



Archaeology: the science of investigation

A Wetwang skeleton

There's the left arm and, what's quite surprising is just how light these bones are. This is the skull after it has been pieced back together and as you can see round the eye sockets they're completely out of alignment. The skeleton itself is laid out into a very shallow scoop in the ground; down at her feet resting almost against her shin was the iron mirror with its associated brooch and hundreds of very small blue glass beads.

The excavation at Wetwang village really provided us with some very key insights into the Iron-age. From my perspective the opportunity to really understand Iron-age vehicles, to get the sort of evidence that allowed us to get into reliable reconstruction and then develop a lot more questions about, how did these work? What did they look like? How well were they able to work in wood and metal? Very, very important.

We also have the idea that we have an iconic woman buried with the vehicle with a mirror. She herself was a very distinguished person, obviously from the burial rite but also from the fact that she appears to have been very old for the population, comparative with the population, we think that she's at least 35 years old, probably early 40's, unfortunately, most of the women were dying round about the age of 25, some a lot younger than that. So she's very old, she's also very tall. Perhaps one of the longest lasting things which show power is a very small, but nevertheless, significant thing, on the terrets, shown here where we've used red enamel, we've cheated, there were; one of them was replaced with red enamel but most of this was actually red coral. Now the red coral has probably come from the Red Sea, that's about the closest, there are a few isolated eastern Mediterranean coral deposits, but it's significant I think that here we are seeing, in Yorkshire material that's been brought in a very long way; clearly reflects her status; clearly showing you that although the cart/chariot burials are a feature of East Yorkshire actually what they represent is, if you like, is the European connections. We certainly know that the British evidence seems to be pulling together similar wheel dimensions, for example, similar ways of manufacture, but actually I think that really that's just symptomatic of trade and travel and transport across a much, much wider remit than once tends to think about when you're talking of pre-history.