

Conference world

For all upcoming 'experimental' conferences, check the EXARC calendar at www.exarc.eu.

EAA meeting

Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists, held in Malta 17-21 September 2008.

■ Caroline JEFFRA (UK)

This year's meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists, held in Malta 17-21 September 2008, had an initially promising session on experimental archaeology, entitled "Experimenting the Past: The Position of Experimental Archaeology in the Archaeological Paradigm of the 21st Century".

Twenty-one papers and two posters were included in the session, arranged chronologically by period addressed of material addressed. Unfortunately, this session fell into a common shortcoming of such sessions. Many of the papers presented failed to adhere to adequate experimental methodology or address theoretical issues. Instead, case studies of varying quality formed the overwhelming majority.

The topics of these case studies included use of stone tools in the production of flour (Aranguren and Revedin) and in antler working (Kufel), production of ground stone tools (Young), the possible tools used for pottery decoration (Iovino), the chaîne opératoire of Neolithic ceramics (Rocco and Simona), various aspects of building combustion (Kaltsogianni; Gheorghiu; Dumitrescu), copper casting (Wiecken), pottery wheel studies (Jeffra), Roman dyeing (Hopkins), salt production (Daire, Bizien-Jaglin, Baudry and Levillayer), and grey wheel made pottery (Dobrzańska), the use of Ancient light and shadow (Pásztor), the daily practices of Prehistoric Europe (Wood), the use life of Final Neolithic bone beads (Choyke), and Early Slavic Roasters (Szmoniewski).

With that said, there were a few good case studies presented. The two discussed here demonstrate both good experimental methodologies as well as consideration of a range of evidence. In the latter example, self-awareness of the misconceptions surrounding archaeological experimentation is well stated. "**The Experimentation of Technologies Linked to Vegetable Food: The Production of Flour at Bilancino (Florence Italy) 30,000 BP**" was an excellent example of a well composed multifaceted experiment well anchored in the archaeological record. By linking their research to a single-phase site where bulrush flour production has been proposed, the variables and tools were kept explicit and under control, giving a sound foundation for their finding that sandstone pebbles functioned as mortar and pestle for grinding flour thousands of years prior to the agricultural revolution.

A second excellent example was "**An Archaeology of Coastal Salt Industry: The Inescapable Part of Experiments**". The experimental approach discussed during the presentation of this paper was legitimised by the massive amount of research conducted before experimentation took place. It clearly showed that while experiment arises from archaeologically-unanswerable questions, the process must be grounded in that same archaeology in order to assure validity.

At the other end of the spectrum (and perhaps more worrying), however, is the inclusion of several papers which lack an experimental component entirely. Koerner's "**Experimental Archaeologies of Emergent Novelty and the Inherent Plurality of Life Forms and Cultures**" seemed to lack an understanding of the difference between the paradigm of scientific experimentation and the nature of archaeological experiment.

"**Between Research and Tourism: A Case of Integrated Experimental Archaeology in Sardinia**" (Cappai, Manca and Piras) was a summary of the facilities provided by the University of Sassari and a private holiday group for public outreach. Along the same vein was "**The Role of Experiment as an Educational Approach in Maritime Archaeology**" (Oliveri), where maritime archaeology is presented to school groups. It is crucial to differentiate between these educational centres, where experiments may be demonstrated to the public and actual experimentation, where new knowledge applicable to the archaeological record is being sought for the first time.

The lack of a discussant compounded the issues within this session, as there was no clear common thread amongst the topics presented. Without this common thread, the wide variety of case studies was just that: disparate applications of the separate authors' interpretations of what comprises experimental archaeology. The usefulness of a critical discussion following the presentation of all papers cannot be understated; commonalities between projects do exist, but unless they are extracted and addressed in depth, the gathering of practicing experimental archaeologists and new experimental archaeologists does little more than provide a forum for show-and-tell. The absence of introspective and self critical analysis of methodology and research design criteria comes at the expense of normalising experimental approaches within archaeology as a whole.

liveARCH: training skills in Latvia

September 25th – 29th 2008, the Latvian National History Museum and the Arais Lake Fortress Foundation hosted an international workshop on the theme "skills training".

■ Roeland PAARDEKOOPEL (NL)

A total of 96 participants from 11 nationalities met for a combination of serious debate, crafts presentation and hands on teaching.

Key note speaker Schmidt from the Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum in Hannover introduced the theme "**Crafts in Open Air Museums, The Odyssey between Maintenance & Experimental Archaeology**". Archaeological open air museums are mostly about crafts. Of course, when dealing with crafts, ethics enter the picture. Modern maintenance is sometimes disguised as 'ancient' but that works counterproductively. Be honest about what you do and how you do it, Schmidt urged. Experimental archaeology again, strictly seen, is 'hard core' and not a craft demonstration, education or otherwise. When experimenting, be focussed on results and not on experience. The ideal crafts person for archaeological open air museums is self critical, has learned



■ Part of the international group of craftspeople and other representatives of archaeological open air museums at the convention in Latvia, September 2008. (Photo Schöbel / MZ)

a historical craft, has deep archaeological knowledge, needs time to gather experience, to learn and read and ... unfortunately hasn't been found yet. Schmidt concluded that whoever is unaware of all the problems and not giving his / her best should not work in an archaeological open air museum. The two presentations by Schmidt, on crafts and on archaeological house (re)constructions aroused a lot of discussion, exactly what was needed.

Although half of the participants were craftspeople, presentations were mostly given by the museum staff. The **Foteviken Museum** (SE) presented, based on the results of a lengthy questionnaire filled out by 8 museums, what they think are the characteristics of an archaeological open air museum. A minimum definition has been laid out, but this discussion will continue for a few years yet. The **Parco Montale** (IT), **Foteviken** (SE) and the **Lofotr Museum** (NO) added a presentation on how they see the use of crafts in archaeological open air museums. Paardekooper, a Ph.D student from Exeter (UK), concluded by outlining the characteristics of archaeological open air museums, their history and possible future success factors. Archaeological house (re)constructions were further presented and discussed by the **Scottish Crannog Centre** (SC), **HOME** (NL), **Foteviken** (SE), **Araisi** (LV) and **Unteruhldingen** (DE).

Between the theory and practical days, the participants visited the **Latvian ethnographic open air museum in Riga**. This was a welcome in-between; a good point for reflecting on where practise and theory meet.

The second part of the workshop was a field work day at the **Araisi Lake Fortress**. Here, very specific crafts were presented in a unique context. Not only was the public very impressed, some of whom had travelled as far as from Riga, but also the participants were very interested in seeing the others working. A large contingent of Latvian crafts people, active in (pre) historic crafts, were interacting with others from all corners of Europe.

The workshop was an important event to try and bridge between the two worlds of crafts and archaeological open air museum. Though at the beginning it was not clear how these two stand separately from one another, it became clear that they are independent.

The EU project *liveARCH* foresees another 3 large conventions in 2009 in Italy, Germany and Hungary, where other aspects of the work of archaeological open air museums will be targeted.

Experimental Archaeology Research – New Approaches

Östersund, Sweden 1-3 October 2008

■ Roeland PAARDEKOOPEL (NL)

The village Östersund is situated at about 600 kilometres north of Stockholm or, as the Swedes say “60 miles up north”. It is an unlikely stage for an international Scandinavian conference, but in memory of Tomas Johansson, 40 experimental archaeologists gathered there on October 2008. Johansson was not only one of the founders of EXARC in 2001, he was also an important figure in Swedish experimental archaeology from the 1970s onwards. His magazine *Forntida Teknik* is still used widely.

Obviously, a whole lot of anecdotes were passed on, but it was also found important to look ahead. Johansson's father welcomed the participants to continue where his son had left off. Many different kinds of experimental research were presented. **Olausson** (Lund) made a clear attempt to analyse experimental archaeology by mentioning pitfalls as well as potentials (see table). Case studies included back yard business with student work (**Ødman**, Lund) and investigation into the iron forging processes (**Lyngström**, Copenhagen).

■ **Potentials and Pitfalls of experimental archaeology**, as presented by Debbie Olausson, October 2008:

Pitfalls:

1. We may be able to support a hypothesis but not refute it
2. Our hypotheses may not cover the full range of what was possible
3. We have trouble controlling variables
4. Reality is so complex that it is neither possible nor meaningful to control all variables
5. The more complex the reality is, the more experiments we must perform
6. We have a longer start-up time than our prehistoric counterparts
7. The processes we wish to test require a longer time-span than we can replicate
8. Making the leap from the experiment to human behaviour

Potentials:

1. Understanding spatial patterning
2. Understanding how the archaeological record is formed
3. Exploring what is possible
4. Providing reference collections
5. Approaching relative value by measuring time and skill
6. Appealing to the public

Bradley (Exeter) presented a case study, describing how in his view modern day experimental archaeology has become one tool within a wider toolkit of research options for modern archaeological projects. Making an exact replica of an artefact or site is not the only valid means of experimental archaeology.

Knutsson (Uppsala) tried by means of counting publications on experimental archaeology at his university over the years to conclude whether or not experimental archaeology is having a revival at present. **Paardekooper** (Eindhoven / Exeter) discussed how thorough deskwork needs to precede experimental

activities and good public archaeology in archaeological open air museums is a successful follow up to experiments.

The Bäckedal Highschool was an important presence, not only with their paper, but also because when counted, 40% of the participants had had training from them. This proves the successful approach of combining academic research and craftsmanship. A need for a living tradition in ancient technology was discussed by several. Embodied knowledge was a recurring theme with **Bender Jørgensen** (Trondheim), **Høgseth** (Trondheim) as well as **Hurcombe** (Exeter).

Finally, **Anderson Strand** and **Olofsson** discussed textile experimental archaeology as it is done at the Centre for Textile Research (Copenhagen).

Discussion worked well with such a small group, but it is also important what will be shared later on with others. Not much was discussed about getting funding for research which would include a module of experimental archaeology, but participants were clear that experimental archaeology is a useful method within a series of archaeological methods and archaeology as a profession needs to share our values in these. The conference concluded on optimistic note.

New experiments in archaeology

Oldenburg, Germany 16-19 October 2008

■ Roeland PAARDEKOOPEL (NL)

Oldenburg, Northern Germany saw the “caravan” of experimental archaeologists from the European association EXAR visiting the city in October. This was the 16th in a row since 1990, and the 4th time in this city. The conference was dedicated to the parting of founding father of EXAR, professor Fansa, director of the Landesmuseum für Natur & Mensch. More on the history of the association, its conferences and proceedings (with hundreds of articles on experiments) is at www.exar.org.

The 2008 conference was attended by about 50 people and is seen as an important meeting point – which is why many people are returning participants. The strength of the conference is that usually, anything goes – it is a good mix of ‘tough science’ as well as experience based stories. In 2.5 days, 12 papers were presented, 2/3rd in German and 1/3rd in English. When no country is mentioned, the presenter is from Germany.

Reichert (Ettlingen) is well known for her many reconstructions of textiles and fibres. So far, her attempts to reconstruct a Neolithic bark bucket have been unsuccessful, but maybe the result of an experiment is not necessarily a working “replica” but useful information on the steps one needs to make when trying to make a bucket? **Kania** (Erlangen) presented a brief overview of her recently finished PhD thesis on European medieval costumes (over 1,000 documented finds) and their sewing techniques. We are looking forward to the expected publication. **Ringenberg** (Wölferlingen) presented some of the difficulties and solutions on how to dye wool black.

Friedrich & Meller (Hamburg) accompany their archaeology students every year to a summer camp at the Neolithic archaeological open air museum at Albersdorf. A variety of activities is executed there, from trying out ancient techniques, walking in

‘stone age’ costume up to some experiments. Hopefully some of the students will join in future conferences such as this.

Kelm & Kobbe, working at Albersdorf, described some slash and burn – introduction – experiments but with no final results yet. For that, much more work needs to be done. **Leineweber** (Halle) presented in 2001 the preliminary results of some thorough cremation experiments, the 2008 lecture was seen as the follow up of this. She made clear how a lot can be learned from just 4 experiments, provided that one works in a well structured and thought through way. The experiments led to valuable insights and hopefully, archaeologists will now know what to look for (and what not), when excavating similar archaeological sites.

Lobisser (Vienna, Austria) presented a paper about the construction of a Celtic temple at Asparn/Zaya, which is more extensively presented elsewhere in this volume by Dr. Lauerermann. **Nemcsics** (Budapest, Hungary) has a summer camp with students from his technical university. During these weeks, they take some steps towards constructing a little round stone church as it could have been done in the Middle Ages. As the work only progresses two weeks per year, the building is not ready yet. Some parallels with medieval stone building (re)construction could be made with French and Danish projects. **Braun & Martens** described the experiences with one of the ‘oldest’ houses in the Bronze Age archaeological open air museum at Hitzacker, including its recent renovation.

Highly welcomed were the non-European presentations. **Gluzman** (Buenos Aires, Argentina) presented the first attempts in understanding pre-Columbian metallurgy by hands on attempt to produce copper. **Ybarra** (Guanajuato, Mexico) described lost wax casting for small bells – seems not that hard, but the situation in Mexico was quite different from other continents. For example, instead of bellows, one used blow pipes. Ybarra is travelling around the world to talk and work with metal specialists and invitees for a metal working conference in Mexico.

The last, and unexpected presentation was by **Schenck** (Oslo). She discussed with ample philosophical consideration if and how the public can be involved in experimental research? Are they the ones who help us in gaining statistical relevance? Is it at all a problem that they know less (do they?) about the archaeological past? Obviously, the conference ended in a heated discussion and one thing is certain: October 2009, be there!

II International Congress of Experimental archaeology

Ronda, Màlaga. November 2008

■ Clara MASRIERA ESQUERRA (CAT)

The II International Congress of Experimental archaeology was celebrated in the town of Ronda (Màlaga – Spain) at the end of November 2008. The first congress, which took place in Santander (Cantabria – Spain) on November 2005, was organised by the only universities in Spain teaching Experimental Archaeology: the University of Cantabria and University Autónoma of Madrid.

In the Iberian Peninsula, there is a poor tradition in experimental archaeology in comparison with northern European countries. The first settlement in the Iberian Peninsula where experimental

archaeological techniques were applied at the Iberian Citadel of Calafell. In 1992 the site was partly reconstructed after a rigorous architectural and archaeological study. This site is currently an Open Air Museum and has been an example for other sites such as Numancia (Soria), La Bastida de les Alcuses (Valencia), la Draga (Catalonia) and others. Apart from these experimental archaeology sites in the field of architecture, there is another well developed branch of experimental archaeology in the field of lithic technology, mainly focussing on Palaeolithic.

The Spanish archaeological tradition is mainly influenced by the French tradition, not the Anglo Saxon one. This aspect was clear when the invited contribution which the congress started with was titled “**Experimental approaches in Lithic technology**” and given by Dr Jacques Pelegrin, director of research of CNRS, the prestigious scientific French institution.

At the same time, the fact that prevalence of experimental archaeology focuses on lithic technology was evident with 17 speeches of the total of 80 given on this topic. This ranking was followed by:

- 12 speeches about experimental pottery and metallurgy,
- 11 speeches on experimental archaeology, didactic and historical heritage;
- 10 about experimental taphonomy and bone technology,
- 9 on architectural structures and experimentation;
- 8 about experimenting with fire, wood, ornaments and symbolic representation,
- 7 speeches on experimental archaeology and use wear analysis
- 6 speeches about methodology.

Thirty percent of the presentations were from abroad, mainly from France, the others related to places in the Iberian Peninsula. The Palaeolithic was the period most treated, followed by Neolithic, Metal Ages, Roman Times and the Medieval period. These statements confirm the predominance of prehistoric scholars within experimental archaeology in Spain; moreover, it is clear evidence of the link between the French and Spanish scientific tradition.

In 2003 the Spanish Association of Experimental Archaeology, called *Experimenta*, was created with the aim of gathering together all professionals and individuals interested in experimental archaeology. These two congresses and the increasing number of *Experimenta* members assure a prosperous future for experimental archaeology in the Iberian Peninsula, and a place where experimental archaeology can be shared and recognised. The general assembly of the association held during the Ronda Congress promised to work on creating a website gathering all members, organise the next congress in two years and trying to become part of the wider European net, EXARC.

Experimental Archaeology

Edinburgh, Scotland 15-16 November 2008

■ Roeland PAARDEKOOPER (NL)

Scotland was the venue of the 3rd yearly conference on experiment in the British Isles. The first call had been prepared at the conference a year earlier in Exeter, but there is no formal link between the conferences apart from the fact that participants

to previous conferences are invited to the next. The School of History, Classics & Archaeology of the University of Edinburgh hosted the Saturday session with no less than 13 papers. Interestingly enough, many of these were non-British. With about 60 participants, the conference was well attended.

Dineley (Orkneys) presented grain processing techniques, stressing that grain = flour = bread is a too simple view. This sounds obvious, but when one has seen malting or brewing in process one realises the full scope of possibilities.

Elliott (York) presented his undergraduate research into barbed point manufacture at Star Carr. **Hopkins** (Bradford) discussed experience & experiment. This subject had brought up a lot of discussion at the previous conference in Exeter and is also mentioned elsewhere in this volume. **Choyke** (Budapest) introduced ethnography into the conference and had brought her friend Mrs Daniel along, who is a Transylvanian farmer's wife with much experience in textile working. **Kirk** (Cranfield) had done some testing with colours of Minoan faience – not making replicas, but trying to get to know the process. **Sternke** (Glasgow) and **Eigeland** (Oslo) both presented experimental flint use, discussing skill levels, skill transfer and again the duality of experience and experiment. **Heeb** (Exeter) discussed similar issues, with a case study in copper axe production in Southeast Europe.

Trying to quantify use wear, **Lerner** (Ontario) approached his material and his data from many different angles, assuming that another way of presenting the data would make them more quantifiable and comparable. **Massaud** (Cairo) showed 3D computer models of ancient Egyptian architecture, of which unfortunately nothing has been put to test in reality. **Masriera & Morer** (Calafell, Catalonia) discussed Mediterranean Iron Age architecture – a study they had taken up when the roofs of their archaeological open air museum needed to be replaced. This involved the use of North African ethnographic experience. **Paardekooper** (Eindhoven) presented thoughts about international cooperation to prevent each experimentalist from reinventing the wheel. **Schenck** (Oslo) finally presented a tough but useful theoretic discourse on hermeneutics, the hypothetico-deductive-nomological method and the “gymnastic” split experimentalists make when using ‘hard’ science experimental methodologies on the one hand and the “soft” human science of archaeology. True, people were and are not static, many experiments are not repeated or even repeatable – where does that leave us?

In the discussion, **Bradley** (Exeter) expressed, like elsewhere before, that experimentalists shouldn't worry about semantics anymore although they should remain self critical. Experimental archaeology becomes more embodied within larger research. Other participants raised the issue of experimental archaeology being difficult to be recognised by generic archaeology – here the participants clearly were divided: some experienced this daily while some others had never thought about it.

Sunday, the participants visited the Scottish Crannog Centre (www.crannog.co.uk) at Loch Tay. Not only was this visit important to balance experiment & experience, theory & practice (the Transylvanian lady demonstrated textile working side by side with a Scottish specialist) it also prove to be an excellent place to digest by discussion the many presentations of the previous day.

Most probably, there will be again an Autumn experimental conference in the British Isles in 2009.

TAG 30

The 30th Theoretical Archaeology Conference (TAG 30) took place this year at the University of Southampton, UK from the 15th to the 17th of December.

■ Jodi REEVES FLORES (US)

The 30th Theoretical Archaeology Conference (TAG 30) took place this year at the University of Southampton, UK from the 15th to the 17th of December. Among the sessions addressing current theoretical and practical aspects of archaeology, **Replication and Interpretation: The Use of Experimental Archaeology in the Study of the Past** dealt with the current state of experimental archaeology. Coordinated by Dana Millson (University of Durham, UK), the session sought to examine the use of experimental archaeology as a method for understanding past humans, addressing the “why” questions often posed by archaeologists, and testing current theories and concepts. The six presentations covered a variety of topics: the history of experiment in general (Koerner), as well as the history of experimental archaeology (Reeves Flores), issues regarding the construction of pottery (Hammersmith) and possible uses (Millson), the application of modern technology in understanding ancient landscapes (Marshall), and the application of experiment in addressing common archaeological precepts (Gurling). While the presentations were diverse, the session succeeded in pulling them all together into a holistic view of how experimental archaeology is being practiced within the United Kingdom. As the TAG conferences traditionally focus on theory, the session included important thoughts on how experimental archaeology should be approached and developed. However, this discussion was primarily grounded in practical application and experience, once again highlighting the inherent ability of experimental archaeology to address important ideas and concepts regarding how we approach and study the past within a practical and applicable framework.

Summary

Le monde des conférences

Au cours de l'automne 2008 se sont tenues de nombreuses conférences sur des aspects variés de l'archéologie expérimentale. Leur cadre allait de la session organisée au sein des cercles officiels d'archéologues (associations européennes d'archéologues, groupes académiques de réflexion sur l'archéologie), aux conférences régionales (Scandinavie, Espagne, Grande Bretagne) ou aux organisations pan-européennes (LiveARCH, EXAR). La majorité des présentations consistait en des études de cas, de qualité variée, couvrant un large panel de projets expérimentaux. Il est particulièrement clair que l'archéologie expérimentale est devenue une part importante de la recherche moderne, mais le manque de cadrage du sujet qui englobe parfois la reconstitution à destination muséographique ou pédagogique entraîne des réactions mitigées au sein des académies.

Aus der Welt der Konferenzen

Im Herbst 2008 fand eine Vielzahl von Konferenzen und Workshops statt, die verschiedene Aspekte der Experimentellen Archäologie behandelten. Es handelte sich dabei um Sektionen innerhalb etablierter archäologischer Fachverbände (Europäische Vereinigung der Archäologen/EAA; Arbeitsgruppe der Theoretischen Archäologie/TAG), um regionale Konferenzen (Skandinavien, Spanien, Großbritannien) und um Treffen gesamt-europäischer Organisationen (LiveARCH, EXAR). Bei den meisten Vorträgen handelte es sich um Fallstudien unterschiedlicher Qualität, welche eine große Themenvielfalt experimenteller Projekte umfassten. Insgesamt erscheint offensichtlich, dass die Experimentelle Archäologie ein wichtiger Bestandteil moderner archäologischer Forschung geworden ist. Das ungenau definierte Themengebiet der Experimentellen Archäologie, das viele Überschneidungen mit der Vermittlung archäologischer Ergebnisse und mit pädagogischen Projekten aufweist, verursacht jedoch gemischte Reaktionen innerhalb der akademischen Welt.

2009: 1st Conference Call

Problems and perspectives of Archaeological Open Air Museums and experimental archaeology in Europe – The dialogue of Knowledge, 9-11 October 2009, Százhalombatta (Hungary)

liveARCH is announcing a call for an international conference organised by the “Matrica” Museum at Százhalombatta (Hungary), October 9-11 2009. Members of both EXAR (www.exar.org) and EXARC (www.exarc.eu) are invited just like any other people interested.

The “Matrica” Museum” is a small but very agile local museum in Százhalombatta, 30 kilometres south of Budapest, on the bank of the Danube. It operates Hungary’s first archaeological open air museum which presents a lively view on prehistoric life and environment to the visitors, with major emphasis on school groups. The visitors can enter several reconstructed prehistoric houses with copies of pottery found during excavation inside them. All these are seated in the reconstructed, prehistoric, natural environment. For more information, check www.matricamuzeum.hu.

The EU project *liveARCH* gives 8 archaeological open air museums a unique opportunity to cooperate on the prevailing questions of experimental and living archaeology. With its concluding meeting in Hungary, October 2009, *liveARCH* will offer all interested parties an opportunity to discuss current issues and concerns related to the present state of affairs.

Of these, one of the most vexing problem is the relationship of these museums to the academic world. Clearly what is needed is to change in how academic research perceives archaeological open air museums. Such change can only be successfully brought about if the museums in question convince researchers that what they can offer can be relevant to their fields of study.

Archaeological open air museums, as institutions, also have to show that they have come of age and are becoming legitimate places of research much the same as those based in established museums and ethnographic open air museums.

With these two viewpoints in mind we would like to provide an opportunity for an open dialogue. We therefore invite all interested professionals to deliver papers and stimulate discussions and debates.

We suggest the following themes:

- The future role of archaeological open air museums and experimental archaeology.
- Why archaeological open air museums are not “Disneylands”?
- Reconstruction: what it should and should not encompass.

We are pleased to announce that the conference papers will be published and ready by the start of the meeting, therefore we are respectively ask you to apply to our conference with this aim in mind. We would like to have your application by March 2009 and your manuscripts by June 2009.

More information on how to get there, how to register, the costs, the programme and the facilities will be available at www.conference.livearch.eu.