasons unfathomable to me. And of course I can no longer take it into the printers on a memory stick, but am required to save it as a PDF file and email it to them. (although I can *receive* email, I cannot *send* email from my PC as my lovely Office Outlook 2007 system is so ancient!). Definitely time to hand over to someone more IT savvy.

### ***Volunteering with FFWAP***

The FFWAP (Fridaythorpe, Fimber and Wetwang Archaeological Project) will be returning to Wharram Percy to carry out weeding and edging to the building outlines above the Church and to the South Manor area. As the nearest archaeology group to the site, they undertake this as part of their community volunteering programme to support English Heritage in the wellbeing of the site. Also, with the harvest drawing to a close, they are surveying in the stubble fields in their area. ERAS members are very welcome to take part and FFWAP will be carrying out training sessions in magnetometry surveying for new team members. Simply contact Alison Spencer (Chair of FFWAP) on [ffwap.alison@gmail.com](mailto:ffwap.alison@gmail.com)

### ***Paying by card***

ERAS now has a card reader, so you can pay for subs and books by card at lectures and events, though we are still happy to accept cash or cheques.

### ***Hull Minster Bookfair and Hornsea Event***

We will have our usual bookstall at the Local History Book Fair on September 20<sup>th</sup> in Hull Minster, even though we felt it was poorly advertised and attended, last year, we still see it as an opportunity to publicise ERAS. We will also be having a stall at a Heritage Garden Event in Hornsea on 14<sup>th</sup> September. Any help at these events is always appreciated. Just contact any committee member.

### ***Resistivity Meter Repair***

Our resistivity meter, one of a batch originally designed and made by Bob Randall of TR Systems in conjunction with the now defunct Council for Independent Archaeology, has been out of order for a while (something to do with an electric fence I heard!) However, the brilliant Bob Randall said this is not as uncommon as you might expect and he has been able to repair it. These TR Systems meters were designed specifically for amateur groups to purchase at a reasonable price, being easy to set up and use, whilst giving professional, high quality results. It has given us excellent service over many years.

### ***Talk at St. Mary's Church, Beverley***

On Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> September, Malin Holst and Gigi Signorelli will be giving a talk about the recent excavations around the church. (See their article in this newsletter.)

### ***Ice Age Art Exhibition at Keighley***

You might just be able to catch this exhibition of 75 rare objects on loan from the British Museum at Cliffe Castle Museum, Keighley until 14<sup>th</sup> September, as part of Bradford's City of Culture programme. Some of these fabulous carved pieces are really worth seeing close up. It includes the well known swimming reindeer sculpted from mammoth ivory and pieces from Cresswell Crags, near Sheffield.

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

#### **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> Oct. Duncan Feetham.**

Rolls Royce Electric Cars – 125 Years in the Making. Sir Henry Royce Memorial Archive.

#### **Thursday 13 Nov. Dr. Victoria Taylor, aviation historian.**

The Trail Blazers – The Life of Amy Johnson.

#### **Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> Feb. Prof. Simon Hall, University of Leeds.**

Fidel Castro – Beatnik Revolutionary

Meetings begin at 7.30pm at the Nordic Centre (Danish Church), Osborne St. Hull HU1 2PN. The AGM will be held just before the talk at the beginning of the May meeting.

Annual membership £12, visitors £3, students/unwaged free. For more information [www.herha.org.uk](http://www.herha.org.uk) or 01482 448065

*Editor*

***Petuaria ReVisited***  
***Excavations at Brough 2025***  
***An interim report***  
***Peter Halkon and James Lyall***

This was the sixth season of the joint ERAS and Elloughton-cum-Brough Playing Field Association excavations at Brough as part of the ongoing *Petuaria ReVisited* Project. Our aims for the excavation were to continue to investigate the north-east corner of the defences outside of the scheduled area in the north-west corner of the Burrs playing field, and continue to try to locate the Roman road in the garden of 8 Wrygarth Avenue. After top-soil stripping, excavation began on 20<sup>th</sup> July, a day later than expected due to heavy rain on the previous day.

On the Burrs, most of the first days were spent removing the backfill from the previous year's excavations. The 2025 trench was slightly wider, so contained some previously unexcavated deposits at the north-eastern corner. The next task was to remove the remainder of the "clay rampart", designated as such by Philip Corder. Once again finds were scarce. The layer of irregular blocks of Lincolnshire Limestone which formed the base of the clay rampart was then removed. In the 2024 season we had excavated three approximately square trenches on the east, in one area right down to the 'natural' sand subsoil. We had presumed that the layers under the stone base were part of the so called 'sand' rampart found by Corder. However, as trowelling the trench continued, it was realised that the clean yellow sand which began to appear was indeed the 'natural' subsoil occurring at a much higher level than encountered in the base of the 2024 trenches.

A clear line of darker sand then became apparent towards the eastern edge of the 2025 trench for most of its length, running at what appeared to be a slight angle to the clay rampart. At this stage, it became clear that this was not part of a rampart but a ditch. The fills of the ditch comprised many layers, but the pottery from the upper contexts showed that these were largely contemporary with each other. From the lower layers, a number of rim sherds from a small Roman vessel in a white fabric with an olive-green brown lead glaze were recovered. This may be Lyons ware imported from France, dating from the period AD 40-70, or else from Holt in North Wales. We await confirmation from a specialist before the precise place of production can be confirmed. The ditch fills also contained samian sherds and other pottery of the

later first and early to mid-second century AD. The ditch was overlain by a layer of mixed grey sand deposited as a levelling layer prior to the construction of the 'clay' rampart. Corder described this layer as dirty sand in his reports. This context also contained much pottery and animal bone. Amongst the finds were a silver denarius of Faustina, wife of the Emperor Antoninus Pius, several bone pins, tweezers and other copper alloy items including a penannular brooch and a trumpet brooch complete with pin.

Towards the northern part of the 2025 excavation, we noticed that the stone base had slumped into a feature below. This turned out to be part of a ditch just over a metre wide, running roughly west-east. Its position suggested that it was not part of the defences but formed part of an internal feature. The ditch was filled with many oyster shells, animal bones and pottery. The area in the northeast of the 2025 excavation revealed the "herring bone" style stone foundations of the inner face of the wall. This was very similar to that found by Corder.

Excavations in the garden trench proved to be interesting but complex. In 1935 Corder excavated the east gate of the walled enclosure and found three phases of road construction. The route of the road was visible as a parch mark in the grass during the early July heatwave, running west to east across the playing field, disappearing before it reached the field edge. Corder's plan shows the road continuing for around 12m beyond the east gate before being cut by what he presumed was the inner defensive ditch. The issue was how to reconcile this with the discovery of the road during building work across the road in Wrygarth Avenue and the surfaces found in the neighbouring garden during the 2023 excavation.

The 2024 trench was reopened and enlarged by machine and as in previous years it was found that much modern rubbish had been deposited in pits, including large metal drums and corrugated iron. Under this was the same layer of irregular limestone blocks as had been found in 2024, above a layer of compacted gravel identical to the lower surface found in the garden immediately to the north in 2023. Roman pottery including a large rim sherd from a mortarium in a white fabric and a silver denarius of the emperor Severus Alexander (AD 222-235) was found within the gravel layer. Although this had every appearance of a road surface it was substantially lower than that on the field and the slope seemed too steep. If this is a continuation of the Roman road, the difference in height may perhaps be explained by extensive levelling of the Burrs playing field during its

conversion from agricultural land in the early 1970s. The homogenous deep layer of dark soil at the west end of the trench may also have been created during this activity.

Further to the east were layers of what appeared to be water-deposited silts, possibly associated with a stream channel, the orientation of which was roughly north-south across the trench. This had been encountered during the excavation at 30 Welton Road in 2023. The stream channel had been drained by a now defunct ceramic pipe. Below the pipe was a pond-like feature over 2m in diameter of unknown use which had been lined in two phases with stone.

At the eastern edge of the trench at its base were two lengths of timber which appeared to be unworked. They lay parallel to each other and are therefore likely to have been deliberately laid. (See photo on back cover). The timbers were associated with more stone blocks, several of which were worked, two with a chamfered base. The quantity of stones make it possible that they once formed part of a crossing of the stream or wet area, possibly a bridge or ford. The timbers were lifted for dating and further investigation.



*Rare lead glazed Roman pottery from the lower levels of the ditch*  
*Photo: Peter Halkon*

### **Acknowledgements**

None of our achievements would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of a fantastic team of volunteers, combined with the support of our wonderful supervisory staff and members of the Elloughton cum Brough PFA. This year the excavation was funded by CBA Yorkshire, the Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society, ERAS and the Hull and East Riding Charitable Trust to whom we are most grateful.

Many thanks to the house owner for allowing us to excavate once again in her garden and to the local people who supplied the team with hot drinks and cakes, which were gratefully received!



*Coin of Severus Alexander*  
*Photo: Peter Halkon*

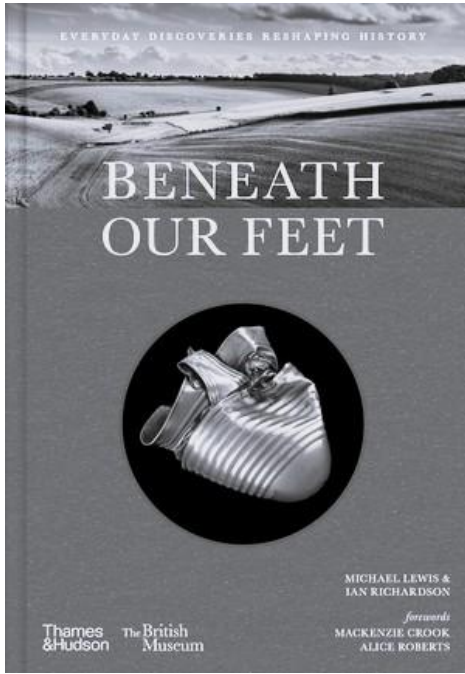


*Graham and Chris excavate a section across the possible Roman road surface in the garden trench*

*Photo: Peter Halkon*

**Book Reviews, by Paul Brayford**  
***Beneath Our Feet: Everyday Discoveries Reshaping History* by Michael Lewis and Ian Richardson**

Thames & Hudson and The British Museum, 2025  
(Hbk) RRP £30 (but available for about £20)



This captivating volume from The British Museum brings together over fifty archaeological finds from England and Wales—each discovered not by professional archaeologists, but by everyday people: metal detectorists, mudlarks, and field walkers who stumbled upon history and reported their finds, often resulting in a careful professional archaeological excavation.

From the Stone Age to the modern era, the book is a treasure trove of stories. It opens with the remarkable 2000 discovery of the 500,000-year-old Happisburgh Handaxe and closes with a poignant tale from 2007, when a jar of American gold coins - buried by a German Jewish refugee family in 1940 - was unearthed in a Hackney garden. These aren't just objects; they're time capsules, each with a story that blends serendipity with detective work. A short but rich discussion accompanies each find: how it was found, what it is, how it was made, and what it might have meant to the people who used it. The photography is top-notch, as expected from such a reputable publisher, though I found that the absence of scale indicators is a small but noticeable flaw.

Readers may be disappointed that there's nothing from the E. Riding in this edition, but Yorkshire

isn't entirely left out: the Roman Ryedale Hoard and the Early Medieval Vale of York Hoard both make an appearance, alongside flint arrowheads from the W. Riding. Sadly, the Iron Age Melsonby Hoard came too late for publication. This isn't a book to devour in one sitting or flaunt on a coffee table. It's a volume to dip into, story by story, savouring each discovery, perhaps over afternoon tea. This book is a celebration of curiosity, chance, and the thrill of uncovering the past. Whether you're a seasoned archaeologist or someone who just enjoys a good story, it deserves a place on your shelf.

***Footmarks: A journey into our restless past* by Jim Leary**

Icon Books, 2023 (Hbk £18.99) 2024 (Pbk £10.99)

I like to read books at the intersection of my interests. Being a keen walker, this book by another walker who teaches Archaeology at the University of York was a definite attraction. Leary opens with a reflection on the discipline's traditional focus on static material remains. Yet as Mortimer Wheeler declared - archaeology is not so much about things as about people - and people move. Leary's theory is rooted in this dynamic truth: that movement, not monumentality is the true thread of human history. His own passion is "paths over pyramids" and he takes us through a compelling and beautifully written account of human wanderings. Building on his previous more academic writings, he weaves his own experiences of archaeological discoveries and stories of movement to excite our imaginations. In doing so, he takes us from Mesolithic footprints on the Severn Estuary to the Dover Bronze Age boats by way of the oldest discovered hominin footprints in Tanzania and John Travolta strutting his stuff in the 1977 film Saturday Night Fever.

Leary starts at a small scale, writing about the movement of individuals and as the book progresses the scale grows, to group and mass movements, from trails to tracks, to roads and then sea voyages. While most of the examples are drawn from Britain, he does range to Africa and Europe. Of special interest are the discussions of the Roos Carr figurines, the Ferriby Boats, the Pocklington Chariot Burials, the Battle of Stamford Bridge and Wharram Percy.

It's a far ranging book, taking in all sorts of topics, not necessarily in depth but enough to whet the appetite of the curious. I liked the woodcut style images, and Leary's prose is engaging. His work invites us to reconsider the archaeological record as a palimpsest of journeys.

**Occasional Series No. 4**  
**A Spotlight on ERAS Members -**  
**Dr. Nick Summerton -**  
**On Roman Medicine**

*I had intended to ask Dr. Summerton to do a question and answer article about himself, but I rather left it to the last minute so was delighted when he offered me the use of this English translation of an excellent interview, originally published in the German newspaper Die Welt. ERAS member Dr. Summerton, a GP, medical historian and writer, with a new book, Roman Rulers And Their Diseases, due out in January 2026, will be giving the December ERAS lecture on the ailments afflicting the Roman Emperors.*

*Editor*

**Question:** Dr. Summerton, in your recent book, you examine what modern medicine might learn from ancient Greek and Roman practices. What did you find?

**Summerton:** Then as now, health maintenance and disease prevention played a major role. If we look at the Roman physician Galen of Pergamon, we see how important the concept of *hygiene* was at the time. For Galen, this meant a balanced diet, physical activity, sleep, fresh air, and mental well-being. These are aspects that don't receive enough attention in modern medicine. The key concept back then was prevention through what Galen called *hygiene* of lifestyle.

**Question:** But prevention is mainly the patient's responsibility – what about treatment methods? Can modern medicine learn from those?

**Summerton:** Today, physicians are largely governed by rules and regulations, while in Greco-Roman times, social control played a larger role. Prognosis was more important than diagnosis. Listening to the patient was essential. The idea was: if I listen long enough, the patient will tell me what's wrong. That's a skill many modern doctors have lost. These days, the patient is already in an MRI before the doctor even knows their name. Roman doctors were more adept. The physician-patient relationship was more equal, more trusting.

**Question:** But are these approaches even comparable? Our scientific knowledge is far more advanced, and society is fundamentally different.

**Summerton:** It's important to realize that many health challenges back then are still relevant today. That's why I believe it's entirely legitimate to re-examine ancient treatment approaches and ask what we might meaningfully integrate into modern practice. But it's also tricky: we must avoid projecting modern beliefs and values onto the past

– because, as the saying goes, the past is a foreign country.

**Question:** So how should we engage with this “foreign country”?

**Summerton:** For me, the key is to avoid turning the past into an idealized fantasy. Mistranslations, incorrect interpretations of ancient texts, the commercialization of archaeological sites, or viewing artifacts through modern lenses can lead us astray. Ancient terms like *phthisis*, *apoplexy*, or *podagra* shouldn't be equated directly with tuberculosis, stroke, or gout. Aqueducts and baths are likely to have said more about a provincial town's desire to appear Roman than about any real concept of public health.

**Question:** So can modern medicine still benefit from ancient practice?

**Summerton:** Roman medicine was very advanced. Galen described special types of steel for surgical tools. Cataract surgery and even cranial procedures were performed successfully. Of course, we can do all that today – but we should learn from the Romans *not* to rush into surgery. In the UK, gall bladders or uteruses are often removed without clear indication. The Romans were more cautious: Galen's holistic concept came first, then medication, and only then surgery. For persistent illnesses like chronic infections or eye and skin conditions, people went to healing sanctuaries – places that often had a religious dimension but prioritized holistic healing.

**Question:** Operations in antiquity were riskier – lacking anesthesia and facing high infection risk. Was this the main reason for avoiding surgery?

**Summerton:** That's true. Major surgeries were often avoided, and mistakes could damage the physician's reputation or, in high-profile cases, even endanger their life. Still, the techniques and tools were sophisticated. Brass and copper were commonly used – metals we're only now reintroducing in hospitals due to their antimicrobial properties. Surgery was often successful, especially in wound care. But cutting was never the first choice. That kind of restraint is something we should relearn: prevention and lifestyle were crucial to avoiding surgery in the first place.

**Question:** So you're saying we need more patient responsibility again?

**Summerton:** In antiquity, the doctor and patient were equals. The patient was the expert in their experience, the doctor in therapy. That's often not the case anymore – and this imbalance affects the trust in medical relationships. We're heading

toward an ever more regulated, technologized system – and with that, a shift in power.

**Question:** But we're not the first to look back in search of past wisdom, are we?

**Summerton:** Certainly not. The Romans looked to the Athenians during plague outbreaks. In the 15th and 16th centuries, physicians identified inconsistencies in Galen's anatomy and threw out a lot of ancient knowledge with it. Much was lost that had been used since antiquity. Theories like the four humors are products of their time. From today's standpoint they're outdated – but their basic ideas, like fresh air and balance, still matter.

**Question:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, public interest in the history of epidemics surged. People wanted to know what helped in the past. What can we learn for the next pandemic?

**Summerton:** Galen's hygiene teachings align closely with what we saw during COVID. Those with poor diet, lack of exercise, and sleep deprivation were hit harder. As the pandemic progressed, fresh air and mental health became increasingly important.

**Question:** Was mental health already a topic during the Antonine Plague in the 2nd century AD?

**Summerton:** In Greco-Roman thinking, physical and mental health were deeply interconnected. Caring for the psyche or soul was an essential part of health. This was also central to Galen's model – alongside movement, air, sleep, and nutrition. Many Romans, including Galen, also searched for a philosophy of life. A highly influential one was Stoicism.

**Question:** What did Stoic thought contribute to health?

**Summerton:** For the Stoics, virtue was the highest goal. Galen treated Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher emperor whose *Meditations* saw a surge in sales during COVID. Two Stoic ideas are especially helpful in crises: understanding what we can and cannot control, and focusing on how we react to what we can't. Trying to control the uncontrollable leads to frustration. Marcus Aurelius would probably have warned against excessive use of social media.

**Question:** So Stoicism is still relevant?

**Summerton:** Absolutely. Anxiety and depression often come from worrying about things we can't control. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is deeply rooted in Stoic philosophy. Today, very few people invest time in a personal philosophy – instead, we chase status, phones, or money.

**Question:** During the pandemic, healthcare workers received applause and gratitude. How did ancient societies show appreciation?

**Summerton:** In recent years, we've witnessed a kind of deification of healthcare. Applause, thank-you cards, gifts – in Roman times, people made offerings to Apollo, god of healing. Just like Apollo and Asclepius, the NHS even appeared on coins. We're continuing a very old tradition.

**Question:** Speaking of public health – Roman baths and spas are still associated with health. Is that a legacy?

**Summerton:** It's funny – people always think of aqueducts and baths when discussing Roman public health. But that's a bit of a misconception. The water in those baths was often dirty and rarely changed. What mattered more to people was good ventilation, light, and spacious architecture – they saw that as promoting health.

**Question:** Modern urban dwellers are disconnected from nature. Most barely know that ginger helps against colds. Is that a loss compared to 2,000 years ago?

**Summerton:** This isn't new. Pliny the Elder already lamented how little urban Romans knew about rural healing plants. The real issue today is that we often can't even identify what ancient texts are referring to – due to vague descriptions and poor translations. Still, some remedies survive: cabbage leaves for swelling, for example, are still used in obstetrics. And we're just rediscovering honey's medical value.

**Question:** Could modern medicine benefit from these rediscoveries?

**Summerton:** In the past 200 years, chemical medicine and new drug models pushed ancient remedies aside. But Galen, for instance, used many of the same substances as the Egyptians centuries before. Their continued use suggests they were effective.

**Question:** So why are we still skeptical?

**Summerton:** One big problem is prejudice. People imagine fried seahorses and gladiator blood – but that's only part of the story. Galen created salves that could deliver morphine transdermally. Researchers have tested ancient formulations in labs – with impressive results. In the UK, scientists are revisiting the antibacterial power of *Lemnian Earth*, used in antiquity for wounds and snakebites. Some modern drugs have been patented based on 2,000-year-old recipes from Celsus.

**Question:** How can we put ancient pharmacy to use today?

**Summerton:** Studies show honey inhibits around 60 bacteria species as well as certain fungi and viruses. It's been effective against MRSA and diabetic ulcers. In burns, honey promotes faster healing and better sterility than conventional treatments. Wild honey outperforms artificial versions because it retains more bioactive ingredients.

**Question:** So what's the advantage over conventional antibiotics?

**Summerton:** Unlike today's single-compound antibiotics like penicillin, ancient remedies were complex mixtures. That's why interest is growing. The *Ancientbiotics* project in Nottingham uses bioinformatics to search ancient texts for ingredient combinations that appear together more often than by chance – the goal is to discover new antimicrobial agents for the future.

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## ***Excavation at St Marys Church Beverley***

### ***LS Archaeology & York Osteoarchaeology***

LS Archaeology, in collaboration with York Osteoarchaeology, conducted excavations at St Mary's, Beverley, from November 2024 to March 2025, ahead of planned landscaping in the northern churchyard. The project aimed to create an accessible pedestrian route linking North Bar Within, the Memorial Gardens, the church, and the church hall. Extensive utilities across the site, including live gas, electricity, and water services, complicated the excavation and required careful logistical planning. Despite these challenges, work proceeded, and appropriate solutions were implemented.

Significant ground reduction necessitated the assessment and removal of burials. While initial estimates suggested up to 300 burials could be impacted, prior disturbance from the construction of the church hall and the services had already affected much of the area and caused disturbance of a large number of burials. Approximately 100 large bags of disarticulated human remains from disturbed burials were recovered from the central area.

The least disturbed section, adjacent to the northern elevation of St Mary's, contained high-status burials with grave goods. A total of 68 articulated burials were recorded in situ using rapid osteological assessment according to standard guidelines by Brickley and McKinley (2004) and

Mitchell and Brickley (2017), supported by the App DiggIt for digital documentation. This included the assessment of age, sex, stature, dental health and skeletal pathologies, when possible. These remains were respectfully reinterred within the northern churchyard alongside the disarticulated remains. All grave goods were recorded and returned to their respective individuals in accordance with Christian burial traditions and associated guidance.

The excavation was carried out in collaboration with the York Diocese, churchwardens, and Revd Becky Lumley, ensuring adherence to ethical and procedural standards. Further analysis, including radiocarbon (C14) dating and isotope analysis, will refine the chronology of the burial phases and will provide an insight into the ways of life of the individuals interred at St Mary's, with results expected in the summer of 2025.

Brickley, M. and McKinley, J. I. 2004. 'Compiling a skeletal inventory: disarticulated and co-mingled remains', in M. Brickley and J. I. McKinley (eds) *Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains*. IFA Paper No. 7 (Southampton and Reading): 14-17

Mitchell, P.D. and Brickley, M. eds., 2017. *Updated Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists)



*Using the DiggIt App to record one of the 68 articulated burials in the churchyard. Photo: LS Archaeology*



*Top picture shows the difficulty of working in a confined space with service pipes and wires etc. Lower picture shows the hessian sacks of human bones from recorded articulated skeletons being reburied alongside plastic bags full of previously disturbed bones. A large cache of older human bone from post-medieval charnel pits encountered during investigations in 1997 was also reburied. Space is always a problem in town churchyards with no room to expand and there are records from St Mary's Churchyard in Hull referring to the surface being several feet above the street level in the 1860s and having to be 'reduced' - a very messy business. It is even rumoured that some of the Hull bones were sold to bone-meal makers! Editor*

## *Obituary*

*Terence “Terry” George Manby*

*1933 – 2025*



*Terry showing Certificate in Archaeology students the Staple Howe site, 1998*

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*Photo: P. Halkon*

On Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025, a long time ERAS member, Terry Manby died peacefully at his Market Weighton home aged 91. He was one of Yorkshire’s most important and respected archaeologists. Born in August 1933 in Thornton Dale, North Yorkshire, his father and grandfather were builders. The family moved to York in 1937. He left school aged 14 and his first job was in Thomas Godfrey’s bookshop in Stonegate. Aged 16, he joined the Yorkshire Archaeological Society. His first field experience was with J.W. Moore on the early Mesolithic Flixton Site 1, followed by his long-standing association with T.C.M. Brewster on the early Iron Age hilltop site at Staple Howe. He joined the RAF for five years and undertook training at Bridgenorth in Shropshire and then at St Athan’s in south Wales. When off-duty he took every opportunity to check out local sites and museums. A return to North Yorkshire at RAF Dishforth meant that he could resume fieldwork, this time with the Granthams on the Yorkshire Wolds and he started recording their finds. The Granthams were butchers in Driffield who became

expert diggers, with an impressive collection of finds in a museum behind their shop. In 1953 Terry was posted to Germany, which meant that he was entitled to six weeks leave, in which he was able to continue excavation.

After leaving the RAF, he received a grant from the North Riding County Council to do a certificate course at the Institute of Archaeology in London, where he met the great prehistorian Vere Gordon Childe and Mortimer Wheeler. Wheeler came out to visit Staple Howe on one occasion. One of the skills Terry obtained whilst at the Institute was drawing, which he continued into his 80s. Each Saturday he visited the British Museum and was the first to begin to go systematically through Canon William Greenwell’s collection of finds from his barrow digging in East and North Yorkshire, drawing many of the finds.

At first Terry found it difficult to get a job in archaeology as, according to him, “they were at this time fixed up on the ‘old boy’ basis”. He went

digging with Peter Wenham, lecturer at St John's College, York, becoming a supervisor due to his previous experience. His first full-time post was with the Derby School's Museum Service. He quickly joined the Derbyshire Archaeological Society where he met his wife Joyce, with whom he enjoyed 66 years of happy marriage. He ran excavations for the Derbyshire Archaeological Society. Eager to return to Yorkshire, he took a job at the Tolson Museum in Huddersfield and excavated the Roman fort at Slack and the medieval pottery kiln at Upper Heaton. After a stint of excavation with Brewster at Garton Slack, Terry decided to run his own sites, digging barrows on the Yorkshire Wolds, excavating at Willerby Wold long barrow and then for two seasons at Staxton Beacon. The excavation of Kilham long barrow raised his profile nationally and he subsequently lectured to the Prehistoric Society.

It became clear that to progress, he needed further qualifications, so he took an MA degree at Liverpool University under the eminent prehistorian Terence Powell, graduating in 1967. His voluminous thesis is still relevant today, as it contains much detail on the Grantham's work on the Wolds and is worthy of a Doctorate. His study of their prehistoric pottery led to him becoming the leading expert on Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery in the north of England and was still working on specialist reports for many archaeological organisations until shortly before his death. He became Director of Doncaster Museum in 1974, where he remained until his retirement in 1992. Terry continued to excavate, most importantly perhaps, on the later Bronze Age ring fort at Paddock Hill, Thwing, reused as an Anglo-Saxon elite centre and large cemetery. Regular interim reports appeared in the YAHS Prehistory Research Section Bulletin, and various summaries as chapters in books. Work is beginning on pulling together the final report which he was unable to complete before his death.

In 1981 he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. Other honorary posts included President of the Regional Museums Federation, Chair and Secretary of the Prehistory Research Section, and editor of this section's Bulletin. He was also the Chair of the YAHS Aerial Archaeology Committee. In recognition of his enormous contribution, he was awarded the Silver Medal of the Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society at a meeting in York in 2007 as part of a conference concerning *The Archaeology of Yorkshire: An Assessment at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, which he co-edited with Stephen Moorhouse and Patrick Ottaway (2003). The

chapter he wrote with Alan King and Blaise Vyner, "The Neolithic and Bronze Ages: a time of early agriculture" remains an important starting point for the study of these periods in the region. Thanks to a new 2022 digital edition, this is now freely available online through the YAHS

[The Archeology of Yorkshire. An Assessment at the Beginning of the 21st Century : T.G. Manby, Steven Moorhouse and Patrick Ottaway \(ed. by\) : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

This was but one of the many articles he wrote which are listed in his birthday tribute volume, *Prehistoric Yorkshire* 61 (2023) edited by Keith Boughey, which fill six sides of closely typed A4 and date from 1957 to 2020.

At an international level, he was a founding member of the Bronze Age Study Group. Always very sociable, Terry particularly enjoyed their overseas meetings. Frances Pryor wrote in his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday tribute about the long friendly discussions he had with Terry at these events which not only displayed his erudition but also contained all sorts of gossip and stories about friends and colleagues. I first met Terry on the Thwing excavation in the hot summer of 1976, having just completed my second year at Liverpool University. Much later he played a valuable role in the Part-time BA Hons Archaeology degree at Hull University which I coordinated, teaching the earlier prehistoric section. Always well prepared with copious hand-outs, a highlight of his module were the visits he organised to the Great Wold Valley monuments and Staple Howe.

I was delighted to put him forward as a candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Letters (D. Litt.) *Honoris Causa*, at the University of Hull, which he was awarded in 2012 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to our knowledge of Neolithic and Bronze Age Northern England. His move to Market Weighton meant I was able to stay in regular contact and am so grateful for his mentorship, in particular collaboration in my article "Change and Continuity within the Prehistoric Landscape of the Foulness Valley", (*East Riding Archaeologist* 12, 1-66) in which he contributed a report on polished stone and flint axe heads.

He was a much-loved family man, leaving behind his wife Joyce, son Richard, daughter Gillian and five grandchildren. The final word must go to Frances Pryor, again from his 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday tribute: "Terry wears ... his learning and erudition very lightly. It was a pleasure and a privilege to have known him".

Peter Halkon

## *Obituary*

*John Strickland Dent FSA, FSA (Scot)  
1950 – 2025*



*John Dent recording details of the Chariot 1 at Wetwang*

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, ERAS lost a much-valued former Chair and Programme secretary with the death of John Strickland Dent at the age of 75. John's first excavation at the age of 11 was on a Roman coffin under the guidance of museum curator George Wilmot. He was educated at Bootham School in York, and subsequently at University College Cardiff, where he read Archaeology, graduating in 1971. In 1973 his first independent responsibility for an archaeological site was in Benghazi, Libya, on Hellenistic burials. In 1975 John succeeded Tony Brewster directing excavations ahead of gravel extraction on the Clifford Watts quarry at Garton and Wetwang Slack. John then became a Field Officer for the newly established Humberside

Archaeology Unit. John is perhaps best known for his excavation of the three chariot burials at Wetwang Slack, all excavated in the remarkable archaeological summer of 1984, which yielded the Hasholme logboat and Lindow Man. Whilst in our region he also excavated a Viking Age bridge or jetty at Skerne, finding the fine Skerne sword (1982), a late Iron Age and Roman settlement close to the villa at Brantingham (1983), and an Iron Age settlement and iron production centre at North Cave (1986-7).

In 1989 he took up a new post as Regional Archaeologist for Borders Regional Council (Scottish Borders Council from 1996), where he

served until his retirement in 2011. During his work there he collaborated with Bradford University on the Newstead Environs Project (1990-93), carrying out excavations at four Iron Age settlements in the hinterland of the Roman military complex of Trimontium in Roxburghshire. He also undertook programmes of walkover and aerial survey. John was a Fellow of both the Society of Antiquaries of London and Scotland.

I first met John and his wife Ann in 1977, on the British Museum excavation on the Iron Age and Roman cemetery at Ville-sur-Retourne in the Ardennes region of France, which was led by Dr Ian Stead. John became a supportive friend and mentor whilst he worked for the Humberside Unit and my first booklet on the Parisi, *New Light on the Parisi* (1989) contains a dedication to him on his departure to Scotland. This booklet also includes John's interim article on his excavations at Brantingham. I was delighted that he agreed to present an overview of the Garton/Wetwang excavations in the Royal Archaeological Institute conference on the Arras Culture held in York in November 2017. He contributed an excellent chapter to the conference proceedings which I edited: *The Arras Culture- Celebrating the Iron Age*, published by Oxbow Books in 2020.

John had a great and dry sense of humour. When one early morning in the summer of 1984 I woke up as usual to the Today Programme on Radio 4, I was very surprised to hear his familiar Yorkshire voice. He was asked by the presenter to describe a chariot burial to the listeners. "Well, it looks like someone has fallen off a bicycle" was the reply. When John visited the Hasholme boat excavation and stood musing over the trench, casting a careful eye over the logboat, I asked him what he was thinking about. "Well, its just too narrow to be a landing craft for chariots" was his answer! He will be greatly missed.

Peter Halkon

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## ***Getting One's Eye In - A Reflection on Field Walking***

Whether its searching for mushrooms on a damp Autumn morning or for prehistoric flints on the chalky Wolds soils, people always do better when they have 'got their eye in' as we say. I recall that when invited, occasionally, by my friend Sonja, to accompany her on fungus foraging trips, I never did as well as she did. I would spot only three or four, whilst she collected a whole basketful. Sonja was brought up in 1940s East Germany, where food was often in short supply and she was taught

by her grandmother how to recognise edible fungi. So she got her eye in from an early age and never lost those skills, whilst I struggled to even see the fungi. However, put me in a Holderness clay field, searching for prehistoric potsherds or flints and I do much better.

On an ERAS field walking exercise, many years ago, we had a new member who lived on the Wolds and was very clued up about prehistoric flint. After measuring out a grid of 2m squares, marked at the corners by canes, we started out at Row 1, with our pre-labelled finds bags and walked at a steady, even pace towards Row 10 at the end of the grid. However - I'll call him Mr Flint - in Row D enjoyed this activity so much that he constantly lagged behind and searched much harder than everyone else. When he finally arrived at Row D10 his finds bags were bulging with flint tools, flakes and cores as well as potsherds and other stuff. He found far more than anyone else.

If we had been using the finds data statistically, by linking it to specific areas, it would have been useless, as it would seem to indicate that a strip 2m x 20m, ie Row D, was used for intensive flint working! On the next grid, Mr Flint was prompted to keep up with the more speedy pace of the rest of the group and he found about half the amount of stuff, though he still found more of it than the rest of us. An interesting result and cause for us to ponder on how best to use Field Walking. It was an excellent fun activity, gave a good indication of what was in the soil of a general area and was an opportunity for those with specialist knowledge to pass it on to others, but we decided we could not interpret the finds in relation to specific areas of the field, because those with an experienced eye will always spot more. It would be great if ERAS could do more field walking and recording in our area.

## ***Amazing Science Developments ...***

I have always promoted the CBA magazine British Archaeology, and I spotted this short report in Issue 203 on a new method for analysing the chemical composition of preservation fluids without opening the original containers. The study, by researchers from the Science and Technology Facilities Council, the Natural History Museum and Agilent Technologies was published in the journal *ACS Omega*. This new laser based technique called Spatially Offset Raman Spectroscopy (SORS) can analyse the contents of sealed glass jars. Although obviously of more use to natural history study, it will no doubt become a part of the amazing armoury of tests available to archaeologists in the future.

Kate Dennett

## ***ERAS Lecture Programme 2025-6***

### **Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> Richard Lamb – “Surviving remnants of a long-lost industry: the Lead Smelting Mills of the Yorkshire Dales”.**

A visitor to the Yorkshire Dales today may not realise that far from being a rural idyll, the landscape was once full of industry, particularly the smelting of lead. Richard Lamb has done much fieldwork and research on the lead smelting mills, now ruined relics of Yorkshire’s industrial past.

### **Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> Dr Jason Monaghan - "A Yorkshire-style small Roman fort on Alderney"**

Jason was formerly the Roman pottery specialist for the York Archaeological Trust and became Director of Guernsey Museums. Currently he combines archaeology with crime writing. For some years he and a team have been investigating a Roman fort at a site known as the Nunnery. With a central tower, the outer walls resemble those of the so-called signal stations of the N. Yorks coast. In later times it was used by the German military in the occupation of the Channel Islands.

### **Nov. 19<sup>th</sup> Prof. Ian Armit - “Exploring kinship at the Iron Age cemetery of Wetwang Slack, East Yorkshire”**

The Iron Age square barrow cemetery at Wetwang/Garton Slack was excavated from 1963-1989 by the Granthams, T.C.M. Brewster, then John Dent. In 1971 the first chariot burial was excavated at Garton Slack and three more at Wetwang Slack in 1984 by John Dent. The chariot burials were only part of a large cemetery. Advances in ancient DNA analysis have enabled familial links to be made between occupants of the cemetery and demonstrate connections elsewhere. Prof. Armit has been leading a project in collaboration with Prof. David Reich and the team at Harvard Medical School with astonishing results shedding new light on Iron Age society.

### **Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> Dr Nick Summerton - “Roman Emperors and their illnesses. The Challenges of Retrospective Diagnosis”**

Nick, a former GP and classical medicine expert, has authored several books on the topic. In this talk, he uses modern medical insights to analyse ailments of Roman Emperors described in ancient texts. This is the topic of his latest book, due to be published in early 2026.

### **Jan. 21<sup>st</sup> Dr Katerina Velentza - "Archaeological evidence for past flooding & flood management in England - An East Yorkshire Case Study"**

Katerina is a maritime archaeologist and heritage professional, currently a Postdoctoral Research

Associate in Environmental Humanities at the University of Hull, working within the Energy and Environment Institute. She is the Principal Investigator on the project ‘Community Waterscapes: Supporting community heritage to explore and shape Hull’s relationship with water’, contributing with archaeological and heritage perspectives. Her talk is appropriate in this era of climate change and rising sea levels in a region badly affected by the floods of 2007 and 2013.

### **Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> Dr Clare Rainsford - "Old bones: what can we learn from archaeological animal bones"?**

A Cambridge graduate, with an MSc from the University of York and PhD from Bradford, Clare is one of the leading zooarchaeologists in this region. Now a freelancer based in York, Clare previously worked for York Archaeology on the bones from the Hungate excavations and has studied animal bones from excavations from the Orkney Islands to Southwest England. Most recently she has been working on the bones from the excavations on the later Bronze Age/ Iron Age ring fort and sanctuary at Kipling House farm, and Roman Brough.

### **March 18<sup>th</sup> Professor Tom Moore - “The Melsonby Hoard”**

Consisting of around 800 artefacts, the largest hoard of Iron Age metalwork yet found in the UK, the Melsonby hoard was discovered by detectorist Peter Heads close to the possible Brigantes capital at Stanwick, N. Yorks. It was excavated by a team led by Prof. Tom Moore of the Dept. of Archaeology, Durham University. The hoard which includes chariot wheels, cauldrons, horse bridles and spears is being studied by experts. Thanks to a public appeal and grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund it will remain in this region in the collections of the Yorkshire Museum in York.

### **April 15<sup>th</sup> Mary Anne Slater - Excavations at Skeffling, Holderness and ERAS AGM**

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

*Peter Halkon*



*Petuaria ReVisited excavation. Timbers exposed in the garden trench. Note also, the worked stone. Photo: Peter Halkon*

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

Lectures are always on the third Wednesday of the month and more details will be on our website.

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.

#### ***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. Recently 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](mailto: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