



Fig. 1 A group of our MA students at the Gladstone Pottery Museum in Stoke-on-Trent, get hands-on experience of wheel-throwing pottery. ■

The MA in Experimental Archaeology at the University of Exeter Becomes More Established

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- **The article introduces the programme of the MA course in experimental archaeology at the University of Exeter.**

The Department of Archaeology, University of Exeter founded its MA programme in Experimental Archaeology in 2000 and it now attracts a broad range of applications from people with many different backgrounds and from many different countries. This year, we have invested further in the

programme with the appointment of the world-renowned flint knapper, Dr Bruce Bradley as a senior lecturer. This adds to our existing strengths in experimental archaeology associated with organic materials, zooarchaeology, archaeometallurgy, ceramics and functional analysis.



Fig. 2 We currently have a programme of excavations investigating early iron workings on Exmoor. Here, our experimental MA students are helping with an experimental iron smelt. ■

When we set up this programme we were very conscious that experimental archaeology forms an exceptionally important part of both archaeological research and its presentation to the public, yet the formal provision of education in this field was very much lacking. The number of experimental archaeology centres of various kinds has vastly increased in recent years. This is a testament to the popularity of practically-based activities in communicating archaeology to the public and within education. Those working in traditional museums have had the opportunity to undertake specialist post-graduate courses for many years, but no equivalent seemed to be available for those who work, or wish to work, in archaeological open air and experimental centres. Furthermore, we also noted that actualistic experiments are still relatively underplayed within the formal research literature. Why is this? Sadly, it appears that there is still often something of a gulf between those with practical ability and skills in primi-

tive technologies and hard scientists and academics. This gulf needs to be bridged so that the archaeological research world can benefit from the wealth of practical knowledge that exists out there.

Our programme, therefore, was designed to provide education and experience in three key areas. Firstly, it provides a broad, practical experience of working with different materials. We give our students hands-on experience of working organic materials, making pottery, smelting and working metals, flaked stone technologies, butchery and many other things. This work is carried out within a context of soundly understanding good experimental and safety practice. As well as the core experiences, students are allowed to develop their own independent projects. We bring in specialists from outside and take the students on fieldtrips in order to provide a suitable range of experiences.

Secondly, we place experimental archaeology firmly within the world of archaeological research. We address issues relating to the philosophy of science and good practice in the design and conduct of experiments. This is all about how to turn valuable experiences into scientifically valid experiments that can be used to test hypotheses. We believe very strongly in the value of actualistic experience. Indeed, far too much archaeological interpretation is carried out by academics who clearly lack that background of experience. However, the flipside of this coin is that many proficient primitive technologists do not conduct their work in such a way that it will gain acceptance within the scientific community. We address this and our students are given practice in designing scientific experiments.

Thirdly, we deal with the side of experimental archaeology related to public presentation and education. We

discuss the role of practical experiences and reconstructions within education at all levels and set this within the context of the needs of schools and universities. We deal with both educational theory and practical issues like health and safety. We visit outdoor centres and have input from those who run them. Students practice their skills by designing educational or public events.

Throughout the programme we give students a high degree of choice in the assignments they undertake, allowing them to specialise to a certain degree. This specialisation comes to the fore when they undertake their final dissertation. This substantial piece of work allows students to conduct their own experimental programme and write it up. It is an opportunity to pull together all they have learnt. Practical dissertation

topics have included such diverse topics as the use of wetland hurdle trackways for the movement of livestock, the specialised use of cattle mandible fat in the mediaeval period, the effectiveness of varying types of spindle whorls and the effect of different blacksmithing fuels on the metal's surface properties.

We welcome applications from candidates with all sorts of backgrounds. We normally expect a bachelor's degree, but not necessarily in archaeology, depending on the individual's other experiences. For further information e-mail Dr Alan Outram (A.K.Outram@ex.ac.uk) and we can send you an information pack. Alternatively visit our website (<http://www.ex.ac.uk/archaeology/>) or write to us: Dr. Alan K. Outram, Department of Archaeology, Laver Building, North Park Road, Exeter, Devon, EX4 4QE, UK.

Summary

Cours d'archéologie expérimentale s'établit à l'Université d'Exeter

L'université d'Exeter a introduit le cours d'archéologie expérimentale afin de permettre la formation continue aux spécialistes qui travaillent ou veulent travailler dans les musées archéologiques de plein air ou dans les centres expérimentales.

Le programme du cours a été constitué de sorte à impliquer les informations et les expériences de trois domaines clés. Premièrement il fait acquérir de larges expériences des travaux de divers matériaux. Deuxièmement il range strictement l'archéologie expérimentale dans le contexte de la recherche archéologique. Les études sont consacrées aux problèmes philosophiques de la science, aux méthodes de planification et à la réalisation de l'expérience. Troisièmement il fait attention aux problèmes de l'archéologie expérimentale par rapport à la présentation et l'éducation.

Der Studienabschluss "Magister in Experimenteller Archäologie" an der Universität von Exeter hat sich etabliert

Die Universität zu Exeter hat einen Kurs zur experimentellen Archäologie eingerichtet, um spezialisierte Postgraduierte auszubilden, die in archäologischen Freilichtmuseen oder experimentellen Zentren arbeiten oder arbeiten möchten.

Der Kurs wurde so aufgebaut, dass Kenntnisse und praktische Erfahrungen in drei Schlüsselbereichen vermittelt werden können. Zuerst soll dabei eine umfassende, praxisorientierte Kenntnis der Beschäftigung mit verschiedenen Arbeitsmaterialien erreicht werden. Zweitens soll die experimentelle Archäologie fest mit der Welt der archäologischen Forschung verbunden werden; die Ausbildung umfasst dabei sowohl Themen der Wissenschaftsphilosophie als auch des anwendungsorientierten Entwurfs und der Durchführung von Experimenten.

Drittens soll die publikumsorientierte Seite der Präsentation und Pädagogik der Experimentalarchäologie behandelt werden.