



CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD GROUP

Newsletter Number 156

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions are due. If you have not yet paid and need to post, please send them to the treasurer, address above. Current rates are:

£7 for individual membership

£10 family membership

You should be aware that you are only covered by the Group's insurance if you are a paid-up member.

LECTURES

Lectures are normally held in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at 7.30 pm. The season continues with:

- 6 January Mike Coles on recent Group fieldwork
Please note: this meeting will be in the McDonald Institute seminar room (still on the Downing site)
- 3 February TBC
- 3 March Dr Paul Spoerry on *Medieval building and settlement plans from excavations in Cambridgeshire*
- 14 April AGM

On 17th February, the Rheesearch Group will lead a workshop of their geophysical techniques and what can be understood from the results. This will again be at the Museum.

Parking is available on site, from Tennis Court Road.

BAR HILL PROCESSING EVENINGS

Processing continues at the Oxford Archaeology East HQ at 15 Trafalgar Way, Bar Hill on Wednesdays when there is no lecture. We meet from about 7.15 pm. **We will not be at Bar Hill on Wednesdays 23rd and 30th December.**

For those who have not yet found us: approach Bar Hill; at the roundabout where Tesco is on the left, go straight on; take the first right (Trafalgar Way) and Unit 15 is on the corner of the second left turn, with parking in front. Be careful of the large lorries in this area. A plan can be provided.

SOCIAL EVENINGS

On **Wednesday, 16th December**, there will be our pre-Christmas social evening at Bar Hill. All welcome, please bring a contribution of food or drink.

Arrangements for our New Year dinner have not yet been finalized, but this will take place at the end of January or early in February.

COMMITTEE MEETING

A committee meeting was held on the 9th September, when we noted that balances stood at £2,731, including £1,700 remaining of Val Whittaker's bequest; membership was about the same as the previous year. £61.49 of the current year's grant from the Cambridge Antiquarian Society had so far been spent, on excavation tools, a new 100m tape was still to be purchased. The committee agreed that the Group could part fund the purchase of storage boxes for the Wimpole finds, up to £100: the National Trust was to part fund the purchase, but discussions were continuing on the amount.

We agreed to register for a County Council minibus sharing scheme for local groups: not that we expect to make very great use of it, but we felt that communal transport could be useful on occasion. The invitation from the Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service to become a member, however, was turned down as most of the services offered were not of direct relevance to the Group.

Thanks were expressed to Bill Hughes for organizing the Group's display at the Cambridgeshire History Fair on 19th September; and it was hoped to produce at least one new board on the Oily Hall fieldwalking for the November CAS conference.

Potential areas for fieldwork were at Great Eversden; Hurdle Hall, Reach; Childerley; Weybridge Farm, near Peterborough; and Over. In September we were waiting for rain! Various members of the committee were working through the older fieldwork files in order to produce records that could be digitized and deposited in secure locations, although the paper files would still probably be kept. It would be difficult to set a realistic deadline for completion of this project, but it will be kept on the agenda for future meetings. Deposit of information for public use was still thought best dealt with through the Historic Environment Record (HER).

A request had been received from the Young Archaeologists Club for assistance in giving YAC members fieldwalking experience and we agreed that we would be happy to facilitate a session, although the Group could not be responsible for the youngsters.

The next meeting will be on the 20th January 2010, when any member is welcome to attend. One item will be means of publishing the results of fieldwork.

FIELDWORK

Fieldwalking has been continuing at Childerley (near Dry Drayton), not far from areas where traces of Roman and Iron Age settlement were found during the upgrading of the A428, but unfortunately so far we have found little of archaeological interest.

On **Sunday 13 December** and possibly the following Sunday we will be at Reach, meeting on the Village green. The fields we are to walk are on the north side of Reach Lode, They belong to the National Trust and we have been asked to check out for any archaeology, most likely Neolithic and

Bronze Age flint. If the fields are not suitable for fieldwalking we may use an auger, and spades to do some 'shovel tests' i.e. dig out one spade full of top soil and sort for artefacts. Two struck flints were found on a preliminary reekkie.

In the New Year we will continue at Reach or return to Childerley, depending on the results at Reach.

VAL WHITTAKER MEMORIAL PRIZE

We are again offering a prize of up to £150 to a student of archaeology, towards training or equipment. The award will be on the basis of an essay or project report submitted by 31st January 2010. If you would like to enter, or know anyone who would, please get in touch for an application form and guidance notes.

EGYPTIAN LANDSCAPE CHANGE AND THE GLOBAL COOLING CRISIS

On 4th November, geologist Judith Bunbury told us about a survey project investigating changes in the landscape in Egypt, finding evidence for the effects of climate change on water in the Nile, rainfall in the Sahara and sea level change. Techniques used included augering (to 10m and, on one occasion, to 16m), GPS mapping by mobile phone, resistance tomography (to 11m) and air photography.

They found that 12,000 years ago there were many branches of the Nile, which reduced in number as sea levels rose, as much as 100 metres, and the green belt was much further north than now. It had previously been thought that the course of the Nile had not changed much, but the survey found that it had moved an average of 2 kilometres in 1,000 years. Rivers do change course without climate change, of course.

In the estuary, wadi washouts sent sand into the river, changing its course; plants died, the wadis became unstable and people moved to the river bank. At Giza there were again many courses of the Nile. The sand under the builders' settlement there was found to be laid down or laminated in wet/dry phases, whereas further south the laminated sand lay over the "settlement" area. The earliest foundation of Karnack was on an island, which was extended as the river moved, one temple being built over an old channel and the Ptolemaic baths being built across the old river frontage. People gradually moved towards the river edge.

The survey showed a sweeping cooling north to south, the landscape becoming cooler and drier earlier at Giza in the north than at Karnack further south, not drying out in Chad until some 900 years later, with Sudan being the last to be abandoned.

Further details of the work of the survey can be found at:

<http://www.ees.ac.uk/userfiles/file/EA-32pp03-05-Lutley.pdf> and

<http://www.ees.ac.uk/userfiles/file/EA-32pp06-07-Jeffreys.pdf> (with thanks to Colin Coates for these)

LIFE IN THE MIDDLE STONE AGE IN HIGHLAND LESOTHO

On 2nd December Dr Brian Stewart talked to us about ongoing excavations in two rockshelters in highland Lesotho, Southern Africa, unusual research as the majority of archaeological work has been carried out in the coastal regions. In sub-Saharan Africa the Middle Stone Age dates from about 250,000 years ago to 50/20,000 years ago. Melikane rockshelter dates back some 80,000

years and Sehongong 60,000 years. The climate 80,000 years ago was interglacial, but between 60 and 20,000 years ago was very variable and must have been very stressful to live in.

Most sources, including DNA evidence, indicate that the likely origin of homo sapiens was East Africa about 200,000 years ago, but the origins of our “human” behaviour are less certain. For a long time this was thought to be in Europe because of the artistic, possibly symbolic, artefacts and rock paintings found, but this is not now thought to be the case: there was certainly an explosion of such behaviour, but finds of carved stone, beads and worked flints of about 75,000 years ago at Blombos Cave in the southern Cape suggested origins in Africa. Since those finds, sophisticated artefacts have been found in various spots in eastern Africa: harpoons of 90,000 years ago; bone points, ochre and beads from 82,000 years, indicating development in fits and starts. The greater prevalence in Europe may be because it was a harsher place to live in and people were concentrated in certain areas, leading to more symbolic behaviour.

The current research aimed to test hypotheses developed from earlier excavations about the way of life of hunter gatherers in mountainous areas, taking advantage of modern excavation techniques and dating methods. Lesotho is highly dissected, with three height zones including mountains up to 40km high and today has highly seasonal rainfall, and it was considered that mountain living would require greater organization to maximize resources and minimize effort, than living on the coast

Melikane rockshelter sits 1,825 metres above sea level, facing north and consequently warm, so was probably a winter shelter. Pat Carter had dug there in 1974; excavations in 2008 and 9 reached down to bedrock at 2.6m. The upper levels contained many lithics, then there was a layer of hard sandy silts, probably washed in from above in summer storms. Under this was a series of hearths dating to about 30,000 years ago, and below again a series of post holes probably of about 50,000 years ago – these may be in a ring and, if so, would be evidence of one of the very earliest structures.

Sehongong rockshelter sits 1,800 metres above sea level, facing west and freezing cold. It is wider but less deep than Melikane. Carter thought this was likely to be a summer shelter, finding more beads and ochre there than at Melikane. A 1992 excavation was re-opened in 2009. Preservation was such that grass of some 30,000 years ago was preserved, and grindstones sometimes with ochre splashed on them were found. Unfortunately the permit issued was for survey rather than excavation, so the dig had to be backfilled. However, field survey found lithics and quarry sites: this was a high density habitation site.

The lithics are being analysed, although those of the Middle Stone Age do not have special features. Nevertheless, there are differences in the lithics found at the two rockshelters, with Sehongong having the more classic MSA tools, eg points, and showing real differences from other southern African MSA sites. Many bone borers were found, possibly for leather working. The Melikane assemblage is dominated by blades and bladelets – possibly related to a heightened need for exchange?

Dr Stewart was awaiting dating results and funding for the analysis of faunal, charcoal and phytolith remains, but these two sites provide scope for understanding what may be the world’s earliest montane foragers and identifying how they differed from the coastal peoples. 2010 will bring excavation at Sehongong and survey at Melikane, and Dr Stewart promised to talk to us again next autumn with his further results.

CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Antiquarian Society lectures are held in the Law Faculty Building, West Road, Cambridge at 6.00 p.m. on Mondays. Members of the Group are eligible to attend and the programme continues with:

- 4 January Prof Ronald Hutton on *The history of prehistory: megaliths and the modern imagination*
- 1 February Dr Catherine Hills on *Skeletons in the Garden – Romans and Anglo Saxons at Newnham College*
- 1 March Ben Robinson on *Revealing Peterborough – new explorations in an ancient cathedral city*
- 12 April Dr Stephen Alford on *Finding Nicholas Berden: the career of a Elizabethan spy*

The Spring conference will be held on Saturday, 17 April, with the theme *Past relations: different approaches to the dead over time*.

LOCAL EVENTS

- 14-19 December Nunkie Theatre Company presents “*A Warning to the Curious...*”, 2 ghost stories featuring a young archaeologist, by MR James, at The Corpus Playroom, St Edward’s Passage, Cambridge. Box office at Scudamore’s.
- 9 February Professor Rob Foley on *The pattern of human evolution*. 7pm (doors open 6.15pm), Department of Earth Sciences, Downing Street, Cambridge, for the Friends of the Sedgwick Museum

CONFERENCES/COURSES

- 8-10 January *Forensic Facial Reconstruction* Cambridge University ICE
- 13-14 January *Aerial Photography: Archaeological Interpretation and Mapping*. Oxford University DCE
- 12-14 February *Sutton Hoo, King Raedwald, and the coming of Christianity to the English*. Cambridge University ICE
- 13 February *Medieval Parks: recent research*. Cambridge University ICE conference
- 20 February *Forensic Aspects of Ancient Egypt Study Day*. University of London
- 19-21 February *Medieval Cambridge*. Cambridge University ICE
- 13-14 March *AD 410: The end of Roman Britain*. British Museum
- 16-18 April *Landscape history of estates, parks and their countryside*. Cambridge University ICE
- 24 April *Vernacular Architecture in the Fens*. Cambridge University ICE conference
- 26-30 April *Archaeological Survey week: analyzing and recording historic landscapes*. Oxford University DCE
- 30 April-2 May *Forensic Facial Reconstruction*. Cambridge University ICE
- 7-9 May *An introduction to the prehistoric archaeology of Britain*. Cambridge University ICE
- 14-16 May *The landscape of Domesday Book*. Cambridge University ICE
- 21-23 May *Early Medieval East Anglia*. Cambridge University ICE
- 21-23 May *The archaeology of the ancient Greek myths*. Cambridge University ICE
- 24-28 May *Building survey week: analyzing and recording historic buildings*. Oxford University DCE
- 19 June *Monasteries in the landscape and society of Medieval England*. Cambridge University ICE at Denny Abbey

PART-TIME STUDY

Mondays, 7.15-9.15pm, from 11 January

Cambridge ICE Certificate in Archaeology: 11 meetings + 3 field trips – *Prehistoric peoples*

Tuesdays, 7.15-9.15pm from 12 January

Cambridge ICE Diploma in Archaeology: 12 meetings + 2 field trips – *Conflict archaeology: case studies from 20th century Europe*

Cambridge ICE Science: 11 meetings + 2 practical Saturday sessions - *Genes and Evolution*

Thursdays, 7.15-9.15pm from 14 January

Cambridge ICE Diploma in Local History: 12 meetings + 2 field trips – *Researching your local community: from its origins to the present day*

5 Fridays, 11am – 4pm, from 1 May 2010. *Occupation archaeology: The Channel Islands 1940-45*.
At the Imperial War Museum, Duxford (Cambridge ICE)

For more details, see: www.cont-ed.cam.ac.uk

FIELDWORK OPPORTUNITIES

Details of digs can be found at: www.ilovethepast.com (through *Current Archaeology*) and www.britarch.ac.uk/briefing (CBA)

EXHIBITIONS

Ely Museum until 10 February 2010 – Sutton Bronze Age Barrow excavation

Harborough Museum – many finds from the Hallaton hoard. 16 hoards were found including Iron Age silver and gold coins (5,290 dating from 50 BC to AD50) and a silver decorated Roman helmet.

WEB SITES

Staffordshirehoard.org.uk : information on the Staffordshire hoard, which includes many sword fittings. All items were apparently associated with warfare or a warrior culture.

Britarch.net/lqD : web site of the European co-production “Homo Sapiens”

Britarch.net/lqj : Teachers’ TV website, including archaeology programmes

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

British Archaeology November/December 2009

CBA Conservation, September 2009

Susan May, Secretary