

Although the AEA was founded in Britain nine years ago, it was never intended that it should be a specifically British institution. In the event, it has acquired a membership living around the North and Baltic Seas, whose interests centre on the past environments of northern Europe. It was therefore fitting that a conference should be held outside the British Isles, and the ninth such event was held at Roskilde, in Denmark. It must be said at the outset that the conference was a great academic and social success, organised by David Robinson of the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen. He does know how many hours he put into it, the Museum allowing such time, but did not choose to tell me. David was ably assisted by Ida Boldson and Anette Johnson.

The actual conference headquarters was the Roskilde Youth Hostel, as Danish prices did not permit the choice of more opulent surroundings. However, this does possess a conference room, and the catering was of a very high standard. The first evening's events took place here, and comprised a welcome from the Director of the National Museum, an historical talk by Don Brothwell, and an introduction to the Lejre Archaeological and Historical Research Centre by its new director Bo Madsen. This was followed by a velkomstfest, a Danish word that does not require translation.

Most of the academic content of the conference was delivered next day at Roskilde University Centre in the form of sixteen talks - a bit of a marathon - but all of them interesting and well-presented. The following is a personal selection of the highlights. Foremost academically was the low-key presentation of the first incontrovertible evidence for slash-and-burn agriculture in Scandinavia, based on the recognition of heat-altered pollen grains by Svend Andersen. James Greig demonstrated a new way to defeat weeds: he tried to grow them with standard greenhouse techniques and failed. Andrew Jones opened the proceedings in his own inimitable way - perhaps he should consider changing his nick-name from Bone to Coprolite. Sue Stallibrass followed this by some pictures of an obliging mongrel called Sappho, who demonstrated how bones acquire their gnawing marks. Bruce Levitan described a cave site in the Mendips which can only be excavated by archaeoathletes. Ruth Morgan described a timber neolithic mortuary chamber, which had survived well enough to be reconstructed and dendro-dated, from the splendidly named site of Foulmire Fen in Cambridgeshire. Camilla Dickson talked about varieties of reconstructed Roman porridge, some of which were tastier than others. Su Grierson showed us how she actually carries out the dyeing of wool with plant materials. Keith Crabtree, in bringing us up to date on the British Association Experimental Earthworks, managed to imply that Professor Dimpleby had been left standing in one of the ditches for two years, and produced a photograph of him reminiscent of Lot's wife. He also suggested a whole new environmental topic in studying the Fish Villa at Romanbourne. Bill Boyd, an exiled Scot, introduced us to the problems of environmental archaeology in Australia. Robert Janaway brought the proceedings to a close with a description of some heroic experiments designed to show how the presence of metals on bodies enhances the preservation of fabrics. He placed dead rats in shrouds and made suitable coffins for some of them, and after nine months had some very interesting results. He intends to carry out some even more heroic work with pigs. Added to all this were numerous poster presentations which we endeavoured to study whilst consuming tea and coffee, and an excellent lunch.

That evening, following yet another excellent Danish meal, a somewhat languid gathering held its A.G.M. It was agreed that out-of-Britain conferences were a good thing, but the 10th will be held in London next year.

Day Two was spent mostly at the Lejre Archaeological and Historical Research Centre. Here we were privileged (and I mean it) to hear a lecture from Dr J. Troels-Smith retelling the seminal series of experiments demonstrating the possibilities of neolithic deforestation. Another lecture of fundamental importance came from Peter Rasmussen, He has been examining small ruminant faeces, probably of goat, preserved at the prolific Swiss neolithic site of Egolzwil, and has found clear evidence that in the late winter and spring these animals received fodder in the form of hazel and alder twigs, carrying pollen-covered catkins. Some of us spent the rest of the day at Lejre, whilst most went to the famous Viking Ship Museum at Roskilde. A planned sailing expedition there had to be cancelled, as Danish inclement weather has little to learn from its British counterpart.

Lejre is the first centre of its kind, and all subsequent establishments of a similar nature must pay it due acknowledgement. It is set in 20 hectares of enchanting secret landscape, with a pool or bog at the bottom of every hillock. The reconstructed Iron Age village was a little premature, and is no longer considered to be quite correct. Other much later buildings have simply been rebuilt or were always at their present location. Agricultural experimentation seems somewhat in abeyance as the Centre struggles with the familiar financial problem of generating 60\$ of its own income, but there is plenty of pottery manufacture and flint-knapping. There is an area for schoolchildren where they can light their own fires and go boating on log canoes. Some AEA members indulged themselves with this pastime when the children had gone. Dr Madsen seems the person most likely to succeed in restoring the establishment to its former glory. That evening an item cryptically programmed as 'entertainment'¹ turned out to be two traditional musicians whose excellence got members dancing - in the circumstances, the dance might be called a Danish conga.

Day Three consisted entirely of visits. In the morning we went to the Frilandsmuseet, another Danish first. As early as 1902 they were preserving old farmsteads on this site as well as rebuilding specimens from other areas. Whole farmyards are preserved, and have a wonderful air of belonging to the place. There was far too much for the few hours available. Some sampled Faroese fishing huts, and others attended another session on vegetable dyeing techniques. Sheila Hamilton-Dyer and I discovered a common fascination with cowsheds which we were able to indulge. And it didn't rain all the time.

The afternoon was mesolithic. The Vedbaek area has proved so prolific in sites of this period that a museum (Gammel Holtgard) has been set up purely to serve them. The Danes are very museum-conscious, and have more of them per head of population than anywhere else in the world - and this one is a beauty. It was demonstrated to us by Professor Eric Brinch Petersen, who is rightly proud of it. Besides an exemplary display of the finds themselves, there is a series of reconstruction panoramas (referred to as the fiction!) as vivid as those of the Jorvik Viking Centre. We were finally extracted from this splendour to visit the sites of some of the excavations.

That was the end of the conference proper. Sixty-seven persons dispersed to their home bases, and eighteen remained to go on an archaeological tour of Jutland. The conference participants comprised 31 with Danish addresses, eight from other Scandinavian countries, eight Dutch, sixteen U.K., six Swiss, one German, and one Scot from Australia. English, bless everyone, was spoken throughout.

The excursion was superbly planned and hitchless, David (again) doing us proud. We saw the cream of Danish archaeological treasures and a representative selection of sites, each with its own academic specialist to present it. I don't know whether the bus driver had been specially selected, but certainly he joined in the proceedings and was able to contribute information of his own, on farmhouse architecture, for example. We also investigated some of the delights of Danish cuisine in the form of magnificent lunches in delightful settings (most old Danish watermills seem to have been turned into excellent restaurants).

On Day One of the excursion, Or Else Roesdahl showed us the Viking stronghold at Fyrkat, with a magnificent reconstruction of a Viking longhouse strongly reminiscent of an upturned boat. One almost expected the sparrow that the Venerable Bede used as an analogy for the mysteries and transience of life to fly in through the door at one end and out at the other. For the archaeozoologists there was a resident flock of Icelandic sheep to admire. In the afternoon we came into the presence of a mysterious and possibly ritual death at Silkeborg Museum, where Tollund man exudes his curious atmosphere of peace, the star exhibit in this interesting museum, and presented to us by its head Dr Christian Fischer.

On Day Two we enjoyed another museum, this time an educational one associated with the University of Aarhus Archaeological Research Institute at Moesgard (and some of us enjoyed the playground designed for school parties). There was another Iron Age house reconstruction, and we were also shown some of the incredibly rich finds from the site of Illerup Adal, where a Roman army and all their equipment were sacrificially drowned. Dr Jorgen Likjer opened box after box of gilded shield bosses and the like. 'We have¹', he said, 'more Roman swords than they have in the whole of Italy¹'. In the afternoon, Dr Kjeld Christensen presented the important ecclesiastical site of Jelling. Gorm the Old and his wife were buried under the appropriate heathen burial mounds, but it has been suggested that his late conversion to Christianity resulted in his reburial in Jelling church. At any rate, when the mound was opened in the 19th century it was found to be Gormless, and there is the splendid Jelling stone, a massive lump of granite carved with a happy mixture of Viking and Christian iconography. Recent dendrochronological work provides a date which supports the story. We also visited the site of an extraordinary Viking-Age bridge crossing a swamp (complete with part reconstruction).

Day Three was spent in the Esbjerg area where an enormous amount of development is taking place, necessitating vast amounts of rescue excavation. 'We have found 20 new Iron Age sites this year', reported Palle Sieman, who is doing his best to cope with all of this activity. The individual sites are impressive more for their quantity than their quality, as the agriculturally poor sandy soil is also ungenerous archaeologically, but the marine resources of this coastal environment helped to support an apparently high population. Medieval sites have also been found in their dozens. After that we were on our way back to Copenhagen, via the splendid old town of Odense, celebrating its millennium this year. We arrived just too late for the Hans Andersen Museum, but I was able to enjoy a private viewing of the new Nielsen Museum. Nielsen's main business in life was music, but his wife was an eminent animal sculptor, so the whole was appropriate for a musically-inclined archaeozoologist.

Besides the official programme, most of us had the opportunity to visit the Danish National Museum for at least half an hour. The prehistoric gallery is magnificent. Not only are there such world-famous treasures such as the Gundestrup cauldron, but there are

serried ranks of lurs (lura?) and some very beautiful Roman glass. The less well-known medieval galleries are also full of interest (e.g. Greenland excavations) and splendour (church furnishings).

All in all it was a marvellous week. Though flat, Denmark is a country of pleasant scenery and traditional housing in rural areas. The roads are delightfully empty, but take your mackintosh, particularly if you intend to make the journey from Hamburg by bicycle, as did the intrepid James Greig. It is rumoured that his bright purple trousers generate a special form of energy, but then he does eat a lot.

Barbara Noddle