

Joint seminar of the NPI of the CAS

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J. Šneberger (DRD NPI, Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Faculty of Science UK, Museum of West Bohemia): *Bioarchaeology – a multidisciplinary approach to the reconstruction of the life and death of past populations*

Abstract:

The term "bioarchaeology" was first defined in 1972 and 1973 by British archaeologist Graham Clark, who used it to describe the analysis of fauna recovered from the now iconic Star Carr prehistoric locality in North Yorkshire, England. The term was also independently coined in 1977 by American physical anthropologist Jane Buikstra as a means of analysing human skeletal remains. In both instances, the objective was to move archaeology and physical anthropology away from the then-prevalent strongly descriptive approach to the generating and addressing questions about life of past populations. As the scientific community began to generate questions and attempt to answer them, it became evident that there were inherent problems in working with dead populations. To address these challenges, bioarchaeologists have employed a range of natural science techniques. In the present era, bioarchaeology endeavours to integrate a diverse array of natural scientific techniques alongside established archaeological and anthropological methodologies to elucidate questions pertaining to past populations. These include techniques such as a DNA analysis, radiocarbon dating, stable isotope analysis, and numerous others. The objective of this seminar is to provide an introduction to bioarchaeology, including its historical development, theoretical background, and the issues that surround the field. Additionally, I will give an example of a bioarchaeological approach to the evaluation of a specific assemblage within a currently emerging project.