

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of *Digging Up Bones*

REFERENCE: Brothwell, D. R. *Digging Up Bones*, 3rd ed., British Museum (Natural History) and Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1981, 208 pp., no price listed.

The introduction to the second edition (1972) of *Digging Up Bones* stated that "Bones are commonly an embarrassment to archaeologists..." *Digging Up Bones* was written to alleviate the embarrassment or problem caused by bones when found by the archaeologist. It is written for a nonspecialist in the analysis of human skeletal material. Moreover, it seems to have been written primarily for the archaeologist working at sites in Britain. It was intended to give a "... basic knowledge of the human skeleton ..." which "... is quite within the reach of those without anatomical training, whether adult archaeologists or schoolboy amateur." The author has always achieved this stated objective admirably.

Many of the changes in this new and revised edition consist of minor rewording such as the elimination of the suggestion that archaeologists find bones embarrassing. Many recent techniques and advances in skeletal identification, such as electron microscopy and microscopic methods of age (at death) determination are mentioned and described in this new addition, but not in useful detail. New sections on nonmetric variation in the postcranial skeleton (largely from the work of Michael Finnegan) and on nonhuman bones contain useful information despite their brevity.

Approximately one fourth of the book is devoted to bone trauma and pathology. The coverage and plates on these subjects are better than commonly found in most books on general human osteology.

The publication quality has noticeably improved as evidenced by the paper, typeface, and layout. The integration of the plates with the text is especially welcome. The line drawings remain the same, but the quality of the paper and layout produced needed improvement.

This book is not of major importance for the field of forensic science. It cannot be used as a major source or reference book on skeletal identification, but that was clearly not the intention of the author. Its use, alone or with companion texts, will be in introductory courses in human osteology, particularly for archaeology students. The chapter on excavating and conserving human remains makes the book particularly suited as such a text. Earlier editions of it have been used for this purpose in many colleges and by many amateur archaeologists. *Digging Up Bones* will remain popular for such use.

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