

## CONFERENCE REPORT

### **AEA Autumn Conference, 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> September 2013, Kiel University, Germany: *Social Space and Environment: Landscape Reconstruction in Environmental Archaeology***

Members of the AEA attending the 2013 autumn conference and AGM received a warm welcome at the Institute of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Archaeology, Kiel University. Following opening addresses by the President of the University and Director of the Graduate School (*Human Development in Landscapes*), the conference showcased some of the research highlights from the School with a focus on northern German and Scandinavian studies, as well as papers on geographical regions as far apart as Ireland, Switzerland, Spain and Rapa Nui (Easter Island). The subject matter, which broadly fitted within the theme of '*Social Space and Environment*', covered issues concerning inter- and intra-site space of local and pan regional landscapes. The presentations were complemented by a range of interesting posters.

An exciting range of methodological approaches were presented. The use of phytoliths to detect crop processing debris of Eurasian cereals (*Pennisetum glaucum* and *Sorghum bicolor* vs *Panicum miliaceum* and *Setaria italica*) suggested potential for the use of morphometric phytolithic analysis to determine differences between the taxa groups and consequently use in determining crop processing activity areas (Welmoed Out and Marco Madella). By using the English Heritage Soay sheep fleece and skeletal collections, Isabella von Holstein was able to establish the extent to which the differential expressions of carbon, nitrogen and (un-exchangeable) hydrogen isotopes in animal keratin products (skin, wood, hair in textiles etc) compared to collagen (bone) is related to tissue type or animal husbandry/diet. Charcoal fragmentation was discussed by Doris Jansen, while Hannes Knapp and colleagues used novel stable isotope analysis on *Sphagnum* cellulose and pollen diagrams to understand 2000 years of environmental change in the Harz Mountains of Germany. Broader landscape methodologies included a pan European study of vegetation cover presented by Marco Zanoni and colleagues, which used satellite imagery plotted against modern surface pollen data to build models of vegetation density, enabling the authors to challenge current perceptions of openness of the vegetation at key points in prehistory. On a more local scale, Ralph Fyfe demonstrated the benefits of applying the 'Landscape Reconstruction Algorithm' to multiple pollen sequences as a method of refining localised vegetation patterns through time. Jeff Blackford went back to basics in his paper examining vegetation cover and openness within an area of current moorland (the North York Moors) by examining woodland remains beneath the peat. Jessie Woodbridge and colleagues demonstrated the potential of using pollen records together with summed radiocarbon dates to elucidate land-

scape change and provide insights into population density, examining the impact of the Neolithic transition on the vegetation of Britain. A more philosophical paper presented by Walter Dörfler on the role and sources of salt in Neolithic di-



*Walter Dörfler providing delegates with background environmental information*

ets was one of the highlights of the conference, bringing together archaeological and physiological evidence.

A number of papers focused on subsistence strategies and both inter- and intra-settlement relationships. The Neolithic and Bronze Age of northern Germany, the Baltic Sea coastal regions and Scandinavia were particularly well discussed with exciting new results including the confirmation of tetraploid free-threshing wheat in the Funnel Beaker culture (Wiebke Kirleis and colleagues). Further afield, subsistence strategies were also discussed for first cultivation at Tayma Oasis, Saudi Arabia (Michèle Dinies, Reinder Neef, Harald Kürschner) and the Terramare culture of northern Italy (Marta Dal Corso).

Papers examining internal site space included the use of Neolithic Causewayed enclosures in Funnel Beaker societies, reconstructed using plant remains (Stefanie Kloß, Elske Fischer and Wiebke Kirleis) and the Bronze Age sites of Bruszczewo in Greater Poland reconstructed using animal bones, plant remains and finds distribution/refuse disposal (Jutta Kneisel and Helmut Kroll). A number of papers examined the impact of early monumentality and agriculture on the landscape: Sarah Diers explored human induced landscape changes in the Funnel Beaker period through pollen studies and the shift from megalithic to single grave traditions; Jordi Ravelles and colleagues used a multi-proxy approach to explore the economic impact of the Neolithic site of La Draga on woodland around Lake Banyoles, Girona, Spain, while Tim Mattis Schroedter examined the impact of economic strategies on the woodland environment around the early Chalcolithic settlement of Aktopraklik, Bursa, northwestern Turkey. Michael O'Connell



*The reconstructed Viking village of Haithabu*

discussed the impact of early prehistoric farming on the landscape of western Ireland. Ingo Feeser stressed the cyclical nature of adaptive cycles for the Early Neolithic area of Eastern Schleswig-Holstein and Western Mecklenburg. The cyclical nature of woodland exploitation was also explored by Niels Bleicher who has used palaeodendroecology to reconstruct woodland management patterns around Neolithic Swiss Lake villages. Corinna Hoff discussed the relationship between landscape and Lycian burial customs (where stone tombs appear to represent wooden structures) from the 6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries, Teke Peninsula, Asia Minor.

Social events were particularly enjoyable. An opening night drinks reception was accompanied by "Angli Clamant", a wonderful early music ensemble, while all those delegates who attended the conference dinner at Das Kleine Strandhouse, Møltenort, enjoyed both the beach side location and the food. Two excursions were arranged, a longer one to Eastern Holstia, and a shorter one to the Viking village and museum of Haithabu; on the latter, we were able to enjoy the beautiful museum and treasures held there, as well as informative guided tours of the reconstructed village.

The reviewers and members of the AEA committee congratulate the

organisers, Walter Dörfler and particularly Wiebke Kirleis, and their team on an excellent conference. Such breadth of research activity by the Institute, demonstrates its international profile and impact through collaborative projects. The conference, and particularly the short excursion under the informative guidance of Helmut Kroll, provided a wonderful introduction to Kiel and the surrounding landscape of southern Jutland and have

wetted the appetite for many for a return visit.

**Ruth Pelling and Andy Howard**

*Poster prize winners Andry Mitusov (left) and Masters dissertation prize winner Alice Berger (right) with AEA Chair Andy Howard*

