



# Anne Reichert

## 10 June 1935 – 8 May 2022

With the passing of Anne Reichert, the scientific community has lost a personality who was recognised far beyond the borders of the German-speaking world as a proponent of archaeotechnology, or as she herself would have put it, an experimental archaeologist. She was a member of EXARC, the European association dedicated to the promotion of experimental archaeology, and of AEAS, the Swiss platform for experimental archaeology.

Her enduring legacy is marked by the way in which she shared her profound knowledge with interested children and adults – both laypersons and scientific colleagues – with equal enthusiasm.

Born in 1935 in the city of Königsberg, in the Neumark region of Prussia (formerly Germany, now Poland), her life was influenced by the harsh experiences of the war and post-war years. Her will to survive, and her indefatigability, modesty, and enthusiasm were later applied to the field of “living history” which she entered at the end of the 1980s. Her previous experience as a proofreader for a school book publisher and an editor for scientific books and periodicals would become a valuable asset when she wrote her own numerous publications.

In addition to working on reconstructions of prehistoric pottery or the production of birch pitch, Anne also developed a fascination with Neolithic textiles. She was always close to nature, and the harvesting and processing of natural resources were

a lifelong fascination and preoccupation for her. Anne really came into her own when conducting events such as the one held in 2008 in the Fischerhaus Wangen museum, where she taught the twining of wood bast and the freshly harvested bark of young twigs to children. Next to Emil Vogt, who laid the foundation for the research on Neolithic textiles with his 1937 book *Geflechte und Gewebe der Steinzeit*, and Antoinette Rast-

Eicher and her much-cited contribution *Bast before wool* (2015), it was Anne Reichert who directed scientific attention to the subject of wood bast as a raw material in prehistoric textile crafts. Beginning as an autodidact, she was tireless in her drive to understand and reconstruct the production methods used on archaeological finds of tree bast textiles. It hardly came as a surprise that numerous archaeological institutions such as the Landesamt für Denkmalpflege in Baden-Württemberg, in particular the Feuchtbodenarchäologie Hemmenhofen, or museums such as the Museum für Archäologie

und Ökologie Dithmarschen in Albersdorf sought her advice, her competence, or her collaboration.

Her exhibition *Bast, Binsen, Brennessel – textiles Material der Steinzeit* – which has become the stuff of legend – presented the processing of these textile raw materials, along with numerous reconstructions of archeological textile finds, to a wider public (<http://www.museum-albersdorf.de/bast/>).



Anne's participation in the THEFBO project, which was dedicated to the study of Neolithic textile crafts (sponsored by the BMBF 2018-2021) was a real asset to our joint endeavours. She is shown here during a meeting at the central archive of the Landesmuseum Baden Württemberg in Raststatt (2020) (Image: Johanna Banck-Burgess)

The exhibition went on tour through half of Europe, far beyond the confines of the German-speaking world, being shown in venues such as the ArcheoParc Schnals in South Tyrol under the title *Raffie, ortiche e giuncacee – Materiale tessile dell'età della pietra*, or in the Préhistosite de Ramioul, Flémalle in Belgium under the title *Liber, jonc et ortie – Fibres textiles de l'âge de la pierre / Bast, Biezen, Brandnetels – Textielmaterialen uit de steentijd*. The exhibition and the special events associated with it frequently turned out to be real visitor magnets which brought record levels of attendance to some of the museums that hosted it, such as the Heuneburg open air museum.

Anne's real gift of imparting knowledge made her a popular guest at workshops, seminars, or lectures hosted by universities such as the Freie Universität in Berlin or the open-air museum of Sagnlandet in Lejre, Denmark, where she passed on her knowledge in workshops in 2007. In a course of studies titled *Konservierung und Restaurierung von archäologischen, ethnologischen und kunsthandwerklichen Objekten* at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart, Anne found an enthusiastic response when she shared her rich experience with the students to whom she taught the techniques of twining lime bast in a workshop titled *Neolithische Geflechte*.

While academic archaeology would often be very restrained in commenting on textile production techniques due to the scarcity of sources, Anne would rely on her practical experience, an approach which

was not welcomed in all quarters. Nevertheless, she never relented in her tireless struggle to increase our knowledge of how humans fashioned their textiles in the Stone Age. A fine example of her work is provided by her reconstruction of the find of a twined fabric from Seekirch-Achwiesen (Sa 90 Q 99/147/ D-144) in the shape of a truncated cone. To this end, she had worked with Annemarie Feldtkeller throughout the years 2000/2001, discussing, testing, and rejecting numerous possible aspects of the production process until they finally arrived at a solution which came as close to the original as possible.

The impressive bibliography of Anne's works is a testimony to her lifelong active dedication to the field of living history. Only a few of her colleagues can claim to have achieved a comparable success in sharing their knowledge in such a lasting and generous manner. Anne Reichert died on 8 May 2022 in Ettlingen (Baden-Württemberg, Germany). Her extensive collection of textile reconstructions, research protocols, and materials has been entrusted to the Pestenacker Stone Age Village (a UNESCO world heritage site), an institution administered by the Landsberg am Lech district.

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