

IVOR NOEL HUME OBE (36-39)

The following is taken from Autumn 1992 Magazine and Spring 1993 Magazine.



Hume in digging mode

OBE for Ivor Noel Hume

Starting under the Chapel Hume dug his way into America's history

The award of the OBE to IVOR NOEL HUME (36-39) in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 'for services to British cultural interests in Williamsburg, Virginia' adds one more honour to the long list (see his entry in *Who's Who in America*, right) of an OF who rates one

of the shortest of all entries in the College Register – only his birthday and time at school.

Hume is one of America's most distinguished archaeologists who, before retirement, was Director of Colonial Williamsburg's archaeological research programme in Virginia.

But even retirement hasn't stopped him digging. A long article in the *Los Angeles Times* reports his discovery of 'The Cradle of American Science', where he has been directing excavation, on Roanoke Island off North Carolina.

'The find is an old, buried laboratory once used for metallurgical research, says the report.

'Although specialists seeking metals were part of early expeditions to the New World, Hume said the laboratory represents "the first time they planned to stay for any length of time and actually set up a research center."

'Hume, in a telephone interview, added that "it's the first archeological evidence we have for a laboratory in America."

'Remnants found at the site include fragments of glass, crucibles, pots for ointments, and broken distilling apparatus. Hume said the thin shards of glass – perhaps

NOEL HUME, IVOR, antiquary; b. London, Eng., 1927; s. Cecil & Gladys Mary (Bagshaw Mann) Noël H. Student, Framlingham Coll., Suffolk, 1936-39, St. Lawrence Coll., Kent, 1942-44; L.H.D. (hon.), U. of London, 1976, Coll. William and Mary, 1983. Archaeologist Guildhall Mus. Corporation, 1949-57; chief archaeologist Colonial Williamsburg, Va., 1957-63; dir. dept. archaeology Colonial Williamsburg, 1964-72, resident archaeologist, 1972-87; research assoc. Smithsonian Instn., 1959-; bd. dirs. Jamestown-Yorktown Found., 1987-; archaeol. cons. to Govt. Jamaica, 1967-68; vice chmn. Gov.'s Adv. Com. for Va. Research Center for Historic Archaeology, 1967-70, mem., 1971-76; mem. Va. Historic Landmarks Bd., 1985-87; mem. rev. Panel Nat. Endowment for the Humanities, 1973-77; mem. Council Inst. Early Am. History and Culture, 1974-77. Author: *Archaeology in Britain*, 1953, (with Audrey Noël Hume) *Tortoises, Test-pins and Turtles*, 1954, *Treasure in the Thames*, 1956, *Great Moments in Archaeology*, 1957, *Here Lies Virginia*, 1963, 1975; *Another Part of the Field*, 1966, *Historical Archaeology*, 1969, *Artifacts of Early America*, 1971; *It's All the Best Rubbish*, 1974, *Early English Delftware*, 1977, *Martin's Hundred*, 1982; Contribr. articles to profl. journs.; Writer-dir.: film *Doorway to the Past*, 1968; writer, narrator: TV film *The Williamsburg File*, 1976, *Search for a Century*, 1981; author pseudonymous novels, 1971, 72. Served with Indian Army, 1944-45. Recipient spl. award for hist. archaeology U. S.C., 1975. Fellow Soc. Antiquaries London, Am. Antiquarian Soc., Zool. Soc. London, Mem. Soc. Hist. Archaeology, Soc. for Post-Medieval Archaeology (v. 1967-76), Kent Archaeol. Soc. (Gt. Britain), Va. Archeol. Soc. (hon., Pres. Archaeologist of Yr. award 1980), English Ceramic Circle, Glass Soc. OBE Rec 1711 *Williamsburg* Vol. 1187

The 'Who's Who in America' entry to which the OBE must now be added

used in apothecary work – are the oldest examples of English glass ever found in America. Other artifacts include a piece of metallic antimony, slag, clinkers from a forge and traces of molten materials.

'The site on Roanoke Island is where the legendary Lost Colony was supposedly

situated. Two groups of Englishmen – both sponsored by Sir Walter Raleigh – had settled here, the first in 1585, the second in 1587. The second group vanished.

‘Roanoke Island today is a sandy stretch of land 12 miles long by three miles wide, between the North Carolina shoreline and the Outer Banks, occupied by vacation condominiums and small fishing communities.

Elegant speaker

‘The first settlement, Hume said, was established after a scouting party had visited the island for six weeks. That settlement was abandoned a year later, however, as relations with local Indians deteriorated. Although the Indians had first been described as “friendly, civilized and welcoming them as brothers,” Hume said the men in the colony “managed to fall out with the Indians in a hurry.”

‘While relations with the Indians were going sour, Hume said, the colonists were also awaiting a resupply mission from England led by Admiral of the Fleet Sir Richard Grenville. “Grenville hadn’t shown up with the supplies by late fall,” Hume said. When a fleet did arrive, it turned out to be that of Sir Francis Drake, fresh from forays against the Spanish to the south. “They were disappointed by it not being Grenville, so they decided to go home. The Indians were harassing them.”

The well-known author, James Michener has said of him: ‘Ivor Noel Hume is one of the world’s most elegant speakers and writers on archaeology. His record of successful work in this field is brilliant and America is fortunate that he has spent so much of his time digging up our historical record.

Hume first came to our notice because of correspondence with BOB GILLETT which included some pre-war reminiscences about Framlingham. In this he said: ‘I was interested to hear that the rooms under the chapel became an ammunition store. Perhaps that was why the recessed window was bricked up! It is sad that the museum collection was disposed of. Some of the Great War relics would now be of great interest. Perhaps they went to the Imperial War Museum or (with luck) to the National Army Museum, which has only limited collections.

‘Strangely, I have no recollection of the air raid shelters being dug near the chapel. I recall the blackout curtains going up, but my recollection is that they were green on one side and black on the other and were roller blinds. It is odd how little things stick so firmly in mind. My wife often notes that I am incompetent to recall what she was wearing yesterday or even this morning!’

In a subsequent letter to the Editor he says: ‘although my few years at Framlingham were not the happiest of my life the fact that my career destiny was charted there will make me want to read *The Second Sixty Years*’.

‘He has also volunteered to write, for a future issue “some recollections of my proto-archaeological experiences at Framlingham that began under the chapel and ended at Sutton Hoo in the summer of ’39’.

Contemporaries may recall that at school Hume had a hyphenated surname. That too he has explained for their benefit and that of whoever produces the next issue of the Register: ‘Legally the surname is in two words, there being no hyphen on my birth certificate. However, having a two word surname (and using the first as a Christian name – Ivor being hated and used only by my wife at moments of great displeasure) results in filing confusion and double billing. No doubt the Framlingham bursar felt the same way and applied the hyphen.’

The making of an archaeologist

Brown boots, bad arrows and a boring boat

IVOR NOEL HUME (36–39), one of America’s leading archaeologists, to whom the award of an OBE was reported in the last edition, was invited to write about how Framlingham nurtured his interest in the past. His article below supports the claim, made by James Michener, among others, that he is one of the most elegant writers on archaeology.

‘I was not, I must confess, a role model for Junior Framlinghamians, and my end of term reports reflected a paucity of originality on the part of masters writing in the column that called for comments. “Could do better” comes immediately and repetitiously to mind. Fortunately, or so it seemed at the time, my mother’s interest in my education was limited to ensuring that I went to boarding school – and stayed there. Consequently, poor reports held no terrors, no threats of treats withheld.

My father had remarried, sired another son, and sent him to Shrewsbury. So why, one might ask, was I enrolled at Framlingham?

Simply because my cousin, Hugh Horsely (1933–38), was already there and could be relied on, said his mother, to look out for me. He, however, was a senior, a sub-prefect, a member of the Football XV and secretary of the Debating Society, and could not be expected even to look *at* me, let alone out for me.

Born with rickets, I had spent my first years with legs encased in plaster, and by the time I arrived at Framlingham at the beginning of 1937 I was still forced to wear ankle-supporting boots. In those days boots were the kiss of sartorial death at a Public School and so for me were a source of constant embarrassment. Unable to shine at sports, and being a single child from a home that would have preferred none, I was not a good mixer. Instead, I hid behind walls of imagination, escaping reality into the heroic worlds of Charles Kingsley and Sir Walter Scott, of *Hereward the Wake*, of *Ivanhoe*, of *Kenilworth*, and Stevenson’s *The Black Arrow*.

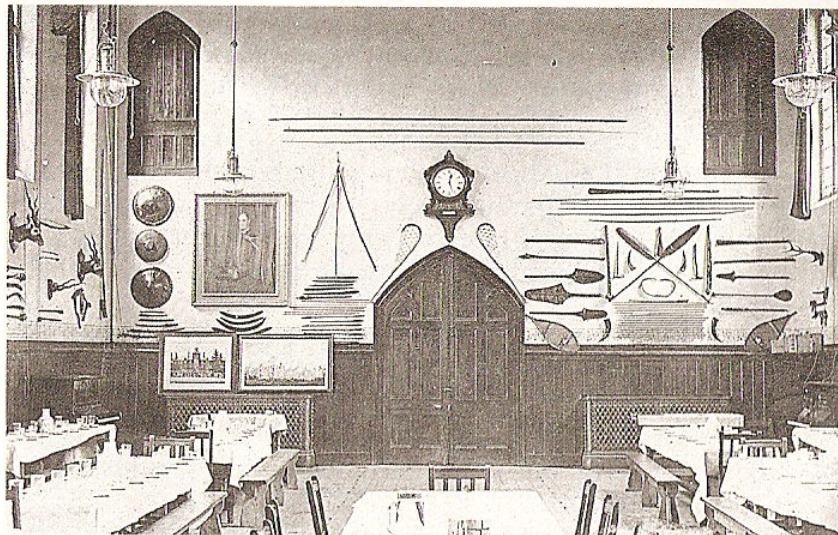
Framlingham, with Roger Bigod’s 12th-century castle grandly visible across the meadows, was the ideal venue for a small boy with a taste for medieval mayhem. Alas, the castle was strictly out-of-bounds to juniors who only escaped from the school grounds when parents visited or on supervised crocodile walks – walks which never went near the castle.

Neither then, nor since, have I warmed to the idea of walking there and back to see how far it is. So, using a stratagem that I no longer remember – it may have been the boots – I contrived to be excused the walks in favour of unsupervised rambling that took me down to the brook between school and castle where I spent halcyon hours catching sticklebacks in my cap. The castle, I discovered, was too far away, but it gave me the idea of fabricating ancient artifacts that I could carry back and show to the master in charge of walks as proof that I had been usefully, even educationally employed. Why or how I got away with this disgraceful deceit, I shall never understand, for my artifacts were arrow heads newly chipped from bits of modern roof slate. This, nevertheless, was my first encounter with the evocative world of archaeology.

When I told an uncle (who later paid my school fees) that I wanted to become an

archaeologist, he turned purple at the neck and thundered "Young man, archaeology is an avocation, and not a profession!" By all the rules of reason, he should have been right. But in my case – he wasn't.

Over the last forty years I have been asked many times why it was that I chose archaeology. In truth, it chose me. But that's another story. Nevertheless, to explain my interest in the artefacts of the past, and for want of a better answer I contend that it began in the dining hall at Framlingham.



The dining room walls which inspired the author before the war.

In my first terms the hall's walls were hung with the trophies of empire, presumably presented to the school by old Framlinghamians returning from the colonies: Assagais, Zulu shields, clubs, Indian knives, muskets from the Afghan War, European swords, flintlock pistols, and much, much else that I cannot remember. But for a small boy with an empty plate and a fertile mind, these relics were catalysts, tickets to journeys of the imagination.

'The lost treasures of the dining hall walls had left their indelible imprint'

Consequently, on returning to Framlingham after a holiday (probably in the autumn of '38), I was dismayed to discover that the dining hall had been renovated and the dust-collecting relics of the glorious past had been banished. Light brown paneling, doubtless installed at great expense, skirted walls

freshly plastered and evocative of absolutely nothing. Nevertheless, the lost treasures had left their indelible imprint, if not on the dining hall walls, in the mind of this little boy.

Those youthful encounters with history both manufactured and imagined, might today be pointed to by psychiatrists as classic examples of the fact that it is not what is taught at school but rather what one learns there, that colours the rest of one's life. Well, not necessarily.

Before being removed from Framlingham at the outbreak of war, I was to have one more close encounter with the past. And this time it was to be the real past – with a capital P.

At the end of the summer term in 1939, the Junior School's Scout troop went to camp on the land of Mrs Edith Pretty beside the River Deben – land which even as we erected our tents was entering the annals of world archaeology. The site of the Sutton Hoo Saxon ship burial, it was being excavated by a team led by some of the soon-be-great names in the archaeological profession. And as a special treat, our troop was allowed to visit them.

A long, oval, sandy hole and a cluster of men down on their knees at the bottom, is virtually all I remember – that, and a man coming up a ladder with a bucket and asking me to empty it. Otherwise we stood for the longest time watching nothing happen. Archaeology, it seemed, was not half as exciting as I had imagined it.

That same summer, a girl of my age, Audrey Baines, visited the dig as the guest of Mrs Pretty, and she, too, went away bored and disappointed. It was not until pictures of the fully excavated ship and some of its treasures appeared on the back of *The Times* (or maybe it was the *Daily Telegraph*) a few days before war broke out that I realized I had been a witness to something memorable and important.

Ten years later, the girl who had yawned at Sutton Hoo, joined me on the staff of London's Guildhall museum, and for several years thereafter we struggled to save the city's Roman and later relics from the jaws of the developer's bulldozers. Married in

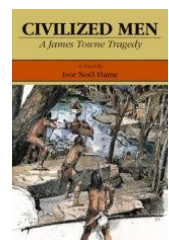
1950, and Sutton Hoo's boredom notwithstanding, we have ever since worked together as an archaeological team – currently at Roanoke Island, the site of Sir Walter Raleigh's 1585 settlement and Britain's first American colony.

After more than forty years of digging I still wonder what part, if any, those hated brown boots, the freshly napped arrowheads, and the mist-shrouded battlements of Framlingham Castle, really played in shaping my career. And not mine alone, for I am told that two subsequent generations of American archaeologists claim to have chosen this profession as the result of reading my books.

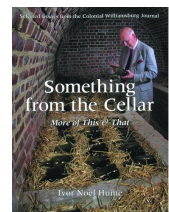
It was Alfred Lord Tennyson who wrote "For man is man and master of his fate." Sometimes I'm not so sure.'

'We stood for the longest while watching nothing happen'

Since writing the above articles, he has produced a novel about Jamestown, Virginia, USA in 1610 titled *Civilized Men*. It has been nominated for the Virginia State Library's fiction award for 2007.



He has also recently had published *Something From the Cellar*, which includes selected essays by him. This is a collection from the pages of Colonial Williamsburg, a popular history journal.



He has also written a play about colonist John Smith called "Smith! Being the life and death of Cap'n John". It premiered on 5 April 2007 at the Kimball Theatre in Williamsburg, Virginia and ran until December 2007. It was written to mark the 400th anniversary of the Jamestown Landing. The play was revived in a new production in Maryland in September 2008.

With those behind him he also completed work on another novel, *The Bicyclist*, which chronicles the collapse of the United States in the not too distant future. This book has not yet found a publisher.

In 2008 he completed a new play about Samuel Pepys titled "Dapper Dicky or Pepys in Person" and a small book on William Strachey titled "Wreck and Redemption", which was published in March 2009. He's finished writing his autobiography, titled *A Passion for the Past* and this will be published by the University of Virginia Press in 2010.

At the end of 2009 he was completing a book on the 19th-century Egyptologist Giovanni Belzoni *Belzoni: The Giant Archaeologists Love to Loathe*. At the age of 82 he feels this may be his last literary effort.