



**Letter: Academic visit by Professor Charlotte Roberts, Department of Archeology, Durham University – UK, to the Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Vitória, ES-Brazil (hosted by Dr. Patricia Deps from August 16<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015)**

**Correspondência: Visita acadêmica da Professora Charlotte Roberts, do Departamento de Arqueologia da Universidade de Durham – Reino Unido, à Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, em Vitória, Espírito Santo, Brasil (anfitriã: Patrícia Deps, de 16 a 23 de agosto de 2015)**

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RECEBIDO: 01.08.2016

APROVADO: 11.08.2016

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## **Background**

In December 2014 I was invited to visit Vitória by Dr Deps. This was to be the main speaker during the First Meeting of Paleopathology at the UFES. The meeting was held by the Post Graduates of Infectious Diseases and the new Archeological Study Center at the UFES. This coincided very well with the holding of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Paleopathology Association in South America (PAMINSA) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I therefore was able to travel on from Argentina to Brazil. The invitation developed from Dr Deps' collaboration with Dr Keith Manchester at the University of Bradford, UK, with whom I worked from 1983 to 1999 at Bradford.

I work in the Department of Archaeology, Durham University, UK<sup>2</sup>, with a background in nursing, archaeology, environmental archaeology and bioarchaeology (specifically the study of ancient disease –

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<sup>2</sup> Internet, <https://www.dur.ac.uk/archaeology/staff/?id=163>



ANGOTTI NETO, Hélio (org.). *Mirabilia Medicinæ* 6 (2016/1).

*Medical Education*

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Jan-Jun 2016/ISSN 1676-5818

palaeopathology). I study the origin, evolution and history of disease as seen in archaeological human remains; I focus on infections. I also teach palaeopathology to home and international students on the MSc Palaeopathology course that I created at Durham in 2000, but I have been teaching this subject matter to undergraduate and masters students since 1990 (and have a large PhD student group).

I was happy and very enthusiastic to receive my invitation to visit Brazil. Palaeopathology in Brazil has had a long history, but has not the numbers working in the field that are seen particularly in the U.S. and U.K.<sup>3</sup> By Deps's initiative to explore ways of contributing to paleopathology's development in Brazil, and notably in Vitoria, reflects her energy and motivation to make a difference in Brazil's palaeopathological history. I was also enthusiastic to collaborate with her on leprosy, one of the infections I have been working on in palaeopathology since 1983. The invitation therefore gave me a two-fold opportunity: contribute to developing a palaeopathology "presence" at the University, and better understand the challenge of leprosy in Brazil. I was also keen to see more of Brazil, having visited twice before, flying via Rio to Argentina to a conference (1989), and attending the first PAMINSA in Rio in 2005 (and having a holiday in the Amazon region).

### **My Visit**

My main task was to deliver six lectures to a range of students and staff from a variety of subject areas, including archaeology, history, biology, medicine, and veterinary science. My lectures were as follows: Global palaeopathology; Methods in palaeopathology; leprosy and tuberculosis; metabolic diseases; treponemal diseases; and the bioarchaeology of care. The lectures were meant to be introductory and accessible to all, whatever a person's background knowledge. It was unfortunate that I could not speak in Portuguese but there were a number of interesting questions from participants for each lecture. Other speakers also

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<sup>3</sup> MENDONÇA DE SOUZA, S.M.F.; GÍOCHÓN, R.A. "Paleopathology in Argentina and Brazil". In: BUIKSTRA, J.E.; ROBERTS, C.A. (eds.). *A Global History of Paleopathology: Pioneers and Prospects*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 329-341.



contributed to the three days of proceedings, which complemented and contrasted with my contributions. The “event” was generally well attended, considering the official classes students had during the week (and staff had lectures to give!). Overall, I think the event was a huge success, and there is now a palaeopathology seminar series run by Dr Deps for anyone interested.

Apart from the meeting, I was treated to visits to the Convento da Penha, the oldest church in Brazil, and the local museum, all in Vila Velha, and many social events (and great food). However, most importantly for me was my visit to the local leprosarium, courtesy of both patients still living there, and the dedicated doctor, Manoel Catarino. Having visited working leprosy hospitals in India and in Nepal, and Kalaupapa on Molokai Island, Hawaii (where people with leprosy were sent between the 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1969), I was interested to see another context in and in country where leprosy remains a big challenge. The visit was very informative, Dr Catarino so highly motivated and dedicated, and the few patients still remaining welcoming and positive in their outlook.

My visit to Vitória was incredibly well organized by Dr. Deps and her colleagues. I thoroughly enjoyed the academic interaction with students and academic staff. I also had several runs on the beach, and was introduced to “life in Vitória”. This was a thoroughly enjoyable visit that is already generating further collaboration.

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## Bibliography

MENDONÇA DE SOUZA, S.M.F.; GÍOCHÓN, R.A. “Paleopathology in Argentina and Brazil”. In: BUIKSTRA, J.E.; ROBERTS, C.A. (eds.). *A Global History of Paleopathology: Pioneers and Prospects*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 329-341.