

Ever since reading this book the idea of reconstructing faces has fascinated me. It was with great interest, therefore, that I pondered over and admired the work of Richard Neave - pioneer of the technique in this country. Manchester Mummy No. 1770 was brought to life in all her fragile adolescence, and then Lindow Man, resurrected from his squashed, leathery remains. In December, 1989 Mr. Neave reconstructed the head of a young girl whose remains had been found wrapped in an old carpet in Cardiff. Her portrait in clay appeared in the national newspapers, resulting in her recognition by two people who had known her. Once her dental records had been obtained, the identification was complete. The accuracy of the technique of reconstruction astounded sceptics.

Having once spent three years learning to produce portrait sculpture from clay, the task did not seem impossible, so last year I decided to 'have a go' myself. The first step was to digest books on osteopathology. Learning the hard way is often best, so the next step was to attempt the reconstruction of a crushed skull from a Prehistoric burial. It took many hours of pushing 30-odd bits of bone around with tweezers before the skull was satisfactorily reassembled and a basic understanding of the construction of the human skull achieved. Ageing and sexing also had to be mastered and although not ideal from the skull alone, by comparison it is possible to learn to interpret certain basic tell-tale features. The results are double-checked against the post-cranial bones.

Once the bone structure and facial

muscle positions, functions and attachments were understood, it was time to attempt a face. First a technical drawing of the skull was produced from both front and side view (the angle at which the skull is drawn is very important as the facial area must be upright to prevent distortion of the features). Placing a piece of tracing paper over the completed drawing, the eyes were placed in the orbits, the masticatory muscles in their appropriate positions, the inter-pupillary line of the mouth, and the shape of the nose sketched in around the nasal opening. The drawing was then re-traced, this time 'fleshing out' the muscles using tables of average soft tissue depths. During that first attempt I have to admit that the result was quite unnerving as a face took shape and began to stare back at me from the page.

As it is impossible to determine such features as eye and hair colour, blemishes, scars and birthmarks, a reconstructed face probably borders on accuracy in the same way that a look-alike can bear a disturbing resemblance to a well-known personality.

The Roman Painted House Trust has kindly agreed to provide the space and facilities necessary to continue the experiments. Throughout the 1990 season visitors will be able to watch these portraits taking shape every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday morning. By the end of the summer it is hoped that a portrait head in wax, of the now famous medieval 'Crusader' (on permanent display at the Roman House) will have been produced. To my knowledge there are only two other artists who undertake such work in England, and certainly no-one in Kent! Do Come along and watch the work progress!

Operation TIDY 90

Dover Sea Cadets beat Air Cadets by a short (artificial) leg!

Organised by the Projects Committee of THE DOVER SOCIETY the litter-clearing project took place on Sunday 11 March in co-operation with Dover District Council and sponsored by McDonald's, Marks & Spencer and Dover Sports Centre.

The Dover cadets took off with great enthusiasm and in 70 minutes picked up over 70 bags of litter thereby actually doing something positive for the improvement of their

local environment in this TIDY BRITAIN YEAR.

Such occasions do not pass without a touch of humour and we had plenty on the day. Aided by a following wind gusting to gale force 8 at times, the sea cadets lost no time in leading the field only to disappear completely from view having gone to ground in a cliff enclave where they sorted out the enemy litter and re-appeared unscathed but with rich pickings. The ingenuity of the air cadets in mobilising abandoned trolleys soon caught on. They flew past in grand style and bagged much litter in achieving their objective.

Litter encountered ranged from the usual to the ridiculous, stacking chairs, trolleys, cones, a number plate, a kettle and yes - - part of an artificial leg. The mind boggles!

Though free squash was laid on, there was little demand possibly because of their enthusiasm to get on with the task but more probably because of the wintery conditions. The hospitality at McDonalds at the prizegiving afterwards was thoroughly enjoyed, the sea cadets taking first and the air cadets second prize.

Our Chairman had earlier made a timely arrival, dismounted, took several action pictures, helped bag some litter, congratulated the team leaders and thanked all participants on a most successful voluntary public service project.

