



Newsletter

March 2010

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AGM Date Changed To
April 19th

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St Cross from the air © Chris Sellen

The WARG Newsletter provides reports on the activities of WARG, the society for Winchester archaeology and local history. It also carries other information of interest to the WARG membership. For more information on WARG, and to join, call 01962 867490, e-mail membership@warg.org.uk or visit www.warg.org.uk

Chairman's notes

I am not yet certain if we have reached the end of winter, but it was certainly exciting to see so much snow. And of course the snow caused the cancellation of our New Year Party. We have rebooked the surprise entertainment for next year (January 10th 2011).

The cancellation also meant that we did not draw the raffle and, as those of you who have been at the subsequent lecture will know, we will now be drawing at the AGM. Raffle tickets will be on sale at the March lecture on recent archaeology in the New Forest. And please remember that the AGM, with the update on last summer's St Cross excavation, is now on April 19th, not April 12th.

St Cross

After reviewing last year's excavation results, we found there are still a few loose ends and un-answered questions, so this summer, subject to our gaining approval to go ahead, the dig will be a series of small trenches at different points, trying to tie up these loose ends and find the answers to the questions. We are again planning on digging during the first two weeks in August and will be sending out application forms in the early summer. So - if you want to dig, help with a geophysical survey or carry out pot cleaning, please block out the dates in your diary. (31st July to 15th August)

Research

Alongside this, in preparation for a full report, there is some desk research that needs to be undertaken. If you have some experience in research, and would like to spend some time trying to find out more about the comparative history of medieval Hospitals/Almshouses or if you fancy looking into landscaping, water features and perhaps the sanitary arrangements of the 16th century onwards, please let me know.

Subscriptions

You will find your subscription reminders in this mailing. If you are already paying by standing order, please ignore the reminder. If you are not yet paying by standing order, please send Techer a completed standing order form – it does make life a lot easier, particularly if cheques are about to disappear. We hope you will renew as we have some exciting talks on a wide range of topics – full details in the next newsletter.

Dick Selwood

Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones.

Summary of a talk by Garrard Cole, 14 December 2009

The bones referred to in this talk were human skeletons, most commonly discovered in the course of archaeological excavations. Apart from the archaeological context and associated artefacts the skeletal material itself can provide much information about earlier generations.

Osteoarchaeologists, specialists in the study of ancient bones, have developed a range of techniques for extracting this information. The data obtainable can cover diet, origins, ethnicity, age, sex, stature and disease.

Much of this information is only now being revealed as skeletal material is re-assessed. There is a considerable archive of such material in museums and universities which was excavated, cleaned and stored with only the most cursory of examination. Teeth as well as bones are the raw material for this work.

Before reviewing the techniques used and the data that can be retrieved, a brief introduction to the make-up of the source material was given. Bones and teeth are largely composed of inorganic material, around 70% for bones and more than 96% for tooth enamel. The organic material, largely collagen, disappears after death so that the excavated skeletons are composed almost wholly of inorganic material. In life, bones are continually in formation and decline through the respective cells called osteoblasts and osteoclasts. The former predominate in periods of growth; the latter in senescence.

What Sex?

Presented with an excavated skeleton the most common first question is “What sex was the individual?” (Note that sex is the biological classification; gender is culturally defined). Like many other methods used in skeletal analysis, the answer to the question is often based on measures and characteristics from a known population, i.e. comparing the data from the sample with data from skeletons where sex is known. In this case the comparisons are made based on skull shape, the morphology of the pelvis and



Metastasis (Lung?) or Multiple myeloma (© Garrard Cole)

long bone metrics. These measures do not always produce a clear-cut answer since age can alter results, e.g. older females showing more male characteristics. Knowing the age of the person can therefore be very helpful but even with this information the outcome can still be uncertain.

How Old?

Age itself is the subject of a range of tests. The usefulness of various tests is dependent on the age range of the subject. For instance, in young children tooth development is a very good indicator of age but after the age of about 13 years this ceases to be of much help. For juveniles an examination of joints can be helpful. Joints ossify with age (epiphyseal fusion) and the presence or absence of this can provide date indications. For adults examination of the pelvis can provide data on age although above the age of 50 years this ceases to be helpful, i.e. one can only say the subject is at least 50 years old, but how much older is not evident in this data. Teeth as well as bones are helpful in determining the age of adults in brackets of around 10 years although again this data becomes much more vague above 45 years age and is aided by knowledge of the sex of the individual. It is important to stress that the assessed age is a developmental age not a chronological age.

This “cut-off” in useful age data is a possible reason for estimates to be too low where verification is possible. Research into this phenomenon is still in process.

How Tall?

Since most humans are in proportion, measurement of the leg bones can be used to estimate the achieved height of individuals. Using this approach, tables of mean stature have been compiled for groups of various periods, e.g. Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, etc., up to the post-medieval period. Perhaps rather surprisingly, there is relatively little change in mean stature with increases sometimes followed by decreases, e.g. in the Iron Age the mean height decreased.

Cause of Death?

There is often much curiosity about the cause of death of people. Weapon wounds can sometimes leave their mark on the skeleton as can some incurable



Saxon skull showing blunt force trauma (Bevis 88) (© Garrard Cole)

diseases, e.g. leprosy. However, many diseases do not affect the skeleton and are therefore undetectable. Some skeletal characteristics of disease can be found (known as pathognomic identifiers if they are specific to a given disease) but some diseases can only be positively identified if the whole skeleton is present. Where this approach is successfully used it may provide interesting insights into lifestyles. One example in later medieval monks is the presence of DISH (Diffuse Idiopathic Skeletal Hyperostosis), a bone disease affecting the spine and has been linked to over-rich diets and lack of physical activity among the brethren.

Traces of stable isotopes, e.g. Carbon with a molecular weight of 13 instead of the normal 12, can be detected in teeth and bone. These isotopes enter the skeleton through water, air or diet and can be used to infer a style of diet, e.g. marine or terrestrial.

Other techniques involve sampling the DNA and identifying diseases such as tuberculosis and leprosy. Other diseases such as syphilis leave no trace in DNA and all such test procedures are very easy to contaminate during sample processing.

Use of many of the above techniques can produce significant re-assessments of burials. Sometimes the violent ends of individuals have been previously overlooked, such as in Saxon graves Bevis 3, where the person had been decapitated, and Bevis 88, where blunt force trauma was evident.



*Jaw with pipe-wear facets on teeth
(© Garrard Cole)*

Pipe Smoker

Finally, the skeletal finds from the WARG excavations at St. Cross were discussed. The data obtained was limited due to the small number of finds and their fragmentary nature. Perhaps the most unusual find was the skull of a man who had a severe tobacco addiction judging by the multiple pipe-wear facets on his teeth caused by the habitual presence of the clay pipe in his mouth.

Steve Taylor

Early Medieval Nunneries

Julia Sandison introduced Barbara Yorke, Professor of Early Medieval History at the University of Winchester, whose renown is such that she has registered 74 million hits on Google, far outdoing George Clooney who has only had a pathetic 9.36 million hits. We were soon to discover why this is so, as Barbara's talk was quite enthralling.

We learned that the Anglo-Saxons looked on nunneries not simply as religious communities removed from the world. They were intimately linked with the royal houses, enhancing their prestige and, by their prayers, supporting them in battle. Thus they had a dual function, secular and spiritual.

After the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms converted to Christianity in the seventh century, the nunneries were part of the process by which the rulers learned to adapt Christianity to suit their needs. They were not an Anglo-Saxon invention but were modelled on Frankish institutions. The Franks had converted to Christianity earlier but were not terribly enthusiastic Christians, viewing nunneries in a pragmatic light as something women could do for their families.

Powerful Women

The nunneries were institutions dominated by powerful women, with men serving as priests and in secular roles. If men entered religious establishments it was usually for political and strategic reasons.

So how did the nunneries work as religious establishments?

They were particularly concerned with freeing the souls of the dead from purgatory by the power of prayer. There had also been a custom of building churches and nunneries as reparation for serious crimes, such as murder. This was seen as another way of ensuring a place in heaven for members of the royal houses.

Another function, adopted from the Frankish model, was as burial churches for the royal families. We were shown pictures of the mausoleum and crypt at Repton, a nunnery run by princesses of the Mercian royal house. Members of the family were buried there, including Saint Wystan, after whom the poet Auden was named.

Also buried at Repton was King Aethelbald who was murdered by his bodyguard in the



year 747 AD. Aethelbald had been much criticised by St Boniface for sleeping with the nuns. He was unmarried and must have felt that he could exercise *droit de seigneur* over them.

Pious Women

Nunneries also provided a means of reinforcing the 'specialness' of royal houses. Sainthood was a way of conferring holiness upon a family and many royal heads of nunneries became saints. Men won their reputations in battle, women by their piety.

Saint Aethelthryf of Ely married twice before founding her nunnery there. Bede claimed that she remained a virgin but Barbara is sceptical about this. Royal marriages were not necessarily for life, being a social and political arrangement, and women sometimes returned to their own kingdoms to found or enter a nunnery. When Aethelthryf died, her sister succeeded as head of the nunnery at Ely, whilst in some other nunneries, a daughter took over. After Aethelthryf's death, preparations were made to make her a saint. No involvement of the papacy was required for this process, religious communities made their own arrangements.

The shrine of St Hwita, an Anglo-Saxon saint, at Whitchurch is a rare survival. During the 19th century the skeleton of a middle-aged woman was found. There were holes in the shrine into which visitors could climb, to touch the body or even sleep there.

Prior to conversion, Anglo-Saxons were used to worshipping a number of local deities and found it hard to adapt to worshipping only one God. Local saints helped to alleviate this difficulty. Saints were viewed as interceding between man and God and prayers were directed through these local saints.

Well Dressed

Problems sometimes arose from the close links between nunneries and the secular world. As Barbara put it, "nunneries didn't really do poverty". Royal nuns dressed as princesses. At Chelles, the well-preserved clothes of Queen Balthild, of Anglo-Saxon origin, have been found. These were very fine dresses made of beautifully decorated silk. One chemise has jewel-like embroideries around the neckline. The Queen had given away her jewels to the poor, then had replicas of them embroidered on her clothes. Her seal matrix has been found, showing that Queens who entered nunneries did not entirely relinquish their worldly connections.

Barbara showed photographs of jewellery found on the sites of

nunneries at Barking, Hartlepool and Whitby. It was deemed important that royal women should “look the part”, with appropriate jewellery and accessories. Abbesses had to assert their authority in a male world so they still acted as princesses to enhance the importance of their families. One nun was chastised for cleaning the shoes of her fellow nuns as this was seen to be demeaning to her status.

Disruptive kings

In the early seventh century kings erected timber halls for themselves and their retinues when travelling around the country, but later on they expected to be accommodated in nunneries and monasteries. This could be extremely disruptive.

Nunneries were also places of learning. A number of bishops had received their training at Whitby. The Abbess was a princess of the royal house and effectively ran the country from the Abbey.

There are in existence letters sent by Bishop Boniface to various nunneries but unfortunately there are no addresses on them so their destinations are unknown. However, there is a letter sent to Boniface from his kinswoman, a nun called Leoba. After her death she was buried at Fulda in Germany. Her cult continues to this day and she is especially credited with curing babies of their ailments. Another kinsman of Boniface’s was Walburga from Waltham in Hampshire who is now an important saint in Germany. Once a year, oil exudes from her shrine and is believed to have curative properties. Thus, the veneration of these women as saints forms a continuous link with the 8th century church.



Wessex Saints

Following the Viking invasions many nunneries disappeared. The few surviving nunneries were mainly in Wessex and they continued to be used to promote the interests of the royal families. Similarly, the only female saints whose cults endured were those associated with the dominant royal houses, such as that of Alfred.

The early medieval nunneries offer a rare insight into the lives of women whose joint position in the church and in the royal houses gave them a unique authority. When the opportunity for influence arises, women can grasp it with both hands.

Iris Gould

The Myth of Medieval Chivalry

Matthew Bennett from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst is a military historian with a medieval focus and a widely published author of several books, including a standard work on Agincourt.

Matt began his talk by asking the audience what the word “Chivalry” called to mind for them. The response was predictable: Knights of the Round Table, damsels in distress, the knightly code of conduct and poetry about medieval knights and ladies. Matt observed that these concepts were a gross over-simplification of medieval warfare and had little to do with the realities. The Black Prince may have been chivalrous but he had also been responsible for the sack of Limoges.

Social Construct

The ideals of Chivalry were a social construct which gained currency during the 12th century when Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote his *History of the Kings of Britain*, giving prominence to the court of King Arthur. This gave rise to the growth of the cult of courtly love, celebrated in a body of literature typified by the *Song of Roland*. Great emphasis was placed on individual prowess; a Knight Errant acted alone, and in accordance with his own moral code.

Three books codifying the military and moral nature of warfare were written in the 14th and early 15th centuries and paint a very different picture. These books drew on the precepts set out by the Roman writer Vegetius (c390) in his book *De Re Militari*, with chapters such as “A Brief Consideration of How to Draw up an Army for Combat According to Present Day Usage”. Early in the Middle Ages, work began on translating classical military texts into the vernacular, principally French, but also into Spanish, Italian and English.

Book of Chivalry

Geoffroi de Charny wrote his *Book of Chivalry* around 1350, at a time when the Order of the Garter was devised as a way of binding the nobility closer to the Crown. He had returned from the Crusades with a relic which can probably be identified as the Turin Shroud. He died, carrying the banner at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356, a deed which brought him great honour.

The chapters of the book were short, usually between 10 and 50 lines and described in detail



Medieval Warfare

the qualities of the perfect Man at Arms. He should not pamper his body, should have no fear of discomfort, must be brave but not too eager for plunder, and should show simplicity of heart. De Charny also listed the deeds to be undertaken, such as distant journeys and pilgrimages, deeds undertaken for rewards and those undertaken for love of a lady. The longest chapter (250 lines) was devoted to the Heavy Responsibilities of Men of Rank and Prowess. The book does not, however, provide a very systematic way to think about how to conduct one's life, Matt said.

Men were entitled to go to war in order to pursue a legal case. It is a myth that chivalric knights served without pay. They may have done so for a period of some 40 – 60 days but after that they expected to be paid for their services. They viewed themselves as an order in society, useful in the world.

Tree of Battles

Honore Bonet (1340 – 1410) wrote the Tree of Battles which deals with the legal aspects of warfare. Issues include:

- The justification for going to war
- War for self-defence and reprisal
- Battles in general and in particular
- Honour and the fighting of duels

Bravery on its own is not enough, observation of the moral code and honouring the cardinal virtues of justice, temperance and wisdom, are more important.

Military Discipline

The importance of maintaining military discipline is stressed. There must be a punishment for attacking without permission. In the conduct of duels, some tactics were permissible, others not.

Bonet also addresses the importance of striking a balance between allegiance to the Pope as spiritual leader, and the Emperor as temporal leader. Also discussed is the need to serve one's lord, but if one's lord is in conflict with his lord, the king, who does one serve?

How should booty be distributed? The military classes depended on the profits of war to survive so fairness in the distribution of booty



Tree of Battles

was essential. Similarly, the payment of ransom required clarification. The modern world views demands for ransom as an evil thing but in medieval times it was viewed as legitimate, and bound up with concepts of honour. There had been two royal ransoms, for King Richard I and for King John. Bonet asked whether there should be people such as the old, sick and very young who are immune from ransom.

Another matter Bonet discussed is whether a fortress can be taken in times of truce. He concludes that there are circumstances in which this could be deemed honourable. Bribery can also be employed without breaking the rules of chivalry.

Book of Deeds

Christian de Pisan was a significant authoress in the early 15th century and was very interested in warfare, as shown in the *Book of Deeds of Arms and Chivalry*. She writes about the value of the experienced soldier, with quotes from Vegetius. This would not be a bad description for a modern soldier in Matt's opinion, being thoughtful and skilful, fit to be in charge of cavalry. Age itself is less important than experience. The emphasis is on modest professionalism, not about parading as a proud, vainglorious knight, and the need to look after the helpless, widows, orphans and the poor is underlined.



Christian de Pisan

The book addresses the problems of large armies. Although armies were usually much smaller than they are now, towns were also much smaller so provisioning and accommodating large numbers of soldiers would create difficulties. Troops could also cause blockages and delay on the roads and a large army could also get out of control. At Agincourt, the English army was much smaller than the French, but was victorious because the French army could not cope with the muddy conditions.

Myth has depicted medieval warriors as dreamy romantics, but they were, in fact, the professionals of their age, much more realistic and effective than they have been given credit for.

Iris Gould

Archaeology in Peru

'Sometimes I saw what men have only dreamed of seeing'

Arthur Rimbaud – Poet

Like many other travellers with an interest in archaeology, I have a list of must-see places and near the top of it is Machu Picchu in Peru. I recently had the opportunity to go to South America to see it for myself but I was totally unprepared for the wealth of other sites that exist in this varied and fascinating country. In all, there are over 5,000 areas of archaeological interest whose mysteries are still being uncovered and revealed to the world. In this article, I will describe some of the places we visited on our way before we finally reached the sacred city.

The Inca Empire itself was short-lived, but its existence was due to thousands of years of development throughout the Central Andes. This has only recently been fully understood through modern archaeological methods of research. For thousands of years before the Incas, other groups in Peru had achieved great power and created spectacular art and architecture. Widespread cultural exchanges have been traced back to the height of the Chavin civilisation which existed in the first millennium BC. Pre-Hispanic Andean culture never developed a written language, but legends, myths and histories were recorded on elaborately painted ceramic vessels.

Our tour took us from the capital Lima, through Nazca to Arequipa and then to Puno on the shores of Lake Titicaca. From there we headed north to Cusco and the famous Urubamba Valley, home to Ollantaytambo and Machu Picchu itself.

Nazca

The territory of ancient Peru was known 10,000 years before the arrival of the Spanish in the 1530s. Nazca was an important pre-Inca culture based on the south coast from AD 100-700. It was a loose-knit society with a shared ideology and religious affiliation. The people developed a highly refined ceramic style decorating vessels with stylised abstract images of mythical beings, felines and foxes etc. They are, however, most famed for the Nazca Lines, a series of gigantic images of animals, geometric forms and straight lines arranged on the arid desert surface.

Known as GEOGLYPHS, they were created by removing the dark oxidised desert surface to reveal lower, lighter-coloured sediments....

rather like an enormous blackboard! The lines occupy a vast desert area and can only be properly viewed from the air. Indeed, they were only discovered when aircraft began to fly over the area with the first archaeological investigation being published in 1926.

Various theories abound to explain them with some ideas more plausible than others. However some experts, including the archaeologist Johan Reinhard, suggest that they may have been intended to encourage rainfall in the mountains which would then nourish the rivers that fertilised the valleys of the coastal desert. Others describe them as 'the biggest astronomical calendar of the world' whilst Maria Reiche referred to the 'Nazca calendar-temple' in her papers on the subject. She devoted her life to uncovering the meaning of the area and concluded that the lines were part of a calendar used to commune with the gods in an effort to secure water and blessings for the crops.

Carbon dating reveals that the lines were constructed between 300 and 800 AD. It never rains on the Peruvian coast which is why the lines have survived for so long. In addition, the Nazcas also built more than 40 subterranean canals to filter water from underground and direct it to reservoirs. The breathing holes of the aqueducts are spiral-shaped, reminiscent of the shape of sea-shells that were found in the area and used today as ceremonial instruments during festivities. The area was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994, and remains one of the world's great archaeological mysteries.

Ice Maiden

Moving south-east to Arequipa we encountered Juanita, the Ice Maiden. This frozen mummy was discovered on the snowy peak of Ampato in 1995. It was the best-preserved mummy discovered up to that time. She was sacrificed by the Incas probably to placate the gods, but details of her life and sacrifice are difficult for modern minds to understand and accept. Johan Reinhard and his assistant found Juanita bundled in alpaca wool and surrounded by ceremonial and symbolic objects.

The Ice Maiden is considered one of the world's best-preserved mummies. She was sacrificed by Inca priests and buried with wooden and gold figurines and other assorted items she would need in the afterlife. Carbon dating reveals that she died between 1440 and 1450. The Incas practiced human sacrifice and present-day archaeologists are continually discovering more about these sacrificial practices. The bodies were often mummified in the foetal position, suggesting

that they needed to be born again in order to enter the next world. Juanita's remarkable preservation has allowed archaeologists to gain amazing insights into Inca culture, and to help us understand a little more about the lives they led.

Chullpas

45 minutes away from Puno, on the shores of Lake Titicaca, lay Sillustani. Nearby is the village of Hatuncolla, which once served as the capital of the Collas. It is their tombs called chullpas that stand here. They were the burial towers for Colla royalty, and they dominated the area before the Incas. 2 stone circles stand halfway along the slope, which leads to the site itself. Archaeologists are still uncertain of their exact purpose, but some say that they were erected in connection with sun worship. Others maintain they were intended for astronomical observation. What is known is that the stones are not local to the area, so early inhabitants must have gone to some trouble to place them there.

The chullpas are impressive in size and style. All have tiny doorways facing east, and some are built in fine-fitted stonework similar to Inca structures. One tower still has the ramp leading to it that was used in the building.

This is a serene, mysterious place, which overlooks the broad, steep-shored Lake Umayo lying to the west. Using our dowsing skills, we detected lines of energy coursing through the tombs, and our guide confirmed that the whole area was criss-crossed by lines of natural energy. This might go some way to explaining why the Collas chose it to commemorate their dead.

Some of the towers are more than 12meters high, and decorated with carvings of lizards, which are a symbol of life. The Collas buried their leaders in towers that are wider at the top than at the base. Experts are still deliberating whether the style of building was to demonstrate their skill with stone, to deter tomb robbers or simply to honour their dead nobility. The inside of the tombs are said to resemble the shape of a woman's womb, and the corpses were mummified in the foetal position. Interestingly, this site has never been systematically excavated.

From here, we travelled northwest to Cusco and the famous Urubamba Valley. It is said that the name of Ollantaytambo fortress and village comes from Ollanta, the Inca general who fell in love with the 9th ruler Pachacutec's daughter. He was forced to flee, but was reunited with her after Pachacutec's death. The Spaniards reconquered

the town in 1537, but before that it was the scene of the greatest Inca victory over the Spanish.

Canchas

People have lived in Ollantaytambo since the 13th century. This Inca town was originally called Qosqo Ayllu and was divided into courtyards called canchas. Each had one entrance. A series of carved stone terraces lead up the hillside to the fortress, which comprises the Temple of the Sun, the Royal Hall, the Princess' Baths and the Intihuatana, which was used to trace the sun's path.

This site still confounds archaeologists. It was never finished, and the enormous stones were quarried miles away across the Urubamba River. The Temple of the Sun is a fine example of Inca stonework with 6 pink monoliths designed to glow as the rays of the rising sun hit the structure. The double doorjambs are rare in Inca buildings and indicate that this, too, was a very important and significant site.

All this – and we still had Machu Picchu and the sites around Cusco to come!!!

Edwina Cole



Hot Holidays

So much has been written about Egypt and its heritage that I can hear you mutter “not another one” as you see the title of this piece, but perhaps I can give a different slant to some of it. Just one week in late November is not a long time to visit a country with such an abundance of historical and archaeological treasures but it was sufficient for me to gain a flavour of some of the world’s greatest and best-known structures. What can one write about the Pyramids and the Sphinx that hasn’t been said more eloquently a thousand times, but to actually stand in front of these early demonstrations of the human ability to transcend everyday life is not just awe-inspiring but a little humbling too. The sheer size and landscape-domination of the Great Pyramid at Giza, for instance, leaves one a little breathless (no, not just the camel ride) and to know that it is over 4,500 years old and STILL younger than the Stepped Pyramid at Saqqara actually leaves one sockless. It’s easy to become a bit blasé in a place like Egypt but there is so much to see and do that comes under the heading of history because history starts today.

Nile Cruise

My week was spent cruising down the Nile from Luxor to Aswan for 4 days before flying to Cairo for the remaining 3 days. The cruise shows one the modern Egypt, if that’s the right word – on the face of it, life has changed little over the centuries except that now one can see cars and vans as well as donkeys, mules and camels on the roads, and the houses have TV aerials but they’re still built pretty much the same, and the Nile is lined with women doing their washing in its clean-ish waters. Water buffalo and goats are brought down to drink and cool themselves in the river and all along the banks are Egyptians and, as you get further south, Nubians gathering papyrus stems and rushes in small rowing boats. The birdlife is stunning and nothing could have prepared me for the thrill of seeing 5 types of heron, bittern, pied kingfisher, osprey, hoopoe, bee-eater, glossy ibis, kite, honey buzzard and more egrets and other waterfowl than one can shake a stick at. I was in heaven!

Architectural Affairs

Luxor itself is a mass of wonders and Karnak is a massive complex taking a great deal longer to discover than the 2 hours we had there. A short drive away brings you to the unbelievable Valley of the Kings, a most unprepossessing-looking area of bare hilly landscape where the sun beats down mercilessly at the height of the day. There is no vegetation for

miles around so why did the ancient Egyptians carve out their royal tombs there, in such an unwelcoming area? Possibly for that very reason, since the tombs were all hidden from view deep underground in the rock and might have been considered a safe place for a tomb packed with wondrous and valuable goodies. A little further down the road Hatshepsut's mortuary temple is rather more brazen and obvious, being a golden structure set into the hillside with long stairways leading up to a front so covered with pillars and statues that it seems somewhat over the top. The story is that she had a long affair with the architect Say no more!

Moving Temples

Just a little inland from the Nile are the Roman-Ptolemaic temples which are a mere 2,000-odd years old. Edfu was built on the site of an earlier temple to extol Horus, the equivalent of the Greek god Apollo. Like Kom Ombo further south and sacred to the crocodile god Sodek, this temple towers overhead with signs from all periods of its life – its early days, its invasions by the Christians, the French and the British – and bears all its scars with clarity. I realised after I returned home that, despite my research and having done a degree course in Ancient Egypt some years ago, I had spent much of my time not being prepared for what I would see! Although the majority of these edifices are now golden stone, there is still a great deal of the paintings from early times and the sheer quantity of carving is staggering. Barely an inch anywhere is left unadorned. The stories told are old and of familiar themes but the modern-day knock-out effect is overwhelming. I simply couldn't get over the amount of work that had been produced and trying to calculate the numbers of people and hours involved is impossible. The best thing to do was just to wander around these areas marvelling. Next came the temple complex at Philae – ok, just another set of golden carved buildings, but hang on, surely that wasn't where they were originally built? No, this entire complex, which was mostly underwater for much of each year, was moved in the 1970s when the High Aswan Dam was created, flooding the original island of Philae, and one can still see the water marks high up around all the buildings. Furthermore when the engineers (Russian) chose a suitable island away from the dam they had to slice off the entire top of it to create a smooth level base for the buildings!

One of the saddening things about the Nile and the life around it is how the green strips that border both banks are shrinking each year; this is due to the fact that when the High Dam was built to create Lake Nasser and dam off the Nile itself, the annual flooding of the Nile which for centuries

had provided the all-important river silt to flow across the adjoining land, enriching it for all vegetation and agriculture, was abolished. Since then the land has to be nourished and renewed by the farmers, many of whom are FAR too impoverished to do so, plus Lake Nasser is fast silting up itself with absolutely no plans by the Egyptian Government to prevent the inevitable result. If you're not sure that what I say is correct, look at photos of Gaza taken 100 years ago – they show the Great Pyramids standing in a green environment – not the way it is today.

Cairo

Now, Cairo – well, a completely different country really compared to the Upper Nile. A thriving noisy dirty city with huge visible differences between “Them” and “Us”; vast American hotels so opulent they make your eyes water next to houses for the real population with only shutters, no windows, and so basic as to make your eyes

But then there is the Cairo Museum so stuffed with treasures that several days would be needed to do it justice – yes, it's dirty, poorly lit, there's very little explanatory documentation and so many of the exhibits are not covered, allowing the public to touch them and small boys to whack them with sticks (promise you), but a new purpose-built Museum is nearing completion in Gaza (several miles away from the centre of Cairo) and should solve all these problems. It is mouth-wateringly incredible to see so much in one place – eat your heart out, British Museum – and even 1 hour there gives sheer delight. The Citadel in the old city was in fact built by Salah al-Din (yes, our Saladin, protagonist of Richard Coeur de Lion) around 1176 to provide Cairo with defences fitting to the powerful state he wished, as sole ruler of Egypt, to produce. However, with the exception of the Citadel and parts of the fortress walls, everything was torn down by Muhammad Ali (no, not that one) in the 19th century. The Mosque there was built to resemble the Blue Mosque in Istanbul and its silver domes gleam dully through the polluted air of a city with almost more vehicles than population.

So, would I return to see more of Egypt? Probably not, since my week was so perfect in every aspect that I'd be nervous that a second time would be a big disappointment and anyway there are so many other countries in that region of the world to discover. Now I want you all to visit your library for books on Egypt, spend hours Googling the country and then VISIT it – you'll never regret it, the food on the cruise ship alone is worth it!

Julia Sandison

Treasures of Hyde Abbey Events

A major free exhibition “Treasures of Hyde Abbey” is to be held in the Gallery at Winchester Discovery Centre from Sat 6 March to Sun 2 May 2010. The exhibition will bring together in Winchester for the first time in over 450 years treasures from Hyde Abbey on loan from The British Library, the V&A, the Bodleian Library, Winchester College, St Bartholomew’s Church and Winchester Museums.

Lectures

Accompanying the exhibition will be a programme of lectures, also at Winchester Discovery Centre. Each lecture costs £5 and starts at 7.30 pm. Tickets should be booked through Winchester Discovery Centre Box Office in person, by telephone on 01962 873603, or online at <http://www.discoverycentres.co.uk/winchester>

Wed 17th March, Justin Pollard:
Re-discovering King Alfred.

Wed 24th March, Dr John Crook:
The Architecture of Hyde, 1110-2010

Wed 7th April, Prof Simon Keynes:
Two books from Hyde Abbey:
The Liber Vitae and the Liber Abbatie

Thurs 15th April, Prof David Hinton:
Life and Death in Norman
Hampshire

Wed 21st April, Dr Leonie Hicks:
Routine Relics and Relatives: Life in
a Medieval Monastery



Other Events

There is a wide range of other events surrounding the Hyde 900 event and the exhibition, including walks, a procession, other exhibition and short talks. Look at the Discovery Centre events brochure including all Treasures of Hyde events at [http:// www.discoverycentres.co.uk/winchester](http://www.discoverycentres.co.uk/winchester)

WARG calendar 2010

March 8: Frank Green: *The New Forest: Recent Research in Coastal and Woodland Archaeology*

April 19: AGM and 2009 Big Dig update

Please Note: This is one week later than previously advertised

May 10: Denise Baker: *Exploring St Cross*

WARG member Denise Baker has made a detailed study of St Cross's history, and will share some of her findings.

June 14: *Visit to a Roman Glassworks* at 7pm

This visit to the Roman Glassworks at Quarley is a follow-on to Denise Allen's fascinating talk to us last October. Mark Taylor and David Hill have "rediscovered" the various ways that the Romans produced glass in all its forms and make really beautiful glasses, jugs, bowls and so on for visitors to buy. Their workshops are not large however and a maximum group of 30 is all they can squeeze in, so as ever applications from members only will be treated on a "first come, first served" basis. The charge will be £5 per head and we will meet there. Directions and a map will be sent to successful applicants. Send Julia your cheque made payable to WARG – using the form enclosed in this newsletter.

July 12: Don Bryan: *Walk in Bishops Waltham* at 7 pm

Another follow-on, this time following on from Peter Watkins talk on *Writing the History of Bishops Waltham*. Don Bryan will lead a walk through Bishops Waltham. Park in the Basingwell Street car park, which is in the centre of Waltham, and meet Don opposite the Millennium Clock at St Georges Square. (And remember to bring an umbrella, plus your £2 per head contribution.)

August 1st - 15th: WARG Big Dig 2010, *St Cross Park*

Details in the next newsletter

The photo shows the mapping of the foundations of the South Range of St Cross, from Cathy Glover's Facebook selection of photos. (<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=137635&id=664657517&l=5316740846>)



Book Review

Austerity Britain 1945-51 by David Kynaston (692 pages) £25 hardback, £10 paperback Published by Bloomsbury ISBN 978 0 7475 7985 4

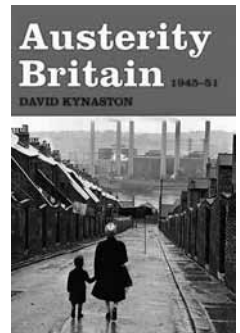
Family Britain 1951-57 by David Kynaston (776 pages) £25 hardback, no paperback yet, Published by Bloomsbury ISBN 978 0 7475 8385 1

New faces joining WARG are bringing down the average age of our members which is terrific. Nevertheless, I will wager that the majority of WARG people were around for these dates. They are all about the times I, and many of you, was in nappies and short trousers.

These modern history books fall into the “I just couldn’t put it down” category. Kynaston uses Mass Observation data as a major source. As you progress, you begin to know what to expect from the group of regular observers that he uses – and his chosen observers cover a wide spectrum of political and social backgrounds. The author delves into political and other memoirs; he quotes extensively from newspapers and magazines like Picture Post and the wireless.

As someone born in 1945, I found the first book amazing. I had no idea of the hardships that my parents were living through. For example, rationing got much tighter after the War? The second volume describes the transition to the Macmillan ‘never had it so good’ years. Kynaston does not often go in for deep analysis. In both volumes he lays out what was happening, gives quotes, usually both sides of the political or other debate, and snippets from reactions of the times. Then he lets the intelligent reader draw his or her own conclusions. As an example: he quotes from Mass Observation working-class feedback on proposed inner city slum clearance (almost universally anti). Then he quotes extensively from the architectural journals of the early 1950s about how high rise flats will create utopia for the working classes. Knowing what we know now, the architects dug their own holes both metaphorically and literally – Kynaston does not need to do it for them.

Rationing, employment practices, the birth of television and how that changed social patterns, the role of royalty, National Service, discrimination (both racial and sexual), changing religious attitudes, the birth of the NHS and Social Services, all are here. But so are occasional sporting references or comments on theatre. An example: the section on the reaction to the Angry Young Men is enlightening



when read in the context of what else was going on at the time. Perhaps the two over-riding revelations for me were (a) just how close to communism the mid 1940s labour movement was and (b) how all the current angst about Iraq and the misleading political run up to that current conflict is just a re-run of Suez.

Really easy to read, well produced, well indexed and referenced, a couple of dozen well selected photos in each. I would be very surprised if anyone was not as intrigued as I was by these books.

Techer Jones

Birthe Kjolbye-Biddle

St Swithun's Day, 15 July 1941 - 16 January, 2010

Many older WARG members will remember Birthe, who recently died after a long illness. She was a familiar figure in Winchester in the 1960s and 70s, particularly during the summer dig season when her bright yellow wellies and mac and her ever-present pipe made her stand out from the crowd.

Birthe came to Winchester in 1964 to work on the already highly-regarded Cathedral Green excavations - one of literally thousands of young, would-be archaeologists hoping to learn the new techniques being developed there. Unlike the others, though, she soon became the Cathedral Green supervisor, and gained a husband in the excavation director.

I was one of the thousands, having no idea what to expect when I arrived in Winchester in 1970. I was told to report to the small Danish lady with a pipe, and expect to work hard. A pretty good description, except for 'small', which certainly did not describe Birthe's personality. She could be quite fierce and did not suffer fools gladly, but once you gained her confidence she was extremely loyal and supportive. She inspired through enthusiasm and dedication.

One of Birthe's great contributions to urban archaeology was the thorough use of the raw material of stratigraphy - likened by one observer to 'squeezing meaning from a stone'. Indeed, she was able to interpret the Saxon Old Minster without any stones, through the recognition of the robber trenches which had removed all traces of the masonry walls.

Working for Birthe was an unforgettable experience and one that led me, and I suspect many others, to a career in archaeology. She will be greatly missed.

Ken Qualmann



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