

PAST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY



Excavated by Victorian foxes: the stunning Needwood Forest torc

The Needwood Forest torc was found on Duchess (now Duchy) of Lancaster land in 1848, in a wooded area within Needwood Forest, Staffordshire. In a letter of that same year to the President of the Society of Antiquaries, Sir Henry Ellis detailed how the torc had apparently been thrown up by the digging of a fox earth, "and the cubs appeared to have been sporting with the torquis".

Describing torcs as being of 'Gaulish origin', Ellis' letter includes the usual florid and rambling prose of the age – there are many references to 'vanquished Gauls' and torc-capturing Romans. Ellis does note the exceptional quality of this torc and it is worth bearing in mind that, at this time in Britain,

only the Netherurd terminal (found in Peeblesshire in 1806 and at that time assumed to be a staff-head, and not a torc) had been found. As such, although Ellis didn't realise it, the Needwood Forest torc is the first gold Iron Age torc from Britain to have been found and recognised as a torc.

There is then an almost one-hundred-year gap, before Edward T. Leeds, writing in *The Antiquaries Journal* in 1933, firmly ascribed the torc to the Iron Age, and included it in the same class as the torcs found from Ulceby in 1859. By 1936, the torc had been given to the British Museum on permanent loan, and Charles F. C. Hawkes, then assistant curator, wrote about it in *The British Museum Quarterly*, including a black and white photo, the first in-print image of the torc.

Although Ellis's 1848 letter included a beautiful ink illustration of the torc, and there is a second illustration in the collection of the British Museum, these – and a couple of photos of the torc in its British Museum case – are all that record the torc since Hawkes' 1936 account.

As such, this is a torc that was long overdue being looked at in detail. By agreement of the Royal Collection Trust (the charity now responsible for looking after the Royal Palaces and an extensive collection which includes The Crown Jewels) and the British Museum, I was able to go and see this torc up close.

It did not disappoint! With an internal diameter of around 140 mm the torc was certainly designed to be worn on the neck rather than the arm. The torc is made from thirty-two wires which, in sets of four, have been wrapped around a mandrel (now removed) to create eight coil ropes. These coiled ropes have then been twisted in pairs, and these pairs have then



RCT 1: The Needwood Forest torc (Royal Collection Trust / © His Majesty King Charles III 2024)

Left: RCT 7: A terminal and neck ring. (Royal Collection Trust / © His Majesty King Charles III 2024)



Right: RCT 13: Close up of the end of one terminal. (Royal Collection Trust / © His Majesty King Charles III 2024)



been twisted together to form the neck ring. The neck ring has then had two, u-shaped, terminals created, with a rope of two paired-coils at each of the four 'corners' of the terminals. When you pick the torc up, it feels flexible, but does have a rigidity in its form. It would not have lost shape but would have been flexible enough to put on and take off easily.

The terminals are likely to have been created by fusing the wire ropes together before hammering and punching the cooled fused wires into shape. Each terminal is highly decorated on the front and sides, but not on the back. Although at first appearing similar, there are several differences between each terminal: for example, one has nine added raised 'dummy rivets' on the exterior terminal face, and the other has twelve.

On each terminal there are two crescent-shaped, rick-rack/wavy lines which start at each terminal 'corner' and converge in the centre of the terminal. These lines have been created by first punching/chiselling two parallel lines, to leave a raised line between. Alternate dots have then been punched on each side of this raised line to create the rick-rack/wavy

line effect. All over the terminals are punched dots and lines which are aligned to roughly follow, and extend, the trajectory of the neck ring wires into the terminal.

The work appears to have been completed with confidence and speed (there is little evidence of double-punched dots or lines being scribed twice), albeit in a rather free-form manner. The preciseness and uniformity of decoration seen on, for example, the Snettisham Great or Sedgeford torcs is not present.

The decoration of the Needwood Forest torc conforms to styles and motifs seen in many other gold alloy Iron Age 'Snettisham Style' torcs. Again, as in the Snettisham Great torc, the South West Norfolk torc and in several other Snettisham torcs, the rick-rack decorative lines of the Needwood Forest torc appear to be marking out hidden joins in the alloy beneath, between the paired ropes in this case. This can also be seen in the parallel lines of the Needwood Forest decoration, which echo the position of the wires, fused into the torc terminal.

The punched/chiselled lines and line of punched dots around the terminal edges again echo several other Iron Age torcs, most obviously the Snettisham Great torc, the Netherurd terminal and Newark torc, which all have lines of punched dots behind their terminal faces.

The Needwood Forest torc is competent and cleverly achieved, however, close up it is very rough and ready, although apparently achieved with a quickness and confidence of skill.

For me, when you get up close to a torc, you get a feeling about a torc and the way it's been worked – perhaps even a feeling about its maker – which then often bears out only later in hard data and evidence. I know many goldsmiths who also look at artefacts in the same way. In the case of the Needwood Forest torc, it most closely reminded me of the Netherurd terminal: the movement, confidence, overall beauty – but irregularity and lack of order when viewed up close. There is also a great similarity in the planishing/hammering across the terminal surfaces of Needwood Forest



RCT 15: The neck ring as it joins the terminal. (Royal Collection Trust / © His Majesty King Charles III 2024)

to that seen in the Netherurd and Newark torcs. Could Needwood Forest be related to these two other, known to be related, torcs? Although difficult to confirm at present, it is worth keeping in mind.

The other interesting thing about the Needwood Forest torc, and which links it to other sheet gold torcs like the Netherurd terminal, the Snettisham Great and Grotesque torcs, the Clevedon terminal etc, is that it has most likely been made using hammering and fusing, rather than casting, techniques. As such this – and the ‘Snettisham Style’ decoration on the terminals – might place its date at the earlier end of torc making in the Iron Age.

It truly is very beautiful. Thank goodness for Victorian foxes, eh?

Acknowledgements

By granting me free use of my images in any publication the Royal Collection Trust have enabled me to share this beautiful torc with you all: the Trust should be applauded for their progressive stance regarding image rights and I would like to acknowledge my grateful thanks.

Tess Machling (independent researcher)
tess.machling@gmail.com

A Bronze Age antler pick and wooden shovel from Carnon Valley, Cornwall

It has long been thought that the exploitation of the rich and accessible tin deposits in southwest Britain started in the Bronze Age (c. 2200–800 BC). Tin ores have been found in Bronze Age settlements and tin artefacts in Bronze Age funerary monuments and in shipwreck assemblages, yet evidence of Bronze Age tin mining in Britain, as across Europe, has remained elusive. The re-evaluation and radiocarbon dating of an antler pick and a wooden shovel from the Carnon Valley near Truro in West Cornwall provides the first direct evidence of Bronze Age tin mining in Europe.

Both these objects reside within the collections of the Royal Institution of Cornwall (Truro Museum) and were sampled separately for radiocarbon dating as part of related but independent investigations. The antler was sampled in 2018 during the course of research being undertaken by Simon Timberlake of the Early Mines Research Group (see *Cornish Archaeology* 57, 107–122). The shovel was sampled in 2022 as part the University of Durham’s Leverhulme-funded ‘Project Ancient Tin’ and was dated with a grant from the Royal Archaeological Institute. It seems very likely indeed that both are tin mining tools.

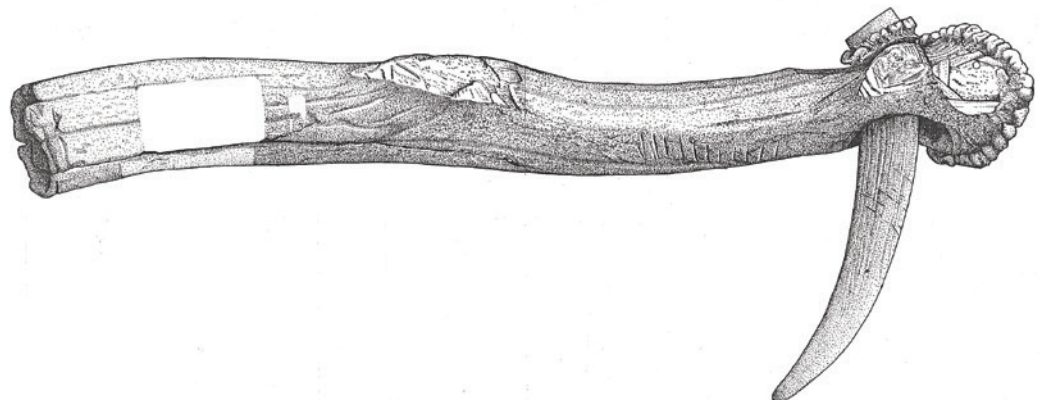
The antler pick was found directly upon the tin ground at a depth of c. 40 feet when these tin-bearing gravels were

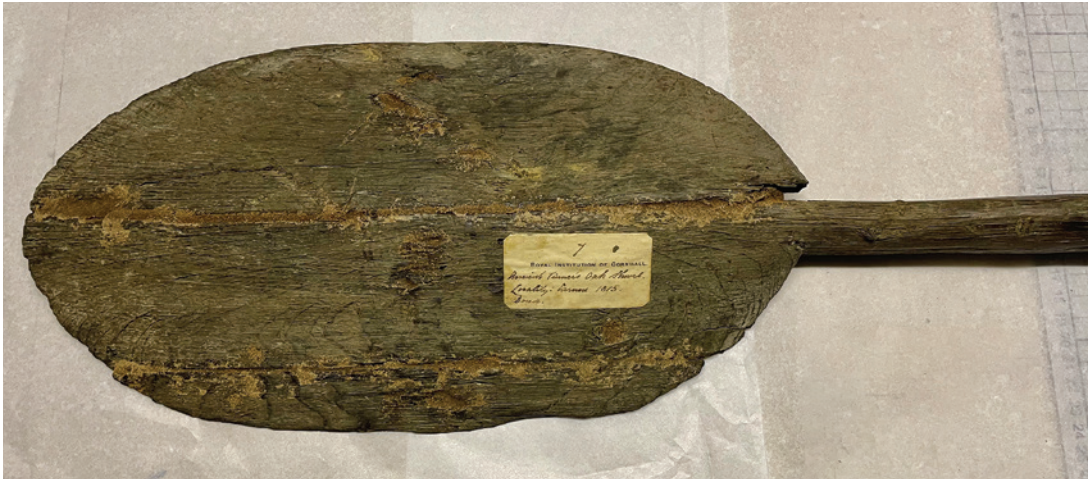
being re-worked at the end of the eighteenth century. The find date appears to be 1796, at which time the most active diggings were taking place south of Bissoe, most probably between Perranwell and Devoran. By 1803 this pick and other antiquities were in the possession of Robert Fox (landowner and then business partner with John Williams of Gwennap of the Perran Foundry at Perranworthal). It was John Williams who founded the Great Carnon Streamworks Company in 1785, and this is probably how Fox acquired the finds from the mining operation.

The original detachable end of the pick (which is shown in the 1860 drawing of this by W.J.Henwood) appears to have been made of a different antler taken from a small (juvenile) red deer. Although found loose, it appears that this had been inserted into a round perforation just above the crown of the main antler shaft, the hole of which appears to have been cut out using a chisel or narrow-bladed axe. It is not certain how this was actually fixed in place. The most likely explanation is that this was wedged into the hole then bound with rawhide or some other sort of organic material. However, no traces of these fixings remain.

The original pick end appears to have been lost, or else it deteriorated and was disposed of following its recovery, and

The Bronze Age antler pick (Truro Museum accession no. 1999.371) drawn by Brenda Craddock. The tool is 480 mm long with a circumference of 152 mm at the shaft base (weight 0.95 kg). Note the 11 tally marks cut on the underside of the shaft handle. The radiocarbon determination was obtained on a collagen sample drilled from the antler crown.





The Bronze Age Carnon shovel (Truro Museum accession number TRURI 1400 1068). The overall length is 88 cm with the spade being 51 cm by 37 cm (photo by Alan Williams).

because of this, part of the tool was replaced by a wooden facsimile, perhaps during the 19th century. However, the main shaft of the red deer antler pick is original.

Rather more difficult to explain are the lack of wear marks or breaks upon the tip of the facsimile pick point. There are a number of possible explanations for this. Either the detail of this wear was not included within the manufactured copy, or else the wear resulting from its use within the gravels was less than we expected. Alternatively, the tip point that it was buried with was a fresh and relatively unused replacement for an earlier one – perhaps it was an intentionally placed object laid upon the recently abandoned and finished diggings? What we can be reasonably confident about (based on the lack of waterworn attrition) is that this tool hadn't travelled far from its source.

One exciting discovery of its examination were the numerous blade tooling marks identified across parts of the shaft or handle. Amongst these was a row of 'tally marks' – an alignment of eleven short parallel cuts made to one part of the handle. Our study suggests these were cut whilst it was still in use. It is quite possible that this tally relates to counting (i.e. recording) some aspect of the pick's use, or else is a record of the people or the volume of tin ore mined.

The radiocarbon date, of 1620–1490 cal BC (90.1% probability; OxA-36336, 3269±27) was not wholly unexpected, given the recent discovery of similar Early Bronze Age antler picks and fragments of picks associated with ancient copper mines at Ecton (Staffordshire) and Cwmystwyth (Central Wales) excavated during the 1990s by Simon Timberlake and the Early Mines Research Group. The date of this tin mining artefact provides further evidence of Early Bronze Age tin exploitation in south-west England. This was attested by the small amount of tin smelting slag and alluvial tin recovered from beneath the Caerloggas I barrow near St Austell and the placed cassiterite pebbles, crushed cassiterite and grinding stone found in Bronze Age pits at Tregurra near Truro, excavated in 2014 by the Cornwall Archaeological Unit. The date is comparable with that of the Nebra Sky Disc found in Germany; the gold and possibly also the tin of which Gregor Borg of the University of Heidelberg suggests are from Cornish sources. The gold, in particular, has a trace element

profile that matches the gold from the alluvial tin deposits of the Carnon Valley from which the pick and shovel were found.

In summary, the evidence suggests that the antler pick is a tool of the Early Bronze Age linked to the working of the hard alluvial tin ground on the floor of the Carnon Valley. As such this is evidence for the earliest known mining of tin in south-west England.

The Carnon wooden shovel has a label stating "Ancient Tinner's Oak Shovel. Locality: Carnon 1815" but with no precise location. Unlike two-piece Medieval shovels, the Carnon shovel was made from one piece of wood, probably partly trunk and branch. A sample was taken with a scalpel from the handle and was dated to 1270–1050 cal BC (95% probability; SUERC-108070, 2964±25), the end of the Middle Bronze Age. Wooden shovels and antler picks appear to have been common finds in the reworking of alluvial tin deposits during the eighteenth and nineteenth century AD. For comparison, an Early Bronze Age (1888–1677 cal BC) one-piece oak shovel was found at the Alderley Edge copper mine and an alder shovel was excavated from the Early Bronze Age Mount Gabriel copper mine in southwest Ireland.

Overall, the Carnon antler pick and wooden shovel are the first dated Bronze Age tin mining tools in Europe and form part of the growing evidence for Bronze Age tin workings in Cornwall.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the Royal Institution of Cornwall (Truro Museum) for permissions to sample these museum objects. Simon Timberlake sampled the antler whilst his colleagues Brenda Craddock, Phil Andrews, John Pickin, Anthony Gilmour with Alan Williams and Kevin Baker collectively helped fund the cost of the antler date. Stephen Hartgroves helped with the interpretation of its findspot. The wooden shovel was sampled by Alan Williams and dated at SUERC following a grant application by Ben Roberts to the Royal Archaeological Institute.

Simon Timberlake (simon.timberlake@gmail.com) Early Mines Research Group and Alan Williams (alan.r.williams@durham.ac.uk) University of Durham

Lunar research at Stonehenge

Stonehenge is a global icon of prehistoric astronomy, and its astronomical importance has been recognised by UNESCO as one of the reasons why it is a World Heritage Site (WHS) and has Outstanding Universal Value. Despite this, there is still much to learn about the astronomical importance of the WHS and Stonehenge itself. Many people know and understand that the monument's architecture is aligned on the movements of the sun, but fewer know that there is credible evidence that it is aligned upon the movements of the moon as well.

Movements of the sun and moon

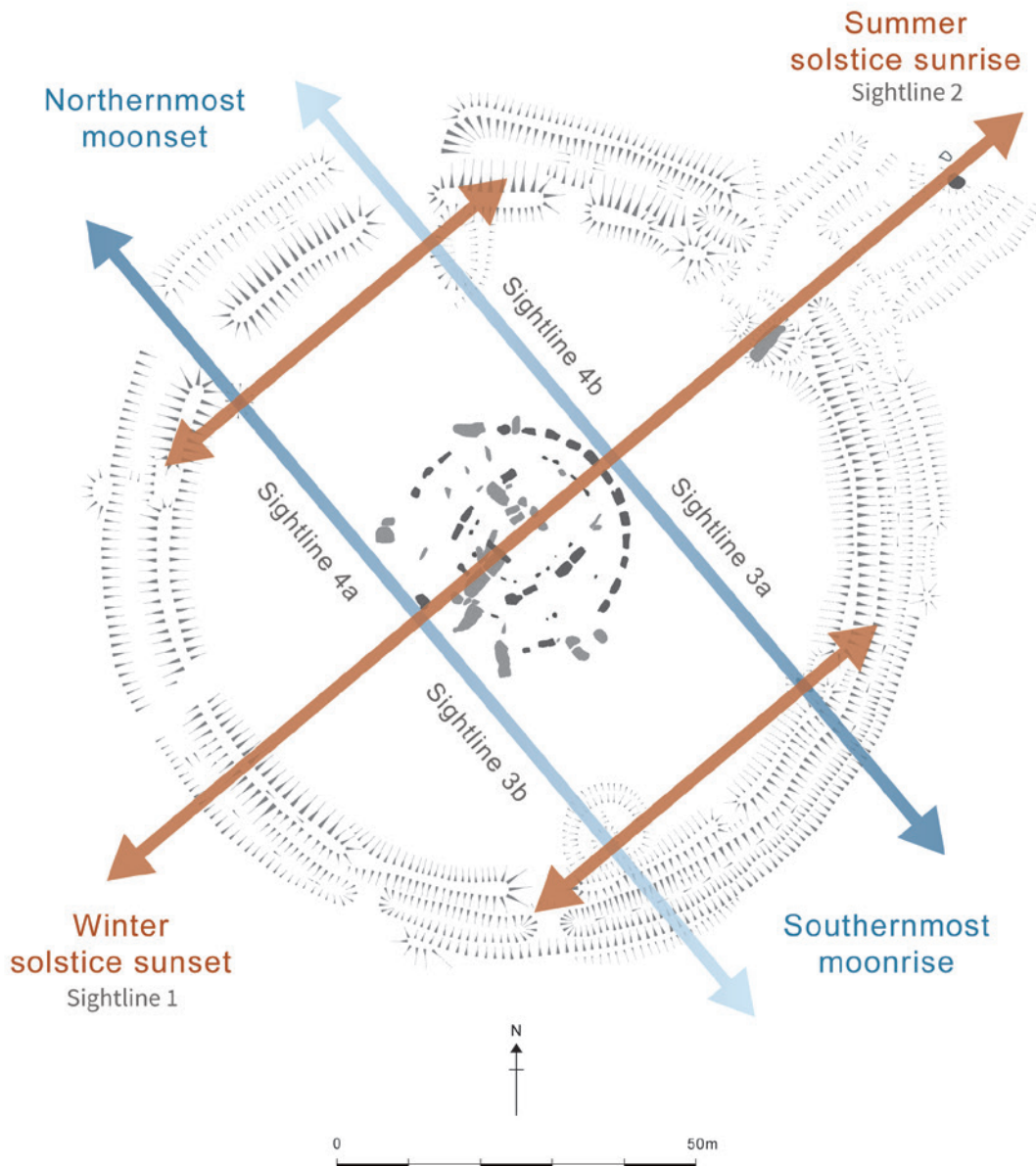
In the case of the sun, its most northerly or southerly rising and setting positions in the landscape (as viewed from a fixed point) occur annually, at the solstices. However, the moon moves up and down the horizon much faster than the

sun and reaches its northerly or southerly rising or setting positions in the landscape every 27 days.

The big difference is that – unlike the sun – the moon's most northerly and southerly positions *themselves* gradually vary. This latter lunar cycle lasts 18.6 years, so that the most northerly moonsets and the most southerly moonrises that one can ever see are visible only when the monthly extremes are furthest apart. This period occurs every 18–19 years and is called the Major Lunar Standstill.

The architecture of Stonehenge and the moon

The solar axis at Stonehenge has been well understood for many years, having been first noticed by William Stukeley in the 1720s and now well known, with the summer solstice attracting large crowds every year. It appears that the



The solar and lunar alignments of the Stonehenge axis and the Station Stone rectangle. The four Station Stone positions are located where the orange and blue arrows cross at the perimeter of the monument; only two of these remain. Image: © Historic England, Sharon Soutar for Ruggles and Chadburn



The most southerly moonrise, viewed on 22 June 2024. Missing Station Stone 92 is marked by a red light. Image: Amanda Chadburn



Left: Recording the most southerly moonrise along Sightline 3b on 22 June 2024. Image: Amanda Chadburn



Right: The most southerly moonrise on 22 June 2024 as viewed approximately from Sightline 3a. Note the trees at Luxenborough Plantation which mask the horizon. Image: Amanda Chadburn

extreme (most northerly/southerly) rising and setting positions of the sun and the moon are both monumentalised at Stonehenge.

The best evidence for the latter is the orientation of the Station Stone rectangle. The shorter sides of the rectangle are oriented on the main solar axis, while its longer sides are oriented along a 'lunar axis', towards the positions of the northernmost moonset and the southernmost moonrise. Concentrations of cremations and animal bones around the southern moonrise direction, first noted by Josh Pollard and Clive Ruggles in 2001, may also indicate the importance of the moon at the monument during the centuries before the sarsen circle was built. We believe that it was possible that

prehistoric people viewed the moon and sun at Stonehenge from various positions in the monument, and that the alignments shown were therefore functional (sightlines).

It is worth noting that only two of the four 'lunar extreme' directions are marked by the architecture at Stonehenge. There is no strong evidence that the moon rising at its northernmost limit or setting at its southernmost one was important to the monument builders.

All of this is described in a new book about archaeoastronomy at Stonehenge, commissioned by Historic England, written by the author and Clive Ruggles and published in May 2024 by Liverpool University Press.

Lunar research at Stonehenge

2024 and 2025 are Major Lunar Standstill years. These are important at Stonehenge because the visual connection between the architecture of the monument and the rising and setting moon becomes apparent for the first time in almost two decades. Two separate teams of researchers (Fabio Silva and colleagues, Bournemouth University; and Clive Ruggles, University of Leicester, and the author) have come together to research these astronomical events at Stonehenge.

We are resurveying critical parts of the monument (the Station Stone rectangle) and are also observing and recording the position of the moon as it rises and sets, and timing these movements. Although several authors have noted the possible relationship between the architecture of Stonehenge and the motions of the moon, we believe this is the first time that these lunar movements have actually been systematically measured and observed in real time at the monument, while the astronomical events are occurring.

Our aims are not only to ground-truth the theoretical calculations of the sightlines which have been made using data from NASA and other sources, but primarily to assess whether these lunar alignments were intentional or, conversely, whether the Station Stones had a different purpose and their relation to the most extreme moonrise and set is a mere coincidence. Furthermore, we are also interested in observing the effects of the moonrise and set on Stonehenge itself (e.g. shadows, other visual effects). We also want to view the effects of modern features such as traffic and tree plantations during these astronomical events. Following on from that, we will be considering what recommendations, if any, are needed with regard to the management of the WHS.

Finally, we are hoping for a series of excellent photographs to record these rare astronomical phenomena in relation to the Station Stones. Obviously, all our observations are entirely weather-dependent. To date (the end of June 2024), the weather has only allowed four nights for observations out of a possible 22 dates; the others have all been overcast or rainy. We are planning to publish our research the year after we have finished our fieldwork.

Lunar Events

English Heritage have embraced the Lunar Standstill period with us and are putting on a series of events. Working with the Royal Astronomical Society, so far we have made two podcasts, a livestream with a 'documentary' section linking in with Chimney Rock in Colorado (a Puebloan site with an established alignment to the major lunar standstill), and there has been a lot of press. Still to come at the Stonehenge Visitor Centre is an exhibition, a planetarium week-long event, and a half-day of public lectures at Bournemouth University. Further details can be found here:

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/stonehenge/things-to-do/major-lunar-standstill/>

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to English Heritage for facilitating this lunar research, particularly their operations team and security staff.

*Amanda Chadburn (amanda.chadburn@hotmail.com),
Visiting Fellow, Bournemouth University and Tutor,
Kellogg College, University of Oxford*

Professor Timothy Darvill OBE BA, PhD, DSc, MifA, FSA, FSAScot, RPA

As PAST went to press, the Society learnt with sadness that Timothy Darvill had passed away after a short illness, aged 66 years. Tim would have been known to many members through his books and articles, as well as through his captivating lectures, field trips and important excavations. He made hugely significant contributions to Neolithic research across Europe, but particularly in south-west Wales, the Cotswolds, the Isle of Man and of course Stonehenge. In his capacity as professor at Bournemouth University he inspired and encouraged many hundreds of students and colleagues.

Tim was a founder trustee of Cotswold Archaeology where he had been Chairman since 1992 and was instrumental in organising both the Theoretical Archaeology Group and the Neolithic Studies Group, as well as serving on the English Heritage Advisory Committee and as Commissioner at the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. Those who knew Tim well will remember his unfailing generosity with time and advice to students and colleagues, his love of field visits (ranging pole always in hand) and his high standards of archaeological practice. Tim was much involved with the Prehistoric Society, including most recently organising the Europa Conference in 2022 which was hosted in Bournemouth. He will be sorely missed, and the Society's thoughts are with his colleagues, family and friends.



Tim with Geoff Wainwright in 2011, during their excavations in the Preseli Hills, Pembrokeshire © Emma Carver

MEETINGS PROGRAMME 2024–2025

DATE	VENUE/FORMAT	DETAILS
2024		
Saturday 2 November 2.15pm (GMT)	Lecture Blended (in-person/ online) Lecture Theatre, Norwich Castle Museum, NR1 3JU	<i>Reviewing the evidence from Arminghall Timber Circle/ Henge and Warham Camp Iron Age Fort: anchor monuments for the stewardship of prehistoric landscapes</i> , by Dr Andy Hutcheson (Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures) Annual Joint lecture with Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society
2025		
Thursday 13 February 7pm (GMT)	Lecture Online (Zoom)	<i>Archaeological excavations at Kynance Gate, Mullion, 1953–64</i> , by Charles Johns (Cornwall Archaeological Unit) Annual joint lecture with Cornwall Archaeological Society
Friday 28 February 7.30pm	Lecture The United Reform Church Hall, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6PR	<i>Chalk Children: death, love and two 5,000-year-old burials from the Yorkshire Wolds</i> , by Dr Neil Wilkin (British Museum) Annual joint lecture with Welwyn Archaeological Society

We continue to work on our programme with more lectures to be announced for 2025. Meetings may be liable to change. Further details, including how to join virtual meetings, will be available online: <http://www.prehistoricsociety.org/events/>

Europa Conference 2024, Edinburgh – Inhabiting temperate Europe in the 4th–1st millennia BC, in honour of Prof Ian Ralston

This year's Europa conference ran on a slightly different format, with papers from leading academic speakers and PGR students given on the same day, followed by the Society AGM and 2024 Europa lecture. It was also a hybrid event, with about 65 people in the room, and a further 40 or so people online. St Augustine's Church in central Edinburgh provided an excellent venue for the day, with an extremely sophisticated audio-visual facilities, and fantastic food from our caterers.

The conference honoured the achievements of Prof Ian Ralston, Emeritus Abercromby Professor of Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh, in the field of European prehistory. The papers presented demonstrated the chronological breadth and geographic width of Prof Ralston's career in archaeology, ranging from a paper on early Neolithic timber 'halls' to warfare and violence in the Celtic world. Speakers travelled to take part in the conference from across Britain, Ireland, France, and Spain. In terms of British and Irish archaeology, attendees were treated to the latest definition and categorisation of lowland marsh forts by Theo Reeves, an exploration of early Neolithic timber halls by Alison Sheridan, a demonstration of the importance of metalworking and lack of evidence for cereals at Welsh upland hillforts by Lorrae Campbell, and a fascinating paper on later prehistoric Rathgall hillfort by Katharina Becker. Further afield, we heard from Rodrigo Paulos-Bravo (who pre-recorded his talk) about Iron Age societies and settlements in Galicia, Pierre-Yves Milcent spoke on late Bronze Age settlements and hillforts in central France, and Fernando Rodríguez del Cueto described his work on an Iron Age hillfort in Asturias, Spain.

After lunch, the focus turned to warfare, violence and mobility, with papers by Manuel Fernández-Götz, Clara Filet and Sophie Krausz on these topics. The final two complimentary papers of the day were given by Hervé Duval-Gatignol and Anthony Lefort, on cross-channel connections in the Late Iron Age, including the transport of Kimmeridge shale to make high-status bracelets.

Prof Ralston's Europa lecture was a warm and personal reflection of his life's work in archaeology, showing how unexpected discoveries or events can lead to unforeseen avenues of new research or fulfilling collaborations. As a



President Linda Hurcombe and Ian Ralston after the Europa lecture



The Europa conference speakers

schoolboy Prof Ralston worked alongside Brian Hope-Taylor to excavate the timber hall at Doon Hill, East Lothian. Later he would excavate a similar timber hall at Balbridie, Fife, which was also expected to date to the early medieval period. However, radiocarbon dates showed that it was instead an early Neolithic building, a discovery which would revolutionise our understanding of buildings from this early phase of prehistory. Much later, in retirement, Prof Ralston was able to prove that Doon Hill too was early Neolithic in date.

As the lecture made clear, Prof Ralston has been first and foremost a highly talented field archaeologist, working across Britain and France, both in the commercial and academic sectors. He has worked on large-scale excavations at Bourges in France, where a vast artisanal neighbourhood of bronze and iron jewellery makers constructed from the sixth century BC has been uncovered. Excavations at Mont Beuvray in Burgundy were undertaken as part of President Mitterrand's last Grand Project. In the 1980s, Prof Ralston embarked on an experiment in an Aberdeen council yard to demonstrate the phenomenon of vitrification, when stone is burned at such high temperature that it melts, with the process known to have occurred at several hilltop forts around Scotland; the experiment even featured on Arthur C. Clarke's Mysterious World television programme. Many readers will be familiar with Prof Ralston's contribution to the Atlas of Hillforts in Britain and Ireland, a resource hugely appreciated by researchers of the Iron Age.

On the following day, there was a tour of the National Museum of Scotland's spectacular prehistory galleries given by curators Fraser Hunter and Matt Knight. There was much discussion of the original design of the building and exhibition displays, and admiration for the astonishing collections. Thanks are extended to both curators for giving up their Sunday mornings and to Jess Bates who expertly organised the whole conference.

If anyone has comments on the revised format for the Europa conference or suggestions for how to improve the event, please do get in touch with Tessa Machling, our administrator (contact details on the front page). Next year's Europa 2025 conference will be held in Reading, in honour of Prof Martin Bell.

Correction: Winner of the Peter Clark Award 2024

We apologise to Francis Wenban-Smith, for a mistake in the last edition of PAST which stated that the winner of this year's Peter Clark Award would be Keith Parfitt. Keith was, of course, recipient of the award in 2022.

This year's Peter Clark Award is given to Francis Wenban-Smith, who will have been presented with his award at the Sara Champion lecture in October. Francis is a researcher in Palaeolithic archaeology and Pleistocene geology, who has worked tirelessly to ensure that Palaeolithic sites and evidence are recorded and recovered as part of major infrastructure and development projects, particularly in south-east England.

Subscription reminder

We would kindly like to remind you that subscriptions will be due on 1 January 2025. Please renew online or using the enclosed form. If you are a UK taxpayer, remember that your subscription is eligible for Gift Aid, which is a valuable source of income for the Society. Please check that you are up to date with payments. If you are unsure about your membership or want to query your payment status, please email admin@prehistoricsociety.org.



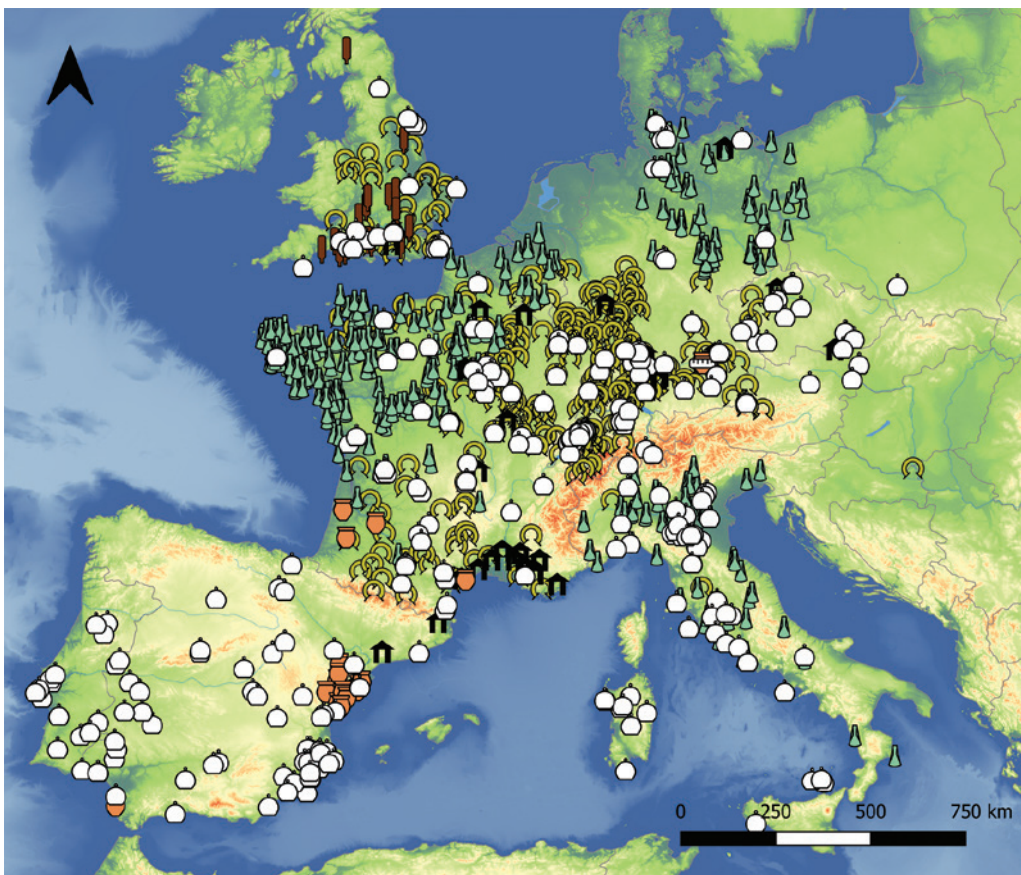
Joseph Déchelette Prize: feedback

In 2022, I was lucky enough to be awarded the 4th Joseph Déchelette European Archaeology Prize for my doctoral thesis, defended in 2019 and published in 2022: *'Poids et de Mesure. Les instruments de pesée en Europe occidentale durant les âges des Métaux (XIVe-IIIe s. a.C.). Conception, usages et utilisateurs'* (available at: <https://una-editions.fr/de-poids-et-de-mesure/>). This prize, awarded every two years by the Joseph Déchelette Association and a number of partners including the Prehistoric Society, aims to promote post-doctoral work on Late Prehistoric Europe by providing funding, invitations to research residencies and support for the organisation of an international conference at the French National Archaeology Museum (Saint-Germain-en-Laye).

My research focuses on the measurement of mass, capacity and length in Europe during the Bronze and Iron Ages. I am particularly interested in how these practices shaped socio-economic relations within and between societies. Measurement, in its broadest sense, encompasses a variety of phenomena ranging from approximate estimates to the precise definition of a value according to a given standard. Although such a process may seem anecdotal, it is involved in the implementation of numerous practices ranging from the technical action of determining precise quantities to produce a product – that can be a metallic artefact as well as a medicine – to the management and administration of agricultural land and products to ensure the subsistence of a community.

Measurement is therefore everywhere. In archaeology, this is not without its difficulties, because measurement practices can leave their mark on a very wide variety of materials (stone, metal, ceramics) as well as material manifestations (finished objects, semi-products, metal fragments, vases, silos, granaries, management of urban and rural space, etc.). Working on these issues means taking into account very large corporuses that have traditionally been of interest to different specialisms. Such research also leads to the production of a large number of negative results, as not all the samples tested comply with metrological considerations.

However, once these obstacles have been overcome, the implications of such research can considerably transform our vision of past societies. Understanding the tools available to people in terms of quantification and measurement enables us to understand the socio-economic mechanisms at work. For example, a population whose management is based on common farming, collectivisation under the supervision of a public authority and redistribution will favour tools and infrastructures adapted to such practices (land effectively divided up, collectivised storage areas, containers dedicated to individual redistribution). In contrast, a population based on a market economy will tend to show signs of private appropriation of land, generating major disparities, storage areas are privatised, and measurement tools are individualised and adapted to mercantile rules. These issues are still in their very early stages, but they offer very interesting prospects for the future.



Distribution map of the data studied for metrological questions in Western and Central Europe



Oppidum of Berniquaut (Sorèze, France)

Winning the prize has been particularly useful in helping me to refine and deepen this research, particularly by giving me the means to build up a large corpus and carry out a number of more in-depth case studies. This inventory work now makes it possible to compile almost 29,000 markers and proxies analysed from a metrological point of view across Western and Central Europe. This was made possible thanks in particular to one of the study periods I was offered, which led me to carry out extensive bibliographical work in the LEIZA library (Mainz, Germany). These studies will enable us to continue to improve our knowledge of measurement practices during Late Prehistory, their complexity and their influence on economic and societal relationships and constructions.

On a more practical level, the prize also gave me the time I needed to mount an application for a French national call for projects (AAP ANR Access ERC), which I won in 2023. This support is now offering me a two-year postdoctoral position that will give me the opportunity to continue and refine my research, particularly with a view to preparing an application for the ERC Starting Grants 2025.

It was also in this context that I was able to put together an application to relaunch excavations at the Berniquaut *oppidum* in southern France, the first campaign of which took place in 2024. The site has demonstrated its full potential, with significant levels of well-preserved Iron Age occupation, and we hope to be able to continue the work in 2025.

I am therefore very grateful to the Déchelette Association for helping me to take my research to the next level with the award of this prize. I now hope to be able to continue this process in the coming years.

Thibaud Poigt (thibaud.poigt@gmail.com), UMR Ausonius, Université Bordeaux-Montaigne, France

Our representative on the jury for this prestigious prize, Sophia Adams, reports that the winner of the 5th Joseph Déchelette Prize was Carole Quatrelièvre, a post-doctoral fellow at the Christian-Abrecht University in Kiel, Germany. Her research focuses on the European Iron Age, particularly focusing on the construction of Gaulis, and social and economic connections between the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean.

Research request: phallic objects from the British or Irish Neolithic to Early Bronze Age

Sarah Dawes, at student at University of Exeter, is making a study of these for an undergraduate dissertation and would welcome information, particularly about excavated examples since 2007. She will be considering phallic objects of any material: stone, chalk or wood, both carved and unmodified 'natural' examples. Items such as carved balls, deliberate arrangements as in the Durrington Walls 'sex pit' or figurines with obvious representations of genitalia (or holes for such attachments) are also of interest. Confidentiality will be respected if required, otherwise any response will of course be fully acknowledged and credited in the finished work.

Please contact Sarah Dawes on sd801@exeter.ac.uk

PAST has a new editor!

The current editor of PAST, Susan Greaney, is moving on to be part of the editorial team for Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society. Since 2021, she has overseen the collation of ten issues of PAST (98 to 108), including an update of the format and look of the newsletter to celebrate Issue No. 100. In this time, she has also completed her PhD, and moved on from being Senior Properties Historian at English Heritage to a new role as lecturer in archaeology at University of Exeter.



ceptual frameworks to the archaeological funerary record. She has recently published excavations at Sculptor's Cave, a later prehistoric mortuary site in north-east Scotland, and is currently employed at the University of York on the ERC-funded COMMIOS Project, which is exploring the bioarchaeology of Iron Age populations in Britain and the near Continent. She is also a Senior Lecturer teaching prehistoric archaeology at Canterbury Christ Church University in Kent.

From 1 January 2025, the new editor of PAST will be Lindsey Büster, a specialist in the later prehistory of Britain and Europe. Her PhD was on later prehistoric roundhouses in Britain, and her research interests include the interactions between ritual and domestic life, and the application of contemporary con-

Susan would like to thank all contributors to PAST in recent years. Please continue to support Lindsey by submitting articles and notes about prehistoric archaeology to PAST; it's a great way to communicate news of discoveries, provide project updates and share musings with the wider membership and beyond.

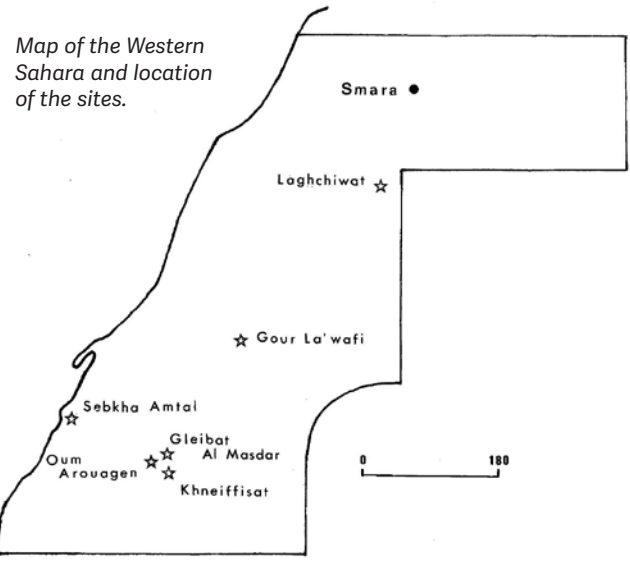
Some rock engravings in Western Sahara

Many prehistoric rock art engravings have been already discovered in Western Sahara, mainly east and south-east of the city of Smara. Less well-known are the sites of the Tiris and Zemmour regions, in the far south of the territory. A recent visit to some of these sites has enabled the collection of new images and observations. Far from being an inventory, here are readings of the subjects, which lead to useful remarks.

Laghchiwat is a very large rock art site, with thousands of subjects and probably the most important of the region. A single inventory is currently being compiled. There are an unusual number of giraffes, some of them measuring more than a metre. Some show reticulated coats (2), a rare observation, and in one instance, a giraffe with udder (1), not previously recorded. Surprisingly, the site of Laghchiwat shows depictions of hippos (3) in a region which is a complete desert today.

The site of Gour La' wafi stands amid a group of twelve small hills, two of them with engravings. The action of the sand winds and the natural erosion have led to irretrievable destructions. Observed here were five giraffes, two elephants, an archer and a man holding an axe (very likely a metallic weapon), a total of around sixteen subjects. There are also two very smart drawings of antelopes (1).

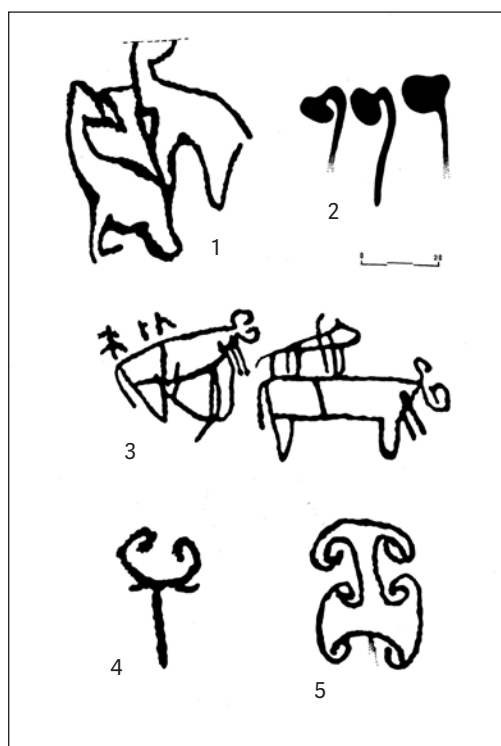
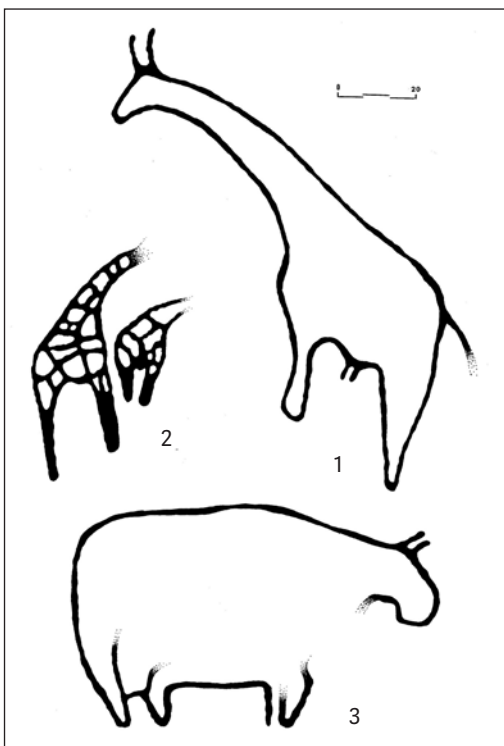
Sebkha Amtal is a rock art site near the ocean. The subjects are not numerous (around thirty drawings) with bovids, ostriches and inscriptions. This site is very probably younger than the other examples. There are unpublished drawings of pecked out axes, which could be the southernmost images of this type of weapon (2). They are numerous in southern Morocco and the High Atlas Mountains and have been



already carefully studied as clear evidence of the Moroccan Bronze Age.

From the site of Gleibat Al Masdar, there are images of chariots and bovids, already known (3). The animal on the back of the bovid on the right is probably a lion. Both bovids show neck pendants. Far more interesting is the way scrolled horns are engraved. There is a link between this image and the first step of the symbol of a bovid (4). One step further and we end in a very stylish graphic pun (5). Other graphic puns (back-to-back bovids imitating a butterfly) can be seen on the sites of Oum Arouagen and Khneiffisat (where there are around thirty subjects, including four giraffes).

Alain Rodrigue, (diazdiego56@gmail.com), independent researcher



Left: Rock engravings of Laghchiwat.

Right: Rock engravings of Gour La' wafi (1), Sebkhha Amtal (2) and Gleibat Al Masdar (3-5).

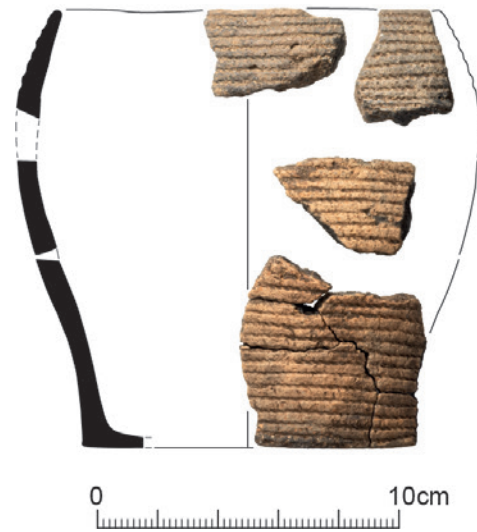
All-Over-Cord Grooved Ware from a prehistoric landscape near Wallingford

Excavations by Oxford Archaeology in 2017–18 at Slade End Farm and Winterbrook, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, revealed a rich prehistoric landscape. Discoveries included groups of early, middle and late Neolithic pits, early Neolithic burials, possible middle Neolithic ring-ditches, Beaker-period pits, middle Bronze Age enclosures and trackways, some associated with a diversity of funerary remains, and numerous areas of Iron Age settlement.

One of the most intriguing discoveries was a near-complete profile of a small Grooved Ware pot from Slade End Farm. This has 'All-Over-Cord' decoration, thin-walled and well-fired, with a fine grog temper. These are characteristics of early Beakers, although its ovoid shape reveals its classification as Grooved Ware of the Durrington Walls style. The pit also produced sherds from other Grooved Ware pots. It can be seen as a hybrid: Grooved Ware shape, but Beaker technology and decoration.

Sherds from similar pots have been discovered before, but not as complete as this example, for example from West Kennet palisaded enclosures and Duck's Meadow, Marlborough, both in Wiltshire. A radiocarbon date from a charred hawthorn stone from the pit it was discovered in belongs to 2625–2470 cal BC (95% probability; SUERC-95128, 4034±21 BP). This is probably at least a generation, perhaps more likely a century or possibly even more, *before* the introduction of Beakers (beginning 2475–2360 cal BC at 95% probability, or 2450–2385 cal BC at 68% probability, as estimated by the Beaker People Project).

DNA analysis has recently reignited the interpretation of the Beaker 'package' being brought by immigrant invaders, displacing the Neolithic people and their material culture. Relatedly, Gibson has recently characterised Grooved Ware and Beakers as belonging to very different traditions with little influence on one another. Although the genetic evidence is



The small Grooved Ware pot from Slade End Farm with unusual All-Over-Cord decoration

not in doubt, many questions remain regarding the extent of cross-channel interactions in the centuries leading up to the earliest Beaker burials in Britain, not least due to the significant gap in DNA samples from southern Britain during this period. This little pot betrays a much bigger picture of a more complex relationship between Britain and the continent in the early third millennium cal BC. It seems that a review of the relationships between Grooved Ware, Beakers and continental pottery is needed.

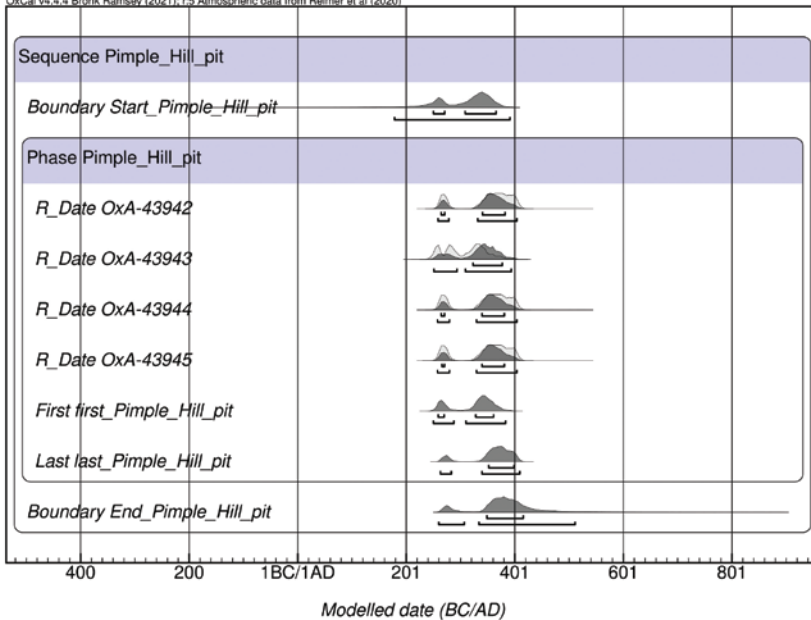
Excavations have now been published as a monograph, available from Pen & Sword Books, and available free online at: <https://knowledge.oxfordarchaeology.com/library/7072>

*Alex Davies (alex.davies@oxfordarchaeology.com),
Oxford Archaeology*

Pimple Hill: Exploring the Mesolithic in the West Midlands

Since 2008, over 10,000 artefacts have been recovered through amateur fieldwalking from Pimple Hill, on the Herefordshire/Worcestershire border. Situated on a north facing spur, the hill extends from a ridgeline 7 km north-west of Malvern. The artefacts form seven discrete scatters across seven fields, and currently represent the largest assemblage of Early Mesolithic material in Herefordshire. At present, the relationship between the scatters is unknown, but a current interpretation is that they collectively might represent a 'persistent place', or landscape locale revisited perhaps over generations. Initial analysis of the lithic artefacts suggests a heavy emphasis on microlith production, as well as cores, microblades, and other tools.

Previous research by the author using Laser Ablation Inductively-Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) and Machine Learning has identified at least five different geological sources for the lithic raw materials used at Pimple Hill. Of 26 artefacts analysed, one was made from flint found in the glacial deposits at Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire, six artefacts from the river terrace deposits of the Severn Valley/ Severn Estuary, six artefacts from the river terrace deposits of the Bristol Avon, two artefacts from the Chalk bedrock at Beer Head in Devon, and potentially 11 artefacts from the Chalk bedrock at Peacehaven in East Sussex. The site therefore represents an interesting opportunity to explore the potential connections within the interior of



Estimates for activity associated the infilling of the Pimple Hill pit. The OxCal CQL2 keywords and the brackets define the model. Distributions given in outline represent the calibrated radiocarbon results, while the black distributions represent the posterior density estimates

Britain, when much of the Mesolithic is considered to have had a coastal focus.

The Pimple Hill Excavations Project aims to investigate the extent, chronology, and nature of occupation of the site, as well as identify potential links between the scatters and beyond. In addition to this, a key aim is also to understand the surrounding environmental context. An interesting aspect to the site is the presence of tufaceous springs on the site, which deposit tufa in the stream beds as calcium carbonate comes out of solution from the spring waters. These remarkable features are known from other Mesolithic sites in southern England and may have been a significant reason for the occupation of Pimple Hill, in much the same way as people visit the nearby Malvern Hills for its spring waters today.

While the project has initially focussed on the scatters, with fieldwalking and lithic analysis, in 2016 a geophysical survey (magnetometry and resistivity) was conducted over the largest scatter, referred to as Site 2. The purpose of this was to establish if any buried features were present which may provide in-situ dating material which may relate to the lithic scatters, as well as provide evidence of occupation and surrounding environment. Site 2 is set low down on the side of Pimple Hill, facing the ridgeline within an incised valley. The geophysics here indicated several anomalies under the plough soil in different areas, with a concentration coinciding closely with the highest density of lithics on the surface.

In 2019, this concentration of anomalies was investigated through small-scale excavation, confirming the presence of in-situ features. Amongst those investigated was an irregularly shaped, charcoal-rich pit containing a single fill (context 1004). A soil sample was taken from this fill for environmental analysis, with charcoal samples identified by Dr Ceren Kabukcu (University of Liverpool).

Funding by the Prehistoric Society has allowed four radiocarbon measurements (OxA-43942 to OxA-43945) to be produced on short life charcoal pieces and a charred barley

seed. These four measurements are statistically consistent at 5% ($T'=3.1$; $T'5\%=7.8$; $df=3$), indicating these could be of the same actual age. If these samples are from a single event, this is estimated to date to *cal AD 255–405* (95% probability, or *cal AD 260–380* at 68% probability). However, as three of the measurements are from species-differentiated samples, meaning they are from different organisms, they may originate from different, but chronologically closely related events. A more neutral approach has been taken here to model the four measurements within a bounded Phase, representing them as a set of related but unordered events, but not assuming they



Top Geophysical survey underway at Site 2. Bottom: The start of gridded sieving of the ploughsoil over the geophysical anomalies

are from the same single event. The resultant model (*Pimple_Hill_pit_1*; figure 1) has a good agreement ($A_{\text{model}}=95$) and is considered here to be an appropriate modelling approach.

From the available evidence, activity associated with the pit began in *cal AD 250-385* (95% probability, or *cal AD 255-365* at 68% probability: *first_Pimple_Hill_pit*), and ended in *cal AD 260-410* (95% probability, or *cal AD 350-400* at 68% probability; *last_Pimple_Hill_pit*). The evidence estimates this activity spanned *0-120 years* (95% probability, or *0-50 years* at 68% probability).

These dates, and therefore the pit now indicate previously unknown Roman activity at Pimple Hill, adding to the history of land use and occupation in the area. While unexpected, this possibly demonstrates a greater potential for Mesolithic features to be preserved in underlying deposits, despite the extensive arable farming in the field where Site 2 is located. Further investigation through geoarchaeology, test pitting, and environmental analyses of the recovered soil samples will help in understanding this. Further steps include continuing to investigate the features identified in the geophysics,

both in terms of the Mesolithic occupation of Pimple Hill, but also to explore the nature of this Roman activity. There is also work to be done on assessing the tufa springs and the relevance they have to the archaeology, with insights to be gained from investigating the location of fragments of speleothem that have been recovered close to Site 2 and the main spring on site.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the Prehistoric Society for their generous funding of radiocarbon dating and archival materials, John Piprani (University of Manchester) for providing equipment throughout the project, Nick Overton for help with reporting of the radiocarbon dating and comments on this report, and our volunteers for all their hard work.

Progress of our work can be followed on our website: <https://pimplehilldig.wordpress.com/>

Dr Tom Elliot (tom.elliott@outlook.com),
Independent Researcher

“Solving the servant problem”: excavating a cartoon about prehistory from 1927

David Ghilchick’s cartoon is from *Punch* from 1927. The caption reads:

SOLVING THE SERVANT PROBLEM. We find that a wireless installation in the kitchen keeps our domestic in a frame of mind conducive to better service.

and the radio presenter is saying:

... on studying the remains of the Pithecanthropus found by Professor Doodle at Mumbledown we observe...

The domestic servant is so entranced that she burns the ironing.

So, why might this have been funny for *Punch*’s wide middle- and upper-class readership? Were they invited to laugh at the supposed inaccessibility of the programme, the notion of a domestic servant engaged by prehistory, or the aspiration to afford both a servant and a radio? Here, the context for the cartoon is excavated using very recent work by Laura Carter, on the origins of popular social history in Britain, and by Jan Lewis, on the development of BBC radio archaeology broadcasting.

First of all, the prehistory is patently ludicrous. Mumbledown does sound like a promising southern English archaeological context, akin to Piltdown. However, regular mentions of *Pithecanthropus erectus* in, say, the equally widely read *Illustrated London News*, make their Javan habitat explicit. Here, Ghilchick might be playing on reader knowingness, which is assumed to be greater than the servant’s.

Professor Doodle is undoubtedly male, as the UK female Professoriate was derisory until the 21st century. And, from Laura Carter’s research, we may identify him as Charles H. B. Quennell, who, with Marjorie Quennell, wrote the 1921 *History of Everyday Life in the Old Stone Age*. Carter recounts how, following Charles’ 1924 broadcasts, the Quennells gave a 1927 radio course for schools on ‘Everyday Things of the Past’, but Charles “spoke too quickly and used specialist language”.

Perhaps Ghilchick is playing on disdain for BBC pretensions. However, the suggestion that the domestic servant might



A 1927 cartoon by D. L. Ghilchick, published in *Punch*, Vol 127, p. 308 (with permission of Topham Partners LLP)

actually be enjoying the programme is a backhanded complement to both her and the BBC.

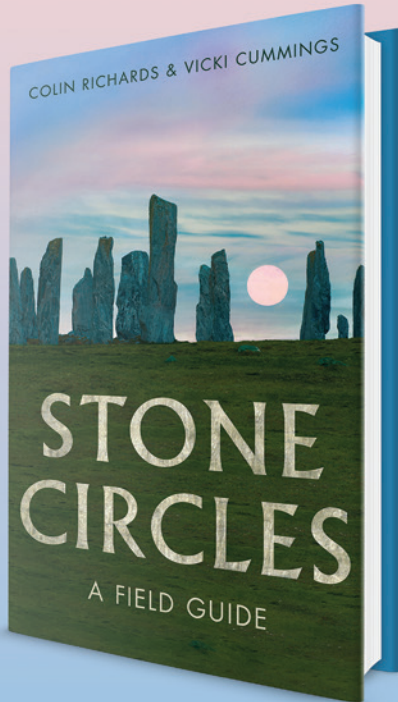
Jan Lewis notes that, from the early 1920s, the professionalisation of archaeology paralleled the development of radio broadcasting. Educated people were expected to be acquainted with archaeology, so it was a natural topic for wider liberal arts and educational broadcasting. While there was considerable coverage of more exotic archaeology, such as the Tutankhamun finds, there was also sustained regional and national treatment of prehistory. The BBC was granted a UK monopoly in 1927 as state broadcaster, so burgeoning radio audiences would all hear the same National programming. Thus, educational and talk programmes were aimed at a broad mass of listeners.

Laura Carter further observes that the Quennells were at the forefront of a new approach to popular social history, which subsequently found a home on the radio. While rooted in culture-historical and progressivist notions, this was based on taking the perspectives of ordinary people rather than great men and women. Contrary to a reading of the cartoon as belittling the domestic servant, from a programme maker perspective it is perfectly reasonable that she might get something out of a broadcast on prehistory.

During World War One, women entered the workforce to replace male cannon fodder. Many were former domestic servants, and, at the end of the war, many expected to remain in better paid employment: hence the 'servant problem' beloved of contemporary cartoons. After the War, the British economy was flat, so the number of households that could afford servants declined. At the same time, there was a steady increase in the availability of electric devices, like washing machines and vacuum cleaners, which housewives and working women were expected to use themselves. While the UK was very quick to embrace radio, after broadcasts began in 1922, by 1925 only 27% of households had access to a set. Thus, there may be grain of truth in the suggestion that being able to listen to the radio might offer some scant compensation for less well-paid drudgery.

Overall, this cartoon, like so much British humour then and now, concerns both social class and gendered work. We can only hope that a domestic servant browsing *Punch* was as amused as her employer, albeit for very different reasons. Nonetheless, this cartoon offers an intriguing glance at public understanding of prehistory one hundred years ago.


Greg Michaelson (*g.michaelson.20@abdn.ac.uk*),
University of Aberdeen



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