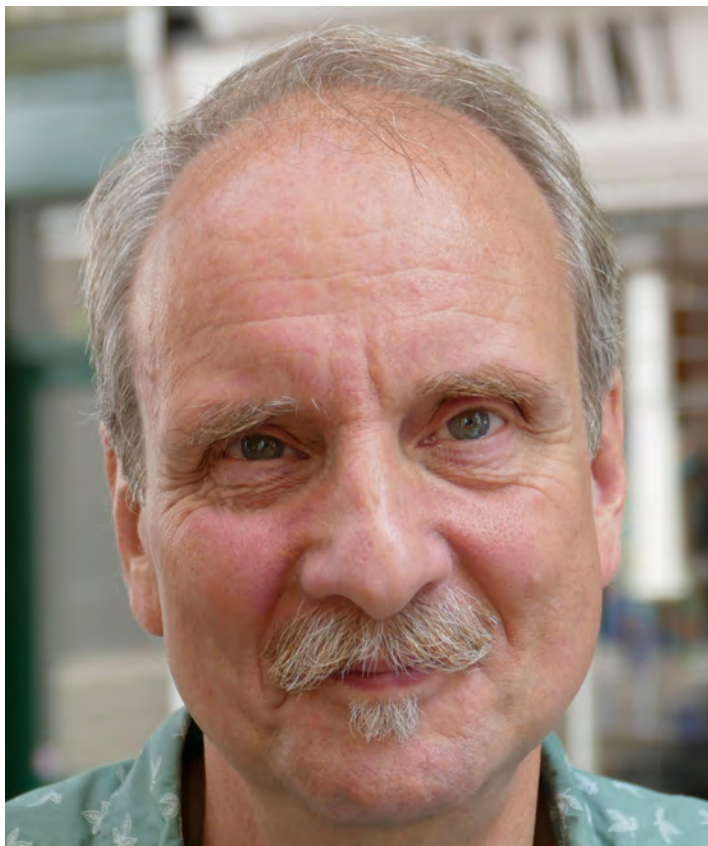


Obituary: Jochen Holger Schutkowski (1956–2020)

As a teacher of osteology for archaeology and anthropology students, Holger Schutkowski often had to be inventive. On one occasion he faced a long wait from suppliers for models of human teeth to demonstrate natural variation and sampling strategies so had casts made of his own molars. The casts were so good that they are still in use, showing not only Holger's appetite for home-spun solutions but also a preference for circumventing officialdom and bureaucracy when it suited him.

Human remains fascinated Holger, and his enthusiasm was infectious. Colleagues recall his patience when excavating complicated prehistoric burials, and his precision when laying out ancient skeletons in the laboratory for analysis. Ethical considerations were always at the forefront of his thinking and led to his involvement in the Working Group on the Revision of Burial Legislation led by the Ministry of Justice of the



Holger Schutkowski

United Kingdom in 2011. He was soon afterwards appointed chairman of the influential Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Burials in England (APABE), a tricky time as deep-seated concerns about the storage and treatment of human remains found voice through protest groups and the popular press, challenging museums and researchers to rethink working practices and tighten up established systems. As colleague Simon Mays recalls, ‘his unfailing good humour and people-skills allowed many potentially difficult situations to be successfully resolved through compromise and consensus’.

Research into the life and death of individuals and whole communities lay at the heart of his academic work. Starting with studies into the determination of the age and sex of individuals as a way of building up profiles of small population groups he quickly moved into the field of human ecology with studies of diet, disease, and adaptation, publishing in quick succession a monograph entitled *Human ecology: Bio-cultural adaptations in human communities* in 2006 and an edited volume entitled *Between biology and culture* in 2008. Both were well received and pushed the field of bioarchaeology forwards, arguing for synthesis and greater nuance to be applied in the analyses of interactions between biological systems and human cultures.

Never one to shy away from a challenge, Holger took on the difficult problem of making sense of cremated bone, becoming an expert on burned remains at a time when few others had come to grips with this widely represented material. In class he sometimes played a video in which he demonstrated how to excavate an urn full of cremated bone in the field, a film no doubt as memorable to students as a ‘how-to-do-it’ piece as it was amusing to see their tutor with long hair and flared trousers. Another pioneering line of Holger’s research was determining the sex of infant skeletons, a problem previously regarded as difficult if not impossible. But his big break came with the development of isotope analysis as a way of documenting mobility patterns amongst human communities by looking at chemical signatures in tooth enamel that could be related back to drinking water in the places people lived. Quickly seeing the potential, he applied the technique to look at populations from prehistoric and early historic times across the Middle East to help sort out some of the most puzzling melting pots of human culture anywhere in the world. He was one of the first in Britain to take an explicitly biocultural approach to isotopic studies of human remains, demonstrating that isotopic and histological analysis should only, and can only, exist within the context of wider bioarchaeological studies, and are meaningless without the biocultural background.

Outside of archaeology music was Holger’s great passion. Almost any music was of interest, but chamber music was his favourite and while competent on many instruments from the piano to guitar it was the viola at which he excelled. As a young man he mastered the demanding viola parts in Smetana’s string quartet number 1 in E minor “Aus meinem Leben” (For my Life). And from school-days onwards he played

in orchestras and ensembles both for personal pleasure and for the delight of those listening. Most recently he played with the Winchester Symphony Orchestra where friends and fellow musicians described him as the ‘best viola player we ever had’, delivering solos in pieces such as Elgar’s *Enigma Variations* with unparalleled expression and poignancy.

Jochen Holger Schutkowski, always known as Holger, was born on the 3 September 1956 in Berlin, but spent most of his childhood in the town of Wilhelmshaven in Lower Saxony on Germany’s North Sea coast, with his parents and his older sister Bettina. The north-lands suited him, and in later life he defined himself as a ‘Northerner’, accepting the inherent propensity for directness, modesty, and the delights of a strong cup of tea accompanied by sweets. Holger studied anthropology at Göttingen University, mentored by the renowned German anthropologist Professor Bernd Herrmann. He completed a dissertation on the diagnostic value of the petrous portion of the temporal bone for sex determination in 1983, a PhD on the sex determination of juvenile remains in 1990, and his Habilitation in 1998. Holger was appointed to a lectureship in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Göttingen in 1989, pursuing his interests in bioarchaeology with a Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) postdoctoral fellowship in 1994–5 and a research fellowship at the University of Copenhagen in 1995. Returning to Göttingen he became acting head of the department in 1995–6, and by this time he had married prehistorian Helen Hofbauer.

In 2000 Holger moved to Britain to take up a Readership in Biological Anthropology in the School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Sciences at the University of Bradford, later becoming Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Transfer, and Head of the Division from 2006 to 2010. During this time he became closely involved in excavations at Sidon in Lebanon with Claude Serhal, but never neglected his administrative duties back home. Faculty in Bradford recall that he was at the helm during a difficult period for the Department with staff cuts looming and talk of closure. He was pivotal during this process and was well-liked and trusted despite the hard decisions concerning staffing issues that had to be made. Indeed, colleagues fondly remember that he always seemed to be on their side rather than the voice of management and a real testament to his skills was that the department retained a close sense of identity and friendship that endured through those years.

After a decade in Bradford new opportunities beckoned, and in 2011 Holger moved south to Bournemouth University to become Professor of Bioarchaeology and Deputy Dean in the School of Applied Sciences. He led the Bioarchaeology Group through several organizational reshuffles that galvanized its future within what is now the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology. His research bridged the sciences and the humanities, investigating the biological outcomes of socio-cultural strategies in human/environment interaction while at the same time looking at forensic

applications of biological anthropology. He applied a combination of morphological and instrument-analytical approaches to the study of human skeletal remains, and used ecological and social theory as interpretive frameworks. His key projects, funded by the Polish National Science Centre, the interrelationship of diet and status in early medieval Alemannic societies funded by the British Academy, and the Hyksos Enigma funded by the European Research Council, included studies of dietary variability amongst human populations of the Near East from the Neolithic to the modern period. More than forty papers in peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings resulted from this work, as well as monographs and edited volumes. He served as an associate editor for the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, *Environmental Archaeology*, and *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, and was a regular participant and speaker at international conferences and meetings on both sides of the Atlantic.

One of these conferences was the meeting titled “Methods and perspectives applied to the study of food practices in the ancient Near East”, organized in the early summer of 2006 in Venice. During the dinner after a busy day, Holger was chatting with Arek Sołtysiak and Theya Molleson about the growing interest in research on human remains in the Near East. As a final outcome of this conversation a new journal was established, “Bioarchaeology of the Near East”, to which Holger contributed for many years as a member of the editorial board.

Despite all his successes at the cutting edge of the discipline, he never lost sight of the importance of teaching. Again, this was an area where Holger excelled, in which his eloquence and love of precision combined perfectly with his boundless enthusiasm and joy of sharing his knowledge with others. In this sense perhaps Holger's most significant legacy is the great many students who were privileged to benefit from his wisdom and insights, and who now carry that forward.

Holger was widely recognized and honoured for his contributions to biological anthropology and bioarchaeology, being elected as a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute in 2012, and a longstanding member of the British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteology (BABAO). He was Chair/President of BABAO from 2004 to 2009, and at the 2018 Annual Meeting in Cranfield was appointed their first Honorary Lifetime Member. He was also a member of the Accreditation Panel for Forensic Practitioners of Royal Anthropological Institute and the British Association for Forensic Anthropology, recognizing the need to integrate academic training with professional practice.

Always happy at heart and unpretentious, Holger had a wicked sense of humour. It is said that he once laughed so much that he half fell out of his chair at a graduation ceremony in Bradford when the Chancellor, the cricketer Imran Khan, peddled the age-old joke in which a well-known commentator absent-mindedly tells listeners

that ‘the bowler’s Holding, the batsman’s Willey’. Preferring small gatherings to large crowds, Holger espoused down-to-earth wisdom, was calm under pressure, and was an unfailing source of sane and sensible advice.

Despite enduring Motor Neurone Disease / MND (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) for more than five years, Holger was teaching and researching right up until his death, recently leaving his palliative care unit in order to spend a day at the university giving lectures, attending seminars, and talking to his students and research team. He showed remarkable courage and a positive outlook throughout, asserting that while it could take his physical abilities it could never dull his determination to live life to the fullest. Reflecting on the time living with MND, Nivien Speith remembers how he constantly accepted change and adjusted accordingly: favourite walks became rides in his wheelchair; voice-banked words became bright new lectures, and listening to concerts replaced playing in the orchestra. The whirr of his motorized wheelchair became a familiar sound around Bournemouth’s campus, and no-one will forget his impish smile as he swung into view. Stoic to the end, he perhaps sometimes secretly savoured the idea that casts of his teeth would be preserved for ever in the Department’s teaching collection.

Jochen Holger Schutkowski died on 30 March 2020, aged 63.

Timothy Darvill and Nivien Speith,

with generous assistance from many of Holger’s friends and colleagues