

News from ADBOU

Unit of Anthropology, Department of Forensic Medicine, University of Southern Denmark



Research and routine work

For 25 years ADBOU has been the organization behind the Odense Skeletal Collection, housed at the University of Southern Denmark. The activities at ADBOU are carried out as a balance between pure research projects (in population history, paleoepidemiology, paleodemography, and forensic anthropology), teaching, and routine work in connection with contract archaeology. With a basis in Western Denmark, ADBOU produces detailed, methodologically sophisticated, and theoretically informed osteological site reports at highly competitive prices. The cutting edge quality of the routine work can only be maintained through a very active internationally orientated research agenda.

At the present the following people are working at ADBOU:

Jesper Boldsen, head of ADBOU, Professor, PhD, DMSc
George Milner, guest professor (Penn State University), PhD
Svenja Weise, postdoc, PhD
Dorthe Dangvard Pedersen, postdoc, PhD
Peter Tarp, research scientist, MSc
Vicki Ryttoft Lillegård Kristensen, research scientist, MSc
Bodil Theilade, secretary

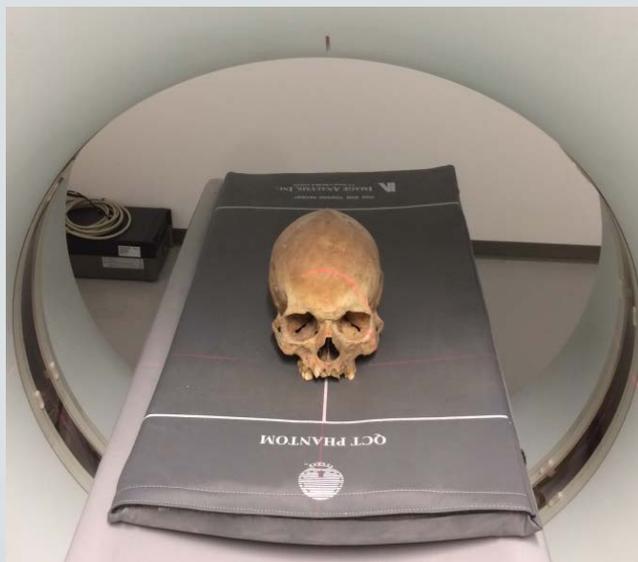
The ADBOU skeletal collection

ADBOU was formed in 1992 by merging two skeletal collections housed in what was then Odense University (presently the main campus of the University of Southern Denmark). The skeletal collection consists mainly of material excavated in contract archaeology. The focus of the collection is the last 1000 years of Western Denmark (Jutland and Funen with surrounding islands), but ADBOU also houses Viking and Bronze Age skeletons and material from other parts of Denmark. We also happily offer our services internationally. For prices and sample reports please contact Bodil Theilade. However, the ADBOU skeletal collection is primarily maintained for research purposes. It comprises several well-known and widely published samples like Tirup (the best known medieval population in the world) and Odense St. Jørgen (probably the largest sample of skeletons excavated from a leprosarium cemetery).



ADBOU got its own CT-scanner

Late last year ADBOU obtained its own CT-scanner – a Siemens Somatom Spirit. The scanner was previously used by the Department of Forensic Medicine, University of Southern Denmark. Scans can be made with a resolution down to 1 mm slices. The scanner will be used in both research projects and routine work ADBOU conducts on a commercial basis for archaeological museums in Denmark. The first project routinely utilizing the scanner's capacity to 'look inside the skeleton' will examine middle and inner ear disease in crania from the medieval village of Tirup. We hope many good projects and interesting results will come from working with the scanner. As always we have an open door for scientists from all over the world to come and carry out research in our collection of approximately 16.000 skeletons from Western Denmark. This also includes the possibility of having bones scanned for research purposes.



Current research projects at ADBOU:



Photos: Østfyns Museer



New Bronze Age skeletons: Kalvehavegård

Østfyns Museer (the museums of Eastern Funen) performed a rescue excavation in 2016 of parts of a Bronze Age burial mound containing a female coffin burial, cremated human remains, and an in situ sword dating to the Danish Bronze Age period II (ca. BC 1500 – 1300) found close together. The excavations also revealed two graves with well-preserved skeletons from the northern base of the mound. The skeletons were ¹⁴C dated to period II (ca. BC 1500), and are thus contemporary with the central graves of the mound. Very few complete skeletons exist from the Danish Bronze Age because people were usually cremated. The two well-preserved skeletons are therefore unique. A grant proposal for the complete excavation of the burial mound is currently under review. The hope is that central grave in the burial mound will be surrounded by secondary inhumations with well-preserved skeletons. It will thereby be possible through osteological analyses to get insights into the population of Bronze Age Denmark. The two skeletons, and any additional skeletons found during subsequent excavations, will be examined and stored at ADBOU.

Estimating adult skeletal age from a large array of new characteristics and improvements in computer-based transition analysis

This three-year project is over halfway done. It is a forensic anthropology project funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ – USA), carried out in collaboration with Penn State University and Mercyhurst University.

Age-related variation from all over the skeleton is utilized. To define new traits and record their time of transition we examined about 1650 skeletons from skeletal collections in the United States, Europe, South Africa, and Thailand. Before the end of the project (spring of 2018), that skeletal information will be incorporated into a Transition Analysis framework. The last step is computer program accompanied by an illustrated scoring manual. It will be made publicly available through FORDISC, a program used extensively in medicolegal investigations involving skeletal remains.

Preliminary analyses indicate that the resulting age-estimation program will provide easily reproducible age estimates of a quality far surpassing what traditional methods can provide. Once the program is generally available, this procedure will be the approach used for age estimation in ADBOU site reports.



Ophelia: The population of Ribe through 1000 years

This project is nearly over. Funded by the Velux Foundation, it has been carried out in collaboration with CHART (Cultural Heritage and Archaeometric Research Team, Institute of Physics, Chemistry and Pharmacy, University of Southern Denmark) and Sydvestjyske Museer. The focus has been on health (particularly tuberculosis epidemiology), demography (primarily adult mortality) and chemical life history (trace element concentrations in different hard tissues).

