

The Post Hole

Issue 1

2008-10-01

The Post Hole is a student run newsletter for all those interested in archaeology. It aims to promote discussion and the flow of ideas in the department of Archaeology for the University of York and the wider archaeological community. If you would like to get involved with the editorial process, writing articles or photography please email: Katie Marsden (<mailto:km531@york.ac.uk>) or Gemma Doherty (<mailto:gjd500@york.ac.uk>).

Contents

1 Hungate: The New Jorvik?	2
2 News	5
3 Against Archaeology in Modern Media	6
4 “Excavation as Theatre” – Why on earth not?!	7
5 Hints and Tips: Starting the New Academic Year	8
6 Interview with an Aerial Photographer	9
7 Photogrammetry Using PI3000	11

1 Hungate: The New Jorvik?

Charlotte Burford (<mailto:cbl511@york.ac.uk>)

Anyone who likes the Vikings or indeed actually reads their emails from the department will have heard about the latest discoveries at Hungate. The new discoveries were released to the press on Thursday (9th October) and have been followed up by extra tours to the public over the weekend to show off the new discoveries to their best. I went along on a tour on Sunday just to see what all the fuss is about. Hungate is a five year project being funded by the Hungate Regeneration Ltd and being excavated by the York Archaeological Trust. The site has been a goldmine of archaeology and one of the biggest digs in York for 25 years. The archaeology spans over 1000 years; with the new Viking evidence and reaching all the way to the most recent archaeology of the Victorian Slums. The most recent discovery has got all the archaeologists on site very excited and could provide vital evidence about the history of Viking York.



Hungate site, and building.

If you have been to Hungate before you will have seen the remains of the Victorian street, Haver Lane, running through the site. Just behind this street, in the left hand corner of the site, the remains of a Viking age cellared building have been found. Until now it's been impossible for anyone on tours to see into the hole the YAT team have wedged themselves in, but due to the discovery the concrete walkway in place at the excavation has been specially extended to provide a view of the Viking house for the public, a view which is impossible from any other angle. The house found at Hungate is very similar in style to those found at Coppergate, seen at the Jorvik. Without dating the timbers from Hungate that are currently still in situ, the house's date isn't completely

certain. As they are a similar style to those at Coppergate and the pottery that has been found in the infill of the building, it is likely that the cellared building probably dates to around 970 AD, the same as those 10th century buildings found at Jorvik. One thing was different in this building which makes it unique compared the houses at Coppergate; it appears the wood used to build the cellared building was re-used wood. No example for recycled wood exists at Coppergate. The wood used in the cellar appears to have come from a ship's hull which is evident by holes in the timbers which are not of a building context. The type of ship that these timbers came from is thought to be a clinker built ship, a very common ship building style in the Viking age. From the new walk way you can actually see the dowel holes in the timbers.

The cellar is dug into the ground and re-enforced with horizontal wooden planks and then braced by larger wooden posts. One of the walls is also re-enforced with an earthen bank, another thing not seen in the houses at Coppergate. The cellar could have been over 5 foot in height and appears to have two phases of building although the second was still very early on in its construction. It was extended around 40cm and this appears to be due to a patch of soft ground found in one corner of the cellar. The use of the cellar is not completely certain; it could have been a workshop or a storage space but some of the other finds also suggest it could have been a domestic dwelling.

I shouldn't need to tell you that York has extremely good preservation and this is definitely the case at Hungate. The cellar is about 3 meters below the modern street level and the timbers have remained water logged for over 1000 years due to the high water table. This excellent preservation has led to finds similar to those found at Coppergate, such as the Viking bone ice skate, stunning Viking combs, leather objects, oyster shells, butchered bones, pottery, wooden objects and a rare amber bead.

The building could be lying on the eastern edge of the Viking town of Jorvik, making it extremely significant for establishing the town's extents; it could have been much bigger than originally thought. It is possible that more Viking houses will be found at Hungate and the archaeologists on site are suggesting that a second may exist directly behind the first. Archaeologists at Hungate still have about 3 years in which to investigate this site before the site is completely developed although the developers have already previously agreed not to build on any cemetery found on the site, to build around it instead. One wonders what will happen if Hungate indeed turns out to be a second Jorvik. The timbers from the house will need to be removed and taken for investigation at the YAT labs and the hope is that the timbers will eventually go on display, possibly on site at Hungate or perhaps in an exhibition at Jorvik. If you want to see the timbers in situ get down to Hungate within the next month before they are removed to be preserved. There are still many questions that need to be answered, most importantly are there any other Viking houses in the Hungate area and just how big was Jorvik or is this a whole new area of Viking York? The answers to these questions will hopefully come in the near future.



Hungate's new walkway

For more information visit the Dig Hungate website at <http://www.dighungate.com/>. If you want to go on one of the tours (highly recommend before the end of the month), they run mon-fri (although more have been added on due to the new finds) from DIG (St. Saviorgate) about 3 times a day and cost a pound.



Re-used timbers

Related links

1. <http://tinyurl.com/4a7727>
2. <http://tinyurl.com/5m2d47>

2 News

Gemma Doherty (<mailto:gjd500@york.ac.uk>) , **Katie Marsden** (<mailto:km531@york.ac.uk>)

Get involved with The Post Hole

The Post Hole is a bi-termly student newsletter ran undergrad and postgrad students. If you want to get involved, writing articles, submitting photos or anything else you can think of, email the editor at km531@york.ac.uk or submissions lady gjd500@york.ac.uk All our articles and more information is available on our website: Or follow the link from the department's main webpage.

Upcoming ArchSoc Events

New term, new socials and events! Join us at Fresher's Fair (Saturday Week One) or our first social (Thursday Week Two). Socials:

Week 2 ? Week 3 Ghost Walk
Week 4 Treasure Hunt
Week 5 Film Night
Week 6 Lecture
Week 7 Historic Bar Crawl
Week 8 Bowling
Week 9 Dress up social
Week 10 KM party

3 Against Archaeology in Modern Media

Brendan Taylor (<mailto:bdt501@york.ac.uk>)

Archaeology has been portrayed in the media since the earliest travellers voyaged to Egypt. With these travels came stories of mummies and even novels set on archaeological sites, like those written by Agatha Christie. Today's media continue to portray archaeologists on the silver screen or on television. This portrayal is somehow different to the portrayal of old where the archaeologist maybe clever and insightful, even a sadistic killer. Today however, the archaeologist is portrayed as a gung ho action star rushing to solve one case or crime to another.

No worse of this betrayal to the integrity of intelligence of the archaeologist is the BBC's programme Bonekickers. Hailed by many as one of the worst shows ever made by the BBC, with terrible story lines and one dimensional character who seem to chase after adventure rather than do actual archaeological excavation. This is a worse betrayal of the science than the silver screen versions like Indian Jones or Richard O'Connor (*The Mummy*), who chase evil villains across the world. The BBC's attempt however tries to make them intelligent and then shatter that image by having them chase across relics across the Britain.

Not only was archaeology let down by the poor characters and storyline of Bonekickers. The archaeological method shown within the programme was also lacking with chunks of wood being found in nonwater logged soil and then being left on a table. As well as a magnetometer beeping when passed over metal which is not exactly how the device works. One wonders when or if the fictional archaeological characters in the media will ever return to the intelligence of years ago or if they will continue down the road of ever increasing stupidity flash past the eyes of the ever stupefying nature of the watcher of today.

This lowering of the effort in today's media can be seen in the latest Indiana Jones film. Although he was always a gun slinging tomb raider, the latest film seemed to be lacking in the originality of the first three films and it seems to take its storyline almost directly from episodes from Stargate. This again shows a lack of effort on the side of the archaeologist.

We should also not forget non-fictional archaeological programming. Time team is obviously the most famous choice of this genre. Since its first episode in 1994, it has covered many different areas of archaeological interest in England as well as several excavations abroad, including the recently aired palaeontology excavation in America. This has revitalised interest in archaeology leading many to choose it as a profession or university course. This is probably the best way that media has shown archaeology as it does not make it any more interesting than it ever was with ridiculous chases or villains with guns.

So it would probably be best for archaeology to stop being portrayed in fictional media all together. More mainstream programmes of archaeology in practice such as the short lived Two Men in a Trench' not more terrible written programs such as Bonekickers. However perhaps shows like Bonekickers' are to the archaeological profession as Channel 5's House' is to the medical profession; a product of the profession that must be endured.

4 “Excavation as Theatre” – Why on earth not?!

Gemma Doherty (<mailto:gjd500@york.ac.uk>)

I'm going to stick my neck out and say I love archaeology in the media. Its trashy, inaccurate and sexy. I love it! And this is for more reasons than the entertainment that can be gained from sitting through half an hour of BoneKickers hurling abuse at the TV with room full of people doing the same thing. We live in a media-dominated, consumer society in which most ideas have to be watered down almost to non-existence to be broadcast. It's a shame but it's the society in which we live, for better or for worse. This society is also a capitalist society where everything costs money, especially archaeology, and however much I love our discipline it is one of life's luxuries. It helps for people's sense of identity, gives our lives a context and teaches us lessons but if we got rid of every archaeologist tomorrow the world would not collapse and many people would believe their lives to be unaltered. This is because they do not view archaeology and the past as relevant to their lives or interesting in any way. If we want funding in archaeology to increase we need to catch the public's imagination and show them how fascinating the past can actually be. To me this is where programmes which drag archaeology into the public's eye, however fantastically, have a vital role.

I'd guess that there are few archaeology students (however much they would scoff at the idea now) who were not initially attracted to the discipline by life-size pictures of a sweat soaked Indiana Jones, the enthusiastic ramblings of Tony Robinson, the geeky charm of Daniel Jackson, or the make-your-own Tutankhamun death mask that you could buy when you were a child. The media can grab people's imaginations like little else these days and it's a tool that, as archaeologists, we should exploit rather than complain about.

But these shows don't show archaeology as it really is? So? How many people would really be drawn to archaeology by tedious shows recording hour after of mind-numbing trowel work which reveal ... oh wait... absolutely nothing?! No one would be. You would not expect shows like CSI to give an accurate view of forensic science its sexed-up, its fast-paced, and its popular! You need to grab people's attention before you can get them to learn about a discipline. Ok, if we were teaching this view of archaeology in universities or in the field I can see the problem with it but these shows are but a tool to get people into universities or into the field where they can learn what its actually like.

Media representations of archaeology like Time Team, Indiana Jones, Bone-Kickers etc are just that: media representations. Anyone who knows anything about archaeology knows its not like that, however much we wished our lecturers looked like Harrison Ford, and anyone who does not just might be inspired to pick up a book on archaeology, attend an open day or get involved with a site.

5 Hints and Tips: Starting the New Academic Year

Gemma Doherty (<mailto:gjd500@york.ac.uk>)

First Years

The first year is a brilliant time of your degree. You have work to do but they start you off fairly lightly so really, really make the most of your free time. Join societies like ArchSoc of course! and socialise as much as possible. If you can, get involved with some volunteering the skills and confidence you'll pick up are so useful and in a subject such as archaeology contacts are everything!

Second Years

Welcome back! Ok, I'm not going to lie to you it gets tougher from here on in you'll have to work harder and you'll find you know the library and jstor' back to front and inside out before long. However it's a great year where you can really start to find out where your interests lie. Once again get involved as much as possible with the department and other people's research when opportunities arise and enjoy it!

Third Years

Right so I know you've done this all before and you really don't need me telling you what to do, however my key piece of advice which is applicable to other years as well is to start looking at masters courses earlier than you think necessary. The AHRC funding application deadline is surprisingly early and some courses have a financial condition' which requires you to prove your access to a certain level of money. Details of these are available on the websites of the individual universities you are looking to apply to. I'd also start putting a bit of money aside for the third term. It will be undoubtedly the most expensive term of your degree as every time you go out it will be a celebration!

6 Interview with an Aerial Photographer

Katie Marsden (<mailto:km531@york.ac.uk>)

1. **What is your job title?** I'm an aerial photography interpreter for an external company based at English Heritage.
2. **What are your current projects?** I'm working on the North West Coast Rapid Coastal Assessment Survey
3. **What first got you interested in Archaeology?** It was through a family interest in local history and Time Team when younger.
4. **How did you get into the Archaeology careers field and your current job?** Firstly, through an Archaeological Sciences degree at Bradford. I was offered a postgraduate degree and, through personal connections like staff that I got on well with etc, forensic archaeology work with the police but turned both down for work in the field and joined a consultancy. I started work as a field archaeologist then became a CAD officer/illustrator. From that I got my present job. I got experience of working with aerial photography at university.
5. **What kinds of experiences have got you where you are today?** I started with no knowledge of archaeology and ended up with a reputation and offers. Getting to know people and contacts with people in different fields has helped a great deal. I worked on 60-70 different sites and they all gave different experiences and understandings. In my opinion teaching is as important as learning and in many cases academics have little or no experience of work in the field or professional archaeological work, its all about the experiences you can offer to a given role.
6. **What are some of the best parts about your job?** I don't officially work for English Heritage, but I like the real chance of being able to push myself further than in smaller companies of say ten people. There are also more experiences, and a chance to see more of the British landscape through the work.
7. **And some of the worst parts?** I'm mainly office based and don't get the chance to get out in the field as much, which coming from a field background is a bit of a frustration. Like other jobs, it's also quite difficult to move up in and skills are not passed around as much as I'd like.
8. **How much do you have to deal with members of the public?** I have no dealings with the public. I produce work that goes into the archive but as the work is produced for academics it doesn't enter into the public dominion.
9. **How do you feel about the present levels of computerisation in archaeology?** More computerisation is coming through and than can only be an excellent thing. Computerisation is generally more accurate. However in things like illustration reductions, errors are increased. So for some parts of archaeology, like small illustrations, the old methods are

the best, but for things like site plans computerisation should be taken all the way. For some of the older techniques in archaeology there isn't much more to learn, but with computers and computerisation there are always new things to be learnt, which can only be a benefit to the field.

10. **What are your experiences with conventions, especially those which are usually taught in university departments, such as drawing conventions?** I worked on sites with many different companies and some refused to use conventions. I think conventions should be based on a MOLAS style system but implemented on a field scale. However, there are many different sets of conventions and teaching these in academic departments can be good for diversity and understanding.
11. **How do you see the current Archaeological climate in this country in terms of jobs?** I think its getting stronger on the research side, and will do until the country has been covered. The consultancy side of Archaeology is dying out, I think, as consultancies are becoming more willing to pay fines than to pay the fees for archaeological work. This means that the smaller companies are suffering.
12. **What advice do you have for students wishing to go into a job in Archaeology?** Learn from your experiences and listen to and take in what people tell you. Field archaeology jobs are relatively easy to get into straight from a degree but for academic jobs its worthwhile pushing to get different experiences, even if you wouldn't normally think of them. Volunteering is always useful. Do more than the compulsory fieldwork; that shows the drive that employers like.
13. **What are your experiences of job interviews?** I went for the same job twice before I was offered my current position, and both times failed on the stereoscopic vision test. The third time I wore contact lenses and was the only one out of the seven candidates who got 100.
14. **Do you have any interview technique tips?** One of the keys things is posture. Don't slouch, but adopt a semi-relaxed stance. Ask yourself the question 'where do you see yourself in the future' as employers like to know and it's best to be prepared. It's essential to be able to work both by yourself and in a team.

With gracious thanks to our interviewee.

7 Photogrammetry Using PI3000

Clara Asher (<mailto:cowa500@york.ac.uk>)

The department has recently acquired a software package named PI3000. This is used to create 3D models from normal photographs.

Using PI3000

A calibrated camera is needed (any camera can be calibrated) although it is important you can lock the focus on it because the software needs the focus to be the same for all photographs or it won't be able to create the model.

The photographs can now be taken and need to be stereo images. It is best to start to the left of the object and then move right by roughly one third the distance between the camera and the object for each photograph.

Once you have the photographs, they are loaded, along with the camera's calibration file, into PI3000. The first two images to work with are chosen and matching points, such as corners, are found on both images. When there are enough accurate points the software will be able to create the stereo pair.

The next stage is to select the area on the images of which you wish to create your model. This is done by drawing a polyline enclosing the area. Additional polylines may be drawn to indicate break lines.

The final step is creating the model itself. All that needs to be done here is to tell the software how fine you want the detail. This may take some time, depending on the detail and complexity of your model. Once it has finished though you will be able to view the completed model.

Uses of PI3000

One example of a use of PI3000 is my dissertation, on the subject of the shrines of St. William.

Before the reformation York Minster had two shrines dedicated to St. William of York, a controversial 12th century archbishop. One, the principal shrine, stood at the east end of the minster while the other, the tomb shrine, stood over his original burial place.

At the reformation both shrines were taken from the minster and buried in Precentors Court. Several fragments of both shrines have thus survived and are now in the possession of the Yorkshire museum, though not currently on display to the general public.

As part of my dissertation I have been using PI3000 to create models of the shrine fragments. I hope to use these to create a reconstruction of both shrines.

Although I have used PI3000 to create models of highly detailed, sculpted stone fragments, PI3000 could also be used to create models of entire building faces and therefore has the potential to be a valuable asset to the department.