# *ERAS News*

***EAST RIDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY No. 105 MARCH 2026***

*University of York Skipsea Excavations 2025* *University of York*

*AGM ~ Diary dates ~ Field Studies ~ Alice Roberts ~ Skipsea ~ East Yorkshire Landscapes ~ New reports ~ Geology for archaeologists ~ Lecture summaries*

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This newsletter is produced twice a year: in March and in September.

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# *Your new editor*

*Paul Brayford*

It is with some trepidation that I pick up the torch carried by Kate Dennett for so many years as editor of this newsletter. I've been going back and reading a good few of the past issues on the ERAS website, and I hope I can maintain the quality she achieved.

A little bit about me:

I graduated with a degree in Archaeological Science from the University of Bradford in 1981. In the early 1980s, I spent a bit of time as a professional archaeologist working at Carlisle, Castleford and Wigan (all Roman sites in town centres) before going off to a more remunerative IT career. Now I'm retired, in theory with time on my hands!

I've been a member of ERAS for about 25 years (the memory is hazy!). I got involved in the resistivity surveys (according to ERAS News 53, I was "leading" – I don't remember that bit!). We did surveys near Rudston, at Hall Garth Beverley, on Walkington and Newbald Wolds (where we located various geological features, including the infamous "ear") and on Beverley Westwood, focusing on the square barrow cemetery. At some point, I was persuaded to join the ERAS committee and served as Chair for some time.

Since I retired, I've started a couple of small personal projects.

During last year's Heritage Open Days, I visited Etton and took a self-guided walk around the village. Local resident and photographer of prehistoric sites, Steven Speller, thinks that the mound, known as The Mount, at the rear of Low Hall, could be a prehistoric bowl barrow. I'm sceptical and think it is more likely a garden prospect mount for the late-medieval formal gardens at Low Hall, but it has set me off! I'm conscious that Jim Leary's work elsewhere has shown that such features can reuse earlier monuments, and we know there were several barrows in the area, as evidenced by the earliest OS mapping and the work of Mortimer and Greenwell.

I'd be interested to know if any other member has taken a look at this feature or Etton in general (obviously, there is the Knights Templar grange at the west end of the village, some nice undesignated medieval earthworks, and a scheduled moated site in Hall Close at the east end).

The Mount, Etton

I'm also collating a record of the archaeology within Molescroft parish, where I live. So far, I've been trawling the records available online, including Historic England's Aerial Archaeology Mapping Explorer. There are at least three other known moated sites, and a further site is thought to be the actual location of Woodhall Manor (though this is unlikely ever to be proven). At the western end of the parish are some possible Romano-British enclosures that show as cropmarks. George Oliver's History and Antiquities of Beverley (1829) suggests Roman coins were found in the foundations of old buildings, possibly one of the moated sites (though he points out this is hearsay!)

I'm looking forward to the report from the Dogger Bank South Offshore Wind Farm project on the phase 3 trial trenching for the cable route between Skipsea and Bentley, which took place in the northern part of the parish last summer, to see whether anything pre-medieval was found.

Hopefully, more of this in future newsletters!

# Local news

## Hull Town Walls

Image copyright Hull City Council

In January, a section of the late-14th-century town walls was found beneath Guildhall Road during works for Hull District Heating Network. They were probably last seen in the 1770s, when the walls were demolished. The Humber Field Archaeology field recorded what they could before the walls were covered again.

Peter Connelly is leading a walk around the area as part of the CBA's Out and About Archaeology week on Saturday, 23rd May.

More details on Eventbrite: "A Slice Through Time, Walking the Hull District Heating Network"

## Humber Young Archaeologists Club

Humber YAC has started its 2026 season of activity. YAC clubs are open to everyone aged 8–16 years and get involved in all sorts of activities, including visiting and investigating archaeological sites and historic places, trying out traditional crafts, taking part in excavations, and much more.

All indoor meetings now take place in the Petuaria Centre, Brough.

If you know of a youngster interested in exploring archaeology, get them along!

Meetings in the current session:

March 29th – Digital archaeology – look at how archaeologists use technology.

April 26th Archaeology in the field – Easter test pitting

May 31st Archaeology and the natural world- Brantingham Dale nature walk.

June 28th – Archaeology and People – Beverley scavenger hunt

July 26th – Archaeology in the field – Summer excavation TBC

September 27th – Archaeology and numbers – investigate how archaeologists use statistics and maths to plan their excavations.

Further details are on the new YAC website.
www.yac-uk.org/club/humber-yac/
or contact humbertimelines@gmail.com

## Treasure at Sewerby Hall

'Treasure! Hidden Hoards and Fabulous Finds is the new exhibition at Sewerby Hall and Gardens. Previously displayed at Beverley's Champney Treasure House in 2022-23, this exhibition highlights objects that are defined as treasure under the Treasure Act 1996 and explores this fascinating area of archaeology.

'The objects were all unearthed at sites across the East Riding, with many found by local metal detectorists. Each item offers a little glimpse into the lives of the people who lived here long ago.

'Treasure! runs until 19th August.

# *Digging for Britain in Skipsea*

*Excavation of a possible Anglo-Saxon malthouse at Skipsea* *University of York*

A series of discoveries during excavations led by Dr Jim Leary and Dr Elaine Jamieson of the University of York's Department of Archaeology is transforming perceptions of the late Anglo-Saxon period in northern Holderness.

The excavations featured on the BBC's series, *Digging for Britain*, which is available on BBC iPlayer until next year.

The flat landscape of Holderness, East Yorkshire, was once dotted with freshwater lakes and pools. These have been used for thousands of years and constitute a remarkable, largely unexplored archaeological resource.

The lakes have continually attracted people. Antiquarians and archaeologists have uncovered Mesolithic stone tools, animal remains, and bone harpoons from within them, as well as Neolithic and Bronze Age structures and trackways at their edges. Today, the remains of a large motte-and-bailey castle built by Drogo de la Beuvrière around AD 1071-86 dominate the landscape. Radiocarbon dating conducted by an earlier project suggests that the mound was probably constructed during the Iron Age.

The current excavations have uncovered evidence of high-status Anglo-Saxon buildings and industry, including a possible malthouse, a timber tower, and a large hall used for feasting and assemblies. These findings suggest that Skipsea was the centre of an elite Anglo-Saxon estate where authority was exercised socially: through assemblies, hospitality, food renders, and legal proceedings.

The work is taking place in a field known as Sparrow Croft, about 225 metres from the Norman castle, and forms part of a six-year research project that began in 2023. ERAS

members have been able to visit the site over the last few years.

The structure, believed to be a malthouse, dated to between CE 750-850, includes a drying oven and an adjoining clay floor, once enclosed within a timber-framed, wattle-and-daub building. This was discovered beneath the later pre-Norman timber hall excavated in the 2023 and 2024 seasons.

Nearby, a square sunken feature lined with timber and mortar was found. This is thought to be the cellar of a wooden tower, possibly used as a watchtower, bell tower or even a tower-nave church.

“We know the area later belonged to the last Anglo-Saxon king of England, Harold Godwinson, before becoming the estate centre of the Lords of Holderness after the Norman Conquest. Although we have not yet found any evidence that Harold Godwinson ever visited Skipsea, our discoveries fit with a landscape shaped by power and wealth in the late Anglo-Saxon period,” explained Jim Leary.

In addition, Accumulations of pottery and animal bones along the wetland edge indicate activity from the late prehistoric period.

A lecture by Drs Leary and Jamieson to the Royal Archaeological Institute, entitled *Life on the lake: the prehistory and history of Skipsea, Holderness,* is available to view on YouTube.

Hopefully, Jim Leary and Elaine Jamieson will return to update ERAS members in detail in a lecture soon, and the Field Studies Group will arrange a return visit to the site in 2026

## *Field Studies Update*

*Matt Walker* fieldstudieseras@gmail.com

In the Autumn, Chris Hannard, our hard-working committee member and keen metal detectorist, hosted an evening of the Field Studies group. He talked about metal detecting, including the ethics of responsible detecting. He brought in some of the amazing local finds he has accumulated over the years from his private special collection for members to look at. We have also continued to catalogue the Skiff Lane Roman pottery assemblage.

This year, I am leading members in some practical workshops, putting them in the shoes of a site director. The first session focused on interpreting geophysical results and determining where to position evaluation trenches to achieve the best outcomes. I also explained why commercial sites use evaluation trenches and briefly covered other factors that go into choosing where to place trenches ahead of development (such as desk-based assessments and crop mark evidence). The remaining sessions will be broken down to the following stages: figuring out where to excavate intervention slots in the archaeology and how to interpret sections/profile relationships etc; how to create a Harris Matrix; how to analyse find assemblages and c14 dates etc, and to use these methods to phase a site; and finally - how to build the interpretation of a site using all the processes previously covered, in addition to incorporating all specialist reports, environmental data etc. I also aim to fit in a practical session on cataloguing flint tools at some point.

These sessions are to break up the dreary winter months. When we get lighter nights, we will hopefully do some field visits. A couple of options include visiting the York University excavations at Skipsea in May, helping to do the Spurn foreshore survey, a tour of St Mary's Church, and a final tour at the end of the Brough excavations. More events may be added as opportunities arise.

# *ERAS Lecture summaries*

*Paul Brayford*

## *Richard Lamb – Lead Smelting Mills of the Yorkshire Dales*

17th September 2025

Richard Lamb has undertaken extensive fieldwork and research on the lead-smelting mills of the Yorkshire Dales over the past four decades.

Richard took us through the development of the lead smelting process to extract the metal from ores, from the bales (basically bonfires) used throughout the medieval period to the ore-hearths used from the sixteenth century to the reverberatory furnaces that began appearing in the 18th century.

Those who walk a lot in the Dales would have recognised many of the sites Richard described, including sites in Swaledale (where, at Marrick in 1574/5 the first Yorkshire smelting mill was built)) and Arkengarthdale.

Ore-hearths used foot- or water-powered bellows and were built inside mills. They burnt dried wood, known as chopwood, which was dried in a kiln over a slow fire. Some remains of such kilns near Grassington have been mistaken for Iron Age roundhouses.

Peat was also used, and drying structures for peat can be found at Surrender Mill.

A particularly interesting design is the Octagon Mill in Arkengarthdale. This was operated between 1803 and 1822, fell into disuse in the early 220th century, and was demolished in the 1960s. It contained six ore hearths and a large waterwheel. There is no particular precedent for the shape, but there is a question of Wesleyan influence.

Reverberatory furnaces used coal as fuel. The first in Yorkshire was a cupola mill at Marrick in Swaledale, built in 1701, but it only lasted a few years. At the end of the 18th century, two more were built in Grassington.

Octagon Mill, Arkengarthdale in the 1920s © Northern Mines Research Society

## *Dr Jason Monaghan – A Yorkshire-style small Roman fort on Alderney*

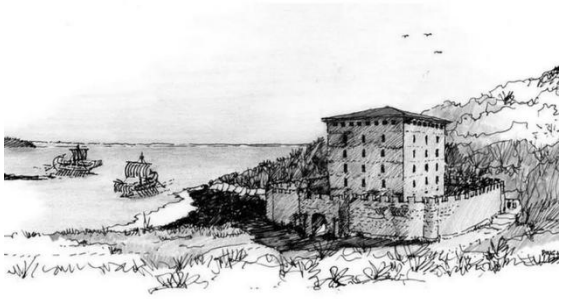
15th October 2025

Jason was formerly the Roman pottery specialist for the York Archaeological Trust and became Director of Guernsey Museums. Currently, he combines archaeology with thriller and crime writing and has published widely. For some years, he and a team have been investigating a small Roman fort at a site known as the Nunnery alongside Londis beach on Alderney. With a central tower, the outer walls resemble those of the so-called signal stations of the north Yorkshire coast (Huntcliff, Goldsborough, Scarborough, Filey ), but it is much better preserved, so it should help in the interpretation of those sites, which are no longer thought to be signal stations, partly because they are not in sight of each other.

Unlike other Roman structures, it is not heavily robbed. It appears to have been in more-or-less continuous use for 1700 years, containing the remains of structures from the Medieval, Tudor, Napoleonic, and modern eras, built on top of one another. During WW2, it was used by the German military in the occupation of the Channel Islands, who built a Type 501 bunker exactly inside the Roman tower, treating the north and south internal walls as shuttering to

pour concrete. The subsequent uses had destroyed any evidence of the Roman tower's internal structures or floors.

Based on examination of the surviving masonry, the Roman walls are estimated to have been about 6.8m high (about 4.9m above modern ground level).



An artist's impression of how the Nunnery could have looked in Roman times © States of Alderney

The report 'A Late Roman Fort on Alderney' is expected to be published by BAR in mid-2026.

### *Prof Ian Armit – Exploring kinship at the Iron Age cemetery of Wetwang Slack, East Yorkshire*

19th November 2025

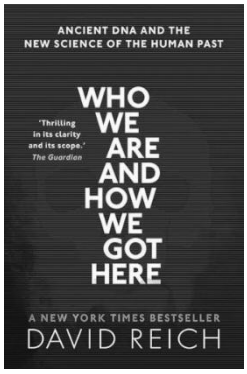
The large Iron Age square barrow cemetery at Wetwang/Garton Slack was excavated from 1963 until 1989 by the Granthams and T.C.M. Brewster, followed by John Dent. In 1971, the first chariot burial was excavated at Garton Slack, with three chariots excavated at Wetwang Slack in 1984 by John Dent. The chariot burials were only part of Britain's largest excavated Iron Age cemetery, with 450 burials. Professor Armit has been leading a project in collaboration with Professor David Reich and the team at Harvard Medical School on ancient DNA and kinship analysis at Wetwang, yielding astonishing results that shed new light on Iron Age society in this region.

A previous Bayesian analysis of the Carbon-14 ($^{14}$C) dates indicates the cemetery was short-lived, from 295-205 BCE to 210-140 BC.

Recent advances in ancient DNA analysis have made it possible to analyse the genomes of buried populations to explore biological relationships among individuals. This has revealed an intricate network of family relations over ten generations (compared with the date span from the $^{14}$C analysis), with a strong emphasis on descent through the female line. Analysis of the chariot burials showed a degree of inbreeding not seen elsewhere, suggesting a special lineage.

Ian reminded us that although we may look for kinship patterns in biological data, kinship is a socially constructed concept and can include bonds based on adoption, assimilation, ideology, and aspiration.

New results from the *Communities and Connectivities: Iron Age Britons and their Continental Neighbours* (COMMIOS) project are due to be published in early 2026, so I am not able to give some of the details here that Ian revealed to us.




Meantime, members may be interested in David Reich's book about ancient DNA: "Who We Are and How We Got Here".

Publ. 2019 OUP Oxford

ISBN: 978-0198821267

### *Dr Nick Summerton – Roman Emperors and their illnesses: the challenges of retrospective diagnosis*

17th December 2025

Nick, a former GP and classical medicine expert, has written several books on the topic, including Greco-Roman Medicine and What It Can Teach Us Today (Pen and Sword Books, 2021). In this talk, he used modern medical insights to analyse ailments of Roman Emperors described in ancient texts.

Nick has a special interest in the interface between the present and the past, and what we can learn from the past by using modern ideas to interpret it. He talked about retrospective diagnosis, the practice of

identifying an illness in a historical figure after the figure's death, based on present-day understanding.

He set out some of the challenges: context, language, disease, information, and outputs.

Taking context into account, one of the issues is understanding the framework of thought at the time: for instance, humoural theory proposes that human health relies on the balance of four bodily fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. Sickness was believed to be caused by an imbalance, deficiency, or excess in one or more of these humours. Also, an understanding that beliefs could focus on a particular organ as being the most important, particularly the liver. So, Suetonius emphasised that Emperor Augustus had liver damage, a point later picked up by more recent authors. But by studying the ancient texts, it's more likely that he had long-term lung disease with a good prognosis: he lived until he was 75.

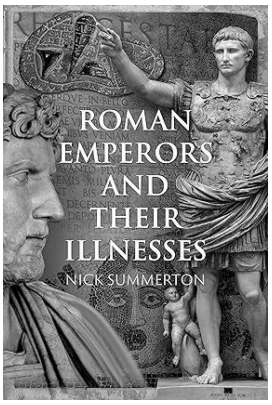
In the past, elements of language have been equated to particular medical diagnoses. So, Vespasian's suffering of *podagra* (swelling of the foot and extreme pain) has been assumed to be gout, but it's possible that it was a stress fracture in the foot after a life of heavy military marching.

Equally, concepts of disease are different now from those of the Roman period. Nick talked about the various understandings over time of what the Antonine Plague might have been, especially now that we can access DNA evidence from the time. Caligula provides an interesting case: was his behaviour a result of a brain injury, a psychiatric disorder, or a megalomania emphasised by the imperial environment (as Ludwig Quidde suggested in Caligula: A Study in Roman Imperial Insanity)?

The information we rely on tends to come from written sources, with all their biases of authorship, uses of language, the survival of sources, the effects of translation and copying, and so on. At the moment, we don't have the bodies for palaeopathology (unlike the mediaevalists and Richard III!)

Finally, the outputs are about the audience. Who was the audience for the various descriptions? A case study is the retrospective diagnosis of Hadrian based on representations of his image, but these do not contain, if they do, clinical data; rather, they reflect artistic stylings and political messaging.

We should remember that at an ethical level, the patient cannot request a second opinion or further testing!




Nick's latest book, Roman Emperors and Their Illnesses, was published in January 2026 by Pen & Sword History.

### *Dr Katerina Velentza – Archaeological evidence for past flooding and flood management in England – an East Yorkshire case study*

21st January 2026

Katerina, an ERAS committee member, maritime archaeologist and heritage professional, is 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 was most appropriate in this era of climate change and rising sea levels in a region badly affected by the floods of 2007 and 2013.

Katerina started her lecture by summarising the drivers of climate change, the changes to

the Earth's climate system they cause, and the wide range of impacts, including localised and coastal flooding. She then covered the four types of flood risk in the UK: river (fluvial), coastal (tidal), surface (pluvial), and groundwater, before showing some historical examples from across the country. Katerina then described the research question that had been set by Prof. Briony Donagh of the University of Hull's *Risky Cities: Living with Water in an Uncertain Future Climate* project: *Is there any archaeological evidence for past flooding?* Katerina pointed out that archaeology is a useful tool, it has, for a long time, been tracking natural phenomena and environmental changes that happened in the past and how they affected humans. Also, because current environmental change is human-induced we can also use archaeology to understand the culture and activities of people that led to the current climate crisis, and archaeology can also track human-environment interactions in specific spaces and landscapes over extended periods of time.

Katerina described her methodology of searching for relevant data across multiple sources, remarking that it was difficult to find relevant material for a variety of reasons. In this region, she had been able to identify evidence of post-flood clean-up efforts at Hull's South Blockhouse; flood defences in 17th century Hull, medieval Broomfleet Island and sites in south Holderness, and of course drainage infrastructure in the Hull Valley and Holderness. She concludes that there is evidence of a range of types for past flooding events, but also that archaeological research can help identify areas prone to flooding; help learn from successful and unsuccessful flood management strategies; and enable creative means of awareness-raising to help people understand risks. She rounded up by highlighting the Community Waterscapes project which aims to create a digital, community-created heritage record of people's connection to water to aid dialogue among Hull communities and cultural gatekeepers. She asked ERAS members to contribute photo observations of heritage at risk of flooding to PuddleWatch, preceding the description of the photo with the word "heritage:" (https://www.puddlewatch.co.uk/)

## *Dr Clare Rainsford – Old bones: what can we learn from archaeological animal bones*

18th February 2026

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.

Clare started her lecture by showing the 'dryness' of a standard zooarchaeological report but went on to highlight what we could learn from the study of animal bones from archaeological excavations. We can see what people ate; what they used animals for; what wild animals lived alongside them; where animals may have come from (using isotope analysis); and, how they were incorporated into belief systems.

We often think that humans created the world we live in, but Clare pointed out that animals were co-creators (with humans) of past worlds.

She discussed her work on the assemblage at Brough, showing the use of colourful pie charts (rather than dry tables) to illustrate the different numbers of each animal

represented in the data. There was an interesting discussion about the different sheep parts found at Brough, leading to a hypothesis that the meatiest joints were being processed and sent elsewhere.

Zooarchaeology does not just look at bones; it also examines craft products made from them. Things like antler combs, pig fibula pins, drinking horns and goose bones, possibly used in fletching arrows.

Then, inevitably, there is ritual! Amongst other examples, the pony burial at Pocklington, the pig bones at Nunburnholme, and the cattle skulls at Kipling House Farm (which form an ongoing project examining aspects of ancient DNA, isotope analysis, and further zooarchaeological analysis).

What lived amongst us, usually microfauna, can tell some interesting tales (or should that be tails?) As long as York has existed, it has been populated by rats. In the Hungate excavations, uninhabited premises could be identified by the prevalence of rat remains. At St Leonards Hospital, derelict "brownfield" land could be identified not only by rats but also by other small species taking up residence.

Clare finished up by answering the question: Old Bones, what's the point of 'em? People have always lived with animals: hunted them, ate them, sacrificed them, painted them, wore them, kept them as pets, and were buried with them. To ignore the animals around us is to ignore a vital part of being human.

Mid-fifth-century grave with warrior and horse at Lakenheath Air Force Base, Suffolk. Photo by Suffolk County Council.

## *A plea from the Editor!*

You may have noticed that the lecture summaries are all written by the newsletter editor from his (at times not very good) notes. I think it would be much more interesting if there were other people prepared to write summaries. If you think you could contribute a summary of a lecture in the next season, please let me know!

# *An Evening with the excellent Professor Alice Roberts*

*Kate Dennett*

Professor Alice Roberts, the TV archaeology presenter, was at Hull City Hall last October, as part of a promotional tour for her latest book, *Domination*, which examines the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity. On a winter evening, in the somewhat bleak and often deserted centre of Hull, it was heartening to see that the event was fully booked.

I rather think that some people (myself included) might have glanced at her name and assumed they were going to see something akin to an episode of *Digging for Britain*.

However, Prof. Roberts strode purposefully onto the stage in a glamorous gown, speaking with clear diction and considerable humour, and using a background screen to display a few images. She held her audience for two and a half hours, with only a short break.

Prof. Roberts argues that Christianity's success was due to its use of Roman-style establishment methods. Elite families used money and land to establish centres of learning that other privileged families sent their young to attend. These young people often travelled widely to complete their education and then gained influence, sometimes beginning as bishops and later becoming saints. In fact, even the humblest, ascetic saints typically came from wealthy, elite backgrounds. During this early period, "saints" were common, as there was no need for papal approval. Rumours of miracles spread quickly and widely. Hagiographies (saints' biographies that magnified their holiness and ignored their flaws), often written centuries later, became part of the literature across the empire.

Prof. Roberts' presentation fell into two parts, and I much preferred the first half, which set out the archaeological evidence for early Christianity. Starting with inscriptions on stones in St. Iltud's medieval church at Llantwit Major in Wales, she went on to summarise the evidence, concentrating mainly on Wales, Cornwall, Brittany and Ireland. In the second half, Prof. Roberts returned to the stage in a slightly different mode and launched into the story of the Roman Emperors and their power struggles. She used humour to sail through the complexity and horror of these power games, to such an extent that I thought she must surely have been taking lessons from BBC Radio 4's comedian and classicist, Natalie Haynes!

Although it is not really my period of interest, the event prompted me to buy the book. After reading it, I am full of admiration for the scope of Prof. Roberts' research and the balance and thoughtfulness of her observations. My understanding of events involving "Barbarians" and "Visigoths" has been completely transformed.

Greg Bailey, in his regular column in CBA's magazine *British Archaeology* (Issue 196, 2024), mused as to whether Alice Roberts and the much-loved and respected *Digging for Britain* BBC TV series might be a suitable vehicle for tackling some of the bigger questions of archaeological theory. In my view, this would be a very positive move. Perhaps someone has taken notice of Greg's suggestion, as the January 28th episode did expand slightly to examine the looming crisis in the storage of archaeological material. The programme tends to focus on "finds", and I am convinced that Alice Roberts' presentation skills would be the perfect vehicle for gradually introducing a bit more theory so that viewers can appreciate the many big questions that still need answering in archaeology, without taking away the sparkle. It would be a better fit for the excellent Prof. Roberts than pursuing the sometimes rather shallow TV travelogue approach, and certainly better for archaeology.

# *East Yorkshire Landscapes Past and Present*

**Pocklington Heritage Festival 2025**

*Paul Brayford*

On a very wet Saturday in November, I drove over to Pocklington for this excellent conference that showcased the landscape of the Wolds and its hinterland, exploring aspects of geology, water supply and the way people and animals have interacted with the landscape over a long period of time.

## *The Geology and Landscape of the Pocklington District*

*Richard Myerscough – Yorkshire Wolds Reassessment Project (WRAP)*

Richard started proceedings by exploring the relationship between geology and the local landscape. He reminded us that 60 million years ago, chalk covered the whole of the country and has since been eroded laterally and vertically, leaving vestiges of the chalk formation in the Yorkshire Wolds and further south. He emphasised that the Wolds landscape is a product of erosion and not glaciation, the high levels of carbonic acid in the rains and rivers throughout the Tertiary period forming a karst landscape with distinctive features including the dry valleys but also windy pits such as at Kilnwick Percy. He pointed out that some of the chalk is extremely hard and had been quarried for use as a building stone, possibly even used for tesserae instead of marble.

A particularly interesting part of his discussion was about faults in the chalk. He raised the likelihood that many of the Wolds entrenchments may not be human-constructed earthworks but geological in origin, aligned with the faults identified in recent geological mapping projects.

Richard also talked about the chalk aquifer, so important to life on the Wolds, and that it is also controlled by the faults in the chalk.

## *A World of Water, Dragons and Dew Ponds*

*Jon Traill – Yorkshire Wildlife Trust*

Jon continued the story of water on the Wolds. He pointed out that 20% of the UK's water enters the sea by the Humber yet not far from it are some of the driest areas.

Jon talked about the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust-led Hull and East Riding Catchment Partnership, which is an initiative with multiple partners to maximise the natural value of our environment.

'Chalkshire' is Britain's most northerly chalk outcrop, and a number of projects are being run to improve chalk stream quality.

He spent some time describing a project to restore heritage dewponds at farms on the High Wolds. Constructed in the 18th-20th centuries, these are not true dew ponds but filled from rainwater. With changes in farming practice, land use and water supplies most have fallen into disrepair or been filled in. Working with farmers ponds have been fully restored, and the farmers have been taught how to manage them. The hope is that the ponds will become havens for wildlife and sources of enjoyment for future generations.

## *Revisiting Ancient Landscapes of the Yorkshire Wolds*

*Matthew Oakey – Historic England*

Many will be aware of Cathy Stoertz' ground-breaking volume publishing the results of RCHME's Yorkshire Wolds National Mapping Project of the 1990s, which hand-mapped the pre-medieval archaeological information found on over 35,000 aerial photographs taken between the 1950s and 1991. Matthew's talk explored how further aerial survey in the last 35 years has continued to develop our understanding of the archaeology on the Wolds. He showed a

range of examples of new discoveries and emphasised that with subsequent mapping projects (such as those in the Chalk Lowlands and Hull Valley, and Holderness) and new techniques (e.g. LiDAR), all archaeological sites detected were being mapped.

He announced the launch of the Aerial Archaeology Mapping Explorer on the Historic England website, which together with the Aerial Photo Explorer, launched in 2022, provides a fantastic resource for us. The mapping explorer contains all the results from the previous publications and is being added to progressively (n.b. large areas of Holderness are not yet covered)

*[When I got home that evening, I went and played with this explorer and was delighted to find much more archaeological evidence in Molescroft parish than I had gleaned before, including a new (to me) moated site.]*

## *Seeing Beneath the Soil - Geophysical Surveys in Eastern Yorkshire*

*James Lyall, Geophiz.biz*

In a talk that was complementary in many respects to Matthew Oakey's, James discussed the (mostly magnetic) geophysical surveys of great swaths of eastern Yorkshire that he has conducted over recent decades, including the southern part of the Vale of Pickering, and the Great Wold Valley. The first part of the talk focussed on a run-through of the various sites he has investigated, from Neolithic monuments including long barrows, round barrows, cursuses (or cursi) and henges. He moved onto Late Bronze Age pit alignments and then Iron Age square barrow cemeteries and described the difficulties using different techniques: for instance, at Arras magnetometry had identified 31 square barrows while the aerial photography had shown cropmarks of 63. He'd explored a number of Roman villas and Romano-British sites. Of course, his career started with the Landscape Research Centre, where he surveyed huge areas of the Anglo-Saxon / early medieval settlements at East and West Heslerton, he has also investigated other early medieval settlements, and later medieval settlements.

He talked through some particular case studies in the areas closer to Pocklington, including Kipling House Farm; Brough (where ground penetrating radar (GPR) has also been used); and the Roman road at Stamford Bridge, which produced intriguing results.

*Editor's note*

*James gave a similar talk in the CBA Yorkshire Fireside Chats series, which can be accessed via cba-yorkshire.org.uk*

## *Livestock and Landscape in Later Prehistoric and Roman Eastern Yorkshire*

*Dr Clare Rainsford, Independent Zooarchaeologist*

Clare is a specialist in the analysis of animal bones from archaeological sites. She talked about the animal bone assemblages at various sites. Her observation of the mix of species identified is that both the type of site and location have an influence. She started with Roman and Romano-British sites. At the military settlements of York, Catterick and Malton there are lots of cattle, then sheep, pig, chicken and dog remains (albeit fewer cattle and more sheep at Malton, which may be related to the steepness of the Wolds hillsides being used for food production). Rural sites such as Shiptonthorpe and Wetwang have a much greater proportion of sheep (chickens being entirely absent at Wetwang).

At Brough, however, the mix of pig, sheep and cattle was more evenly split, though analysis of the sheep bones suggests that the butchered meat from the animals was being taken elsewhere.

At Melton, there were fewer pigs represented with equal amounts of sheep and cows. There were lots of mainly local

wildlife such as birds and oysters, possibly from oyster beds in the Humber.

Moving on to the Iron Age sites of Kipling House Farm and Nunburnholme, Clare said that at Kipling House Farm *(as previously reported in ERAS News 91)* there was a higher than expected proportion of cattle bone, including a large number of cattle heads deposited in one episode while still fleshed, suggesting a deliberate ritualised action rather than simple food waste disposal. Clare had conducted lots of analysis using multi-stranded techniques and identified that males tended to be young and females old, and theorised that the deposits represent animals not wanted in the herds. At Nunburnholme, the assemblage was mostly sheep, then cattle and pig. In one pit, evidence of water voles had been found. There was some evidence of ritual activity associated with pigs. The weight of evidence overall is that sheep are not subject to ritual activity, but pigs and cattle are.

*Editor's note*

*The Kipling House Farm cattle heads are being published in the Journal of Archaeological Science, see* dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5737194 *for the review draft*

## *Forty Years Researches on a Past East Yorkshire Landscape*

*Dr Peter Halkon, Pocklington and District Heritage Trust and ERAS*

Since Peter was reprising his talk delivered at the ERAS AGM last April, I lazily took almost no notes. Although it must be said that the title in echoing that of Mortimer's tome is a little inaccurate because Peter has been active since at least 1980, when he started his work in the Foulness Valley, so it should be *More than Forty Years ..!*

Peter took us through his research starting in the Foulness Valley and moving on to more recent projects in the western Wolds. He pointed out that archaeological evidence starts with an Acheulean handaxe from Hotham and evidence of straight-tusked mammoths and elephants in the Foulness Valley. The return of human activity after the last Ice Age is represented by Mesolithic activity clustered around the glacial lakes, with evidence around Everingham.

The Storegga Slides in approximately 6225–6170 BCE led to sea incursions up the Humber valley forming a tidal inlet in what is now Walling Fen and estuarine conditions up the Foulness Valley.

Further marine incursions at the beginning of the Iron Age around 800-500BCE had changed what had been a forested freshwater environment into an estuarine environment with tidal creeks.

Peter reflected on the importance of taking a holistic approach to the Wolds and the wetlands. For instance, a connection between hillfort sites, dykes, and stock and water management.

He pointed out the lessons for today about human resilience being demonstrated in adaptations to dramatic landscape changes.

*Editor's note*

*From my perspective, the lesson of the day was the interdisciplinary nature of archaeological research, evident in the inter-relationships between dry and wet environments, geology and archaeology, people and animals, the present and the past. This is becoming increasingly important, and the thread is woven into ERAS own talks this season.*

# *Council for British Archaeology Beatrice De Cardi Lecture*

**York February 2026**

## *'Rewilding' later prehistory: Archaeological wildlife and its role in current nature recovery*

*Dr Anwen Cooper, Oxford Archaeology*

*The CBA honours its first Secretary and a leading woman archaeologist of the 20th century at an annual lecture after the AGM. This year it took place in York.*

Dr Cooper gave a lecture about the fascinating *'Rewilding' later prehistory* project, which recasts the nature conservation concept of 'rewilding' to reveal the 'wonder and enchantment' of archaeological wildlife, its relevance to contemporary environmental concerns, and its role in current nature recovery.

Like our own Katerina Velentza, Dr Cooper recognises the part that archaeology can play in helping us think about different but inter-related global environmental problems: the climate and biodiversity crises.

The project has four aims:

- to create a novel, holistic account of Bronze and Iron Age ecologies that prioritise the wild;
- to develop an archaeological take on the term "Rewilding";
- to create, with environmental archaeologists from across the sector, a centralised, sustainable digital infrastructure for plant and animal remains metadata;
- mixing up archaeological research dynamics, so that developer-funded archaeology moves from being a data provider to being at the centre of a collaborative network.

The project has collected all Bronze and Iron Age plant and animal remains data and interpreted evidence for prehistoric wildlife across five case study areas: Thames Valley, Wales, North Eastern England; West Sussex and the East Anglian Fens. This is over a thousand sites and nearly a hundred thousand records for nearly 1.5 million individual animal and plant remains, including objects made from plant or animal materials. Wild plant remains make up more than half of the plant remains recovered from archaeological sites. Wild animal remains are a minority dataset: 5-10% of animal bones recovered.

By looking at different sets of data across the study areas the project was able to investigate temporal patterns of different wildlife over the period: when species decline and go extinct, or when they become more prevalent.

They also identified that people were selective (unsurprisingly) in their choice of woods to work for objects. Looking at bone and antler objects, they have been able to identify that 'everyday' objects tend to be made from domesticated animals, whereas 'special' objects tend to be made from wild species.

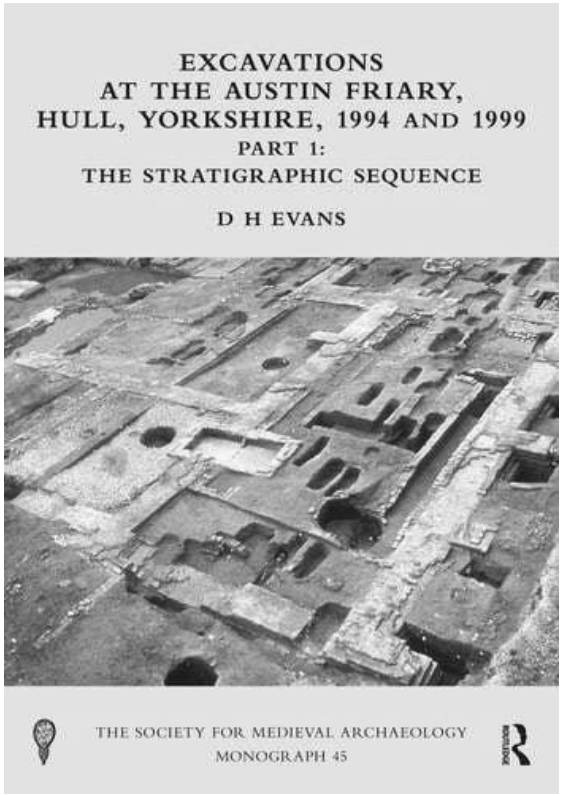
Other aspects of the projects have looked at plant remains in funerary contexts, and horse-human relationships in prehistoric Britain.

The last part of the lecture related to work with modern rewilding projects, such as at the Knepp Castle Estate in West Sussex, where the evidence database has been able to inform the work that the team at Knepp are doing. This resulted in a document about what archaeology can do with nature recovery and habitat creation, called the *Knepp Accord*. Another (contentious) project being worked with is at the Rothbury Estate in the Simonside Hills of Northumberland where rewilding ambitions are in conflict with people's understanding of their landscape heritage.

The lecture can be watched on YouTube via youtube.com/@CouncilforBritishArchaeology

# New Publications

## *Excavations at the Austin Friary, Hull, Yorkshire, 1994 and 1999, Part 1: The Stratigraphic Sequence by D H Evans*




A new monograph by our member, Dr D H Evans FSA, has been published in the Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph series; it is the first of three volumes devoted to the extensive programme of excavation which took place on the site of the Hull Austin friary during the 1990s. (See ERAS News 43 and 49 for early coverage of these excavations)

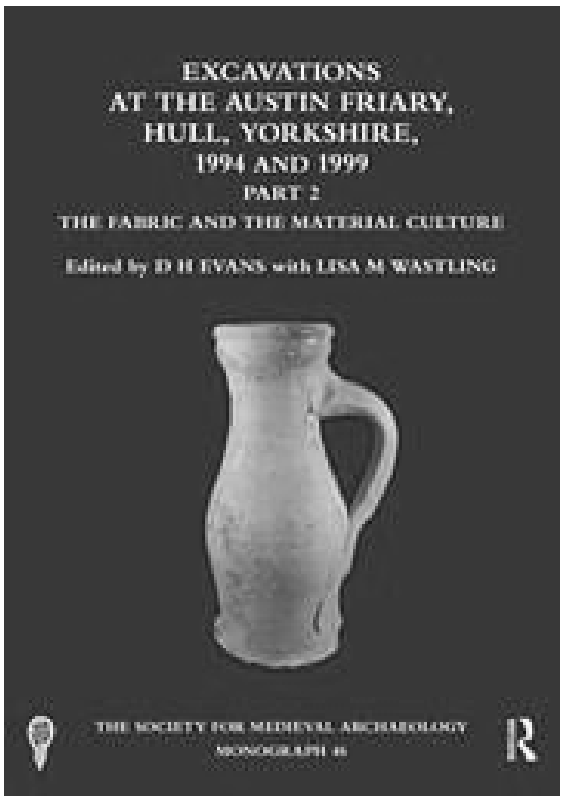
This religious house was founded in 1316/17 as a daughter-house of the York Austin friary. It would be the very last of the Order to surrender to the Crown, on 10 March 1539. This monastery was located in the heart of the medieval Old Town, next to its marketplace. It was excavated in 1994 and 1999 prior to re-development of the site. The results are being published in three parts, this being the first one. The excavations recovered substantial elements of the main friary buildings, and the layout of over 70% of the entire precinct can now be reconstructed.

The medieval structural sequence included the remains of a dozen temporary buildings, an early timber church, and a well-preserved later medieval acoustic passage. Anaerobic waterlogged conditions favoured the survival of organic remains and structures. Some 260 articulated burials were recovered, associated with important sepulchral remains, including 44 oak coffins, a significant assemblage of textile remains and a wealth of dress-accessories. Almost all the coffins, which can be closely dated, were made of imported Baltic oak, making this the largest assemblage of medieval Baltic oak to have been found in England.

At the Dissolution, the friary seems to have escaped major damage to its fabric, and within a year much of it had been converted into a large secular holding. Some of its buildings would still be standing to their full height as late as the 1790s, albeit with substantial modifications and changes of use. Later activity on this site includes the development and use of three public houses, the construction of a Georgian Butchers' Shambles and a Victorian Market Hall. In May 1941 the whole area was extensively bombed and largely razed to the ground during the Hull Blitz.

*Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph series no. 45 (2025).*
*ISBN 9781041075721*
*376 Pages 82 Colour & 142 B/W Illustrations*
*Published October 29, 2025 by Routledge.*
*Price £39.99 paperback; £33.99 e-book*

## *Excavations at the Austin Friary, Hull, Yorkshire, 1994 and 1999, Part 2: The Fabric and the Material Culture*
## *By D H Evans, Lisa M. Wastling*



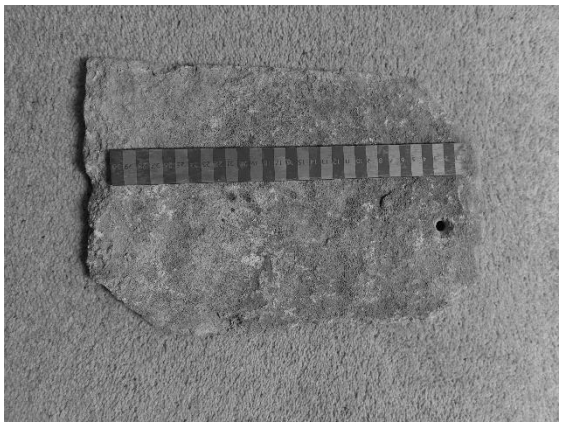

Due in June, is the second monograph in the series.

This volume concentrates on the material culture recovered during the excavations. The site yielded a nationally significant group of medieval coffins, all but one of which were made of imported Baltic oak – the largest assemblage of such timber from the whole of Britain. There were also significant collections of well-preserved textiles, leather, wood and dress-accessories. In addition, some of the burials were accompanied by carefully placed wooden rods, an under-reported burial tradition which can be found on either side of the North Sea. Many of the monastic buildings were reused after the Dissolution in 1539; partly in consequence, a large assemblage of masonry and ceramic building materials was recovered from this site. There were also significant collections of floor tiles (both plain and decorated), and window-glass, whilst other finds include rare finds of musical instrument components. Cumulatively, this volume sheds significant light upon a full range of aspects of life and death within this northern religious house for a period of over two centuries, as well as offering yet more valuable evidence about Hull's extensive medieval trading-links, as one of England's leading ports.

*Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph series no. 46 (2026).*
*ISBN 9781041075776*
*354 Pages 67 Colour & 136 B/W Illustrations*
*Published June 5, 2026 by Routledge.*
*Price £39.99 paperback; £33.99 e-book*

## *Roman Roof 'Slates' and Flagstones of East Yorkshire*

*Richard Myerscough*



Have you ever come across this type of tile before?

From Roman sites come several types of stone roof tiles or 'slates' together with larger flagstones. A 'slate' is defined as a fissile rock that splits easily into thinner sheets the most seen being Welsh slate on Victorian roofs. Many of these can still be observed on present day buildings.

**Upper Carboniferous (West Riding of Yorkshire) 298 million years ago**

These beds exhibit a rhythmic sequence of shales, coals and sandstones laid down in a deltaic environment. The buff grey to brown sandstones split easily along bedding planes of the mineral mica to produce Elland Flags with local Pennine variations. Larger slabs were worked as flagstones often under the trade name 'York Stone.' Both are common on many local Roman and Medieval sites but can be confused with similar rocks from the Middle Jurassic of NE Yorkshire. Examples: York, Brough, Eastfield and Harpham.

**Upper Permian (West Riding of Yorkshire) 251 million years ago**

From the so-called Upper Magnesian Limestone come a succession of thinly yellow bedded dolomitic limestones which have been used as roofing slates. Examples: York and Skipwith. Upper Jurassic (North and East Riding) 163 million years ago

These are a sequence of alternating marine sandstone, clays and limestones laid down in a shallow fluctuating sea. Although better known for their building stones a few examples of 'slates' are known from the so called 'Passage Beds' between the sandstones and limestones, whilst some of the white to grey fossiliferous limestones are fissile enough to be split into 'Wall Stones' On the North Yorkshire Moors at Boltby Moor "Slate Quarries and "Flag Quarries" are recorded from these beds. Examples: Eastfield ('slate' like examples recovered but no evidence for use), Burton Agnes Church (where many 'slates' were uncovered during repairs to a wall).

**Middle Jurassic (North and East Yorkshire) 161 million years ago**

A sequence of sandstones, shales, ironstones, and limestones laid down in a deltaic environment. The sandstones are fissile enough to split into 'slates and flags' and can be confused with Elland. Some limestones are also fissile enough to be split into 'slates and flags' for use as roof tiles, floor/roof slabs, and prehistoric cist burials. These include the fossiliferous reddish brown Brandsby 'Slate' and the northern reddish brown flaggy fossiliferous equivalent of the Cave Oolite, known as the Lebberston Member. Examples of both: Eastfield and Langton.

**Supply of Materials**

Research is suggesting a supply of roofing materials not only from the West Riding but also from the North Yorkshire Moors and Howardian Hills but the choices made as too which 'slate' was used is still to be determined.

# What the papers say – interesting reads from academia

## Cereal crops in Yorkshire (4000BCE – 1100 CE)

Neal Payne, University of Cambridge

*Vegetation History and Archaeobotany*

Neal Payne summarises his PhD thesis based on a comprehensive examination of the archaeobotanical record from 629 archaeological sites across Yorkshire. This dataset included 156 sites in the East Riding.

He traced the long-term trajectories of cereals from their Neolithic introduction to the Norman conquest. In Neolithic Yorkshire, barley and emmer wheat were the primary cereals, with barley consistently present in the archaeobotanical record. Spelt, introduced during the Early Bronze Age, surpassed emmer and barley by the Middle Iron Age. There is little evidence of change during the Roman Period; crop practices maintained continuity from earlier periods. However, a significant shift in cereal cultivation occurred post-Roman, influenced by social changes and climatic factors, leading to a decline in spelt and a sustained prevalence of barley. Oats, rye, and free-threshing wheat remained minor until the post-Roman Period.

He concludes that Roman Period arable practices were firmly rooted in pre-existing Iron Age traditions, with little alteration following conquest. There is a significant transition in the post-Roman Period away from a spelt wheat agriculture to barley agriculture complemented by other emerging free-threshing cereals, possibly driven by cultural responses to climatic factors.

doi.org/10.1007/S00334-025-01045-8

## Reconstructing prehistoric land cover and landuse in complex 'blue-green' landscapes

M. Jane Bunting, University of Hull and others

*Vegetation History and Archaeobotany*

A Multiple Scenario Approach was applied to the Humberhead Levels to improve land cover interpretations from pollen analysis by considering pollen production, dispersal, and sedimentary basin properties. This method aimed to produce quantitative land cover reconstructions for four prehistoric periods: late Mesolithic (4750–4250 bce), middle Neolithic (3350–2850 bce), early Bronze Age (2350–1850 bce), and Iron Age (800–300 bce). The study confirms previous findings of wet woodland and raised mire development in the middle Holocene, while revealing the spatial complexity of this blue-green landscape. It also notes gaps in data, particularly regarding the interaction of freshwater and marine systems in the later Holocene.

Wet grassland or fen increased in the Levels during the Neolithic, with alder-dominated carr woodland spreading north and more reedbeds along watercourses. In the later Neolithic, raised mire patches appeared, but were much smaller than in later periods. In the Bronze Age, carr woodland decreased, replaced by more oak, birch, and hazel, a trend that reversed in the Iron Age.

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doi.org/10.1007/s00334-026-01087-6

## *Dates for your diary*

### *Elmswell Old Hall Open Day*

**1 April 2026** 10:30 am to 3:30 pm

### *CBA Yorkshire Symposium*

cba-yorkshire.org.uk

Merchant Taylor's Hall, York
**18 April 2026**

### *Medieval Settlement Research Group Spring Conference*

medieval-settlement.com

Lincoln College, Lincoln
**18-19 April 2026**

### *Hull Historical Association*

herha.org.uk

**Thursday 15 May Richard Clarke**

The Holderness Coast – the Land which Came and Went

### *CBA Festival of Archaeology*

Theme: 'Archaeology and Nature'

archaeologyuk.org/festival.html

**18 July – 2 August 2026**

### *Heritage Open Days*

heritageopendays.org.uk

**11-20 September 2026**

### *EYLHS book fair*

Hull Minster
**19 September, 10am to 4pm**

### *Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Days*

yorkshiremuseum.org.uk/portable-antiquities-scheme/

Hull and East Riding Museum
**1 May 10:30 am**

**7 August 10:30 am**

## *Directory*

The following local heritage societies also have occasional talks of archaeological interest.

### *Beverley Civic Society*

beverleycivicsociety.com

### *The Bridlington Augustinian Society*

bridaugustinians.org.uk/

### *Cottingham Local History Society*

cottinghamyorkshirehistory.co.uk/

### *East Yorkshire Local History Society*

eylhs.org.uk

### *Hedon and District Local History Society*

hedonhistory.blogspot.com

### *Howdenshire Archaeological Society*

Also, fieldwork across Howdenshire and occasionally further west

www.howdenshire-arch.org/

### *Hull Classical Association*

www.facebook.com/HullClassicalAssociation

### *Pocklington District Heritage Trust*

pocklingtondistrictheritagetrust.org/

### *Spurn, Kilnsea and Easington Area Local Studies Group*

www.skeals.co.uk/

# EAST RIDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

# NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## 7:00pm, Wednesday 15th April 2026

## Room LT1, WILBERFORCE BUILDING, UNIVERSITY OF HULL

1. **Apologies for absence**
2. **Minutes of the last AGM held on 16th April 2025**
3. **Matters Arising**
4. **Reports from Officers**
   - i. **Chair**
   - ii. **Treasurer**
5. **Committee 2026/27**
   - i. **Election of Officers**

     Committee Nominations are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Chair | Peter Halkon |
| Vice Chair | Fiona WIlson` |
| Secretary | John Deverell |
| Treasurer | Colin Parr |
| Programme Secretary | Peter Halkon |
| Editor | Matthew Reeves |
| Marketing & Social Media | Andy Coupe |
| Field Studies Officer | Matthew Walker |
| Records Officer | Jennifer Wilson |
| Newsletter Editor | Paul Brayford |

     Any other nominations for the above posts are welcome and should be sent to the Secretary, John Deverell, no later than 5 April 2026. Members wishing to nominate a person should seek their agreement before doing so.

   - ii. **Election of 5 Ordinary Committee Members**

     The three ordinary members who are willing and eligible to stand for re-election are:

     Les Hebb, Katerina Velentza and Chris Hannard.

     Committee nominations for the remaining two places are:

     John Webb

     Additional nominations are welcome and may be made in advance or from the floor of the meeting. Members wishing to nominate a person should seek their agreement before doing so. If there are more nominations than places, an election will be held.
6. **Election of Auditor**

   Dave Abel has agreed to continue as auditor.
7. **Report of the ERAS Trustees**
8. **Any Other Business**

# *Programme*

All lectures take place in LT1, Wilberforce Building, The University of Hull on the third Wednesday of the month from September to April. For those members who are unable to attend, we hope to livestream - details will be sent to members with a digital link to join on the night.

Attendance is free to ERAS members. £3 for guests.

There is usually a range of used books for sale and *British Archaeology* magazines to borrow.

**Wednesday, April 15, 2026 at 7:30 PM**

**EXCAVATIONS AT SKEFFLING, HOLDERNESS - MARY ANNE SLATER**

**NB: Lecture will be preceded by the ERAS AGM at 7:00pm**

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.

**2026/2027 Lecture Programme**

The first meeting of the new Lecture Programme will be on Wednesday September 17th 2026. Details will be given in the September 2026 Newsletter and on our website.

**Field Studies Group**

Field Studies Group meetings are held monthly on the first Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm in the upstairs meeting room at St. Nicholas Community Centre, Holme Church Lane, Beverley. During the summer months, outdoor trips or site visits may be held instead of indoor meetings. No experience is necessary. Everyone is welcome. Just turn up and enjoy whatever the group is doing. Some activities or visits may have limited numbers, so please check the website first or contact the Field Studies Officer, Matthew Walker, at fieldstudieseras@gmail.com

Excavating the cattle skulls within the palisade slot of the Iron Age sanctuary at Kipling House.
Photo: Peter Halkon