



## Scientists in race to save bones

Staff and students from the University of Central Lancashire have been involved in a race against time to discover the genetic secrets of human remains, some of which date back to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Fighting against the sea and sand which threaten to destroy the site, a team of lecturers and budding forensic archaeologists have been working on the excavation at Towyn y Capel on the island of Anglesey, directed by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. Now the bones, which could tell us so much about the lifestyle of our distant ancestors, are on their way to the University in Preston for detailed analysis.

“We’ll try to find out the ages and sexes of the individuals buried at the site”, says lecturer Michael Wysocki from the Department of Forensic and Investigative Science. We’ll then examine the bones and the teeth carefully to look for evidence of injuries, diseases, diet – anything which helps us to find out more about the general lifestyle of the people. We’ll also try to obtain DNA samples to identify their genetic traits. They may be related to the indigenous population or to possible Viking settlers. It’s good experience for the students and fits in with their forensic science studies”

It’s not the first time that the University’s forensic archaeologists and anthropologists have been called in to help with the identification of skeletal remains.

“We often get calls from the police to help them determine whether bones that people find are human remains,” says Mr Wysocki. “Although there are a few sad cases where we can identify them as human, fortunately most of the bones found in gardens belong to pigs, which were often kept secretly during the second world war when people wanted to supplement their meagre meat rations.”

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**Note:** Please contact Pam Culley, Media and Public Relations, tel: 01772 894425 for further information and for details of photo opportunities