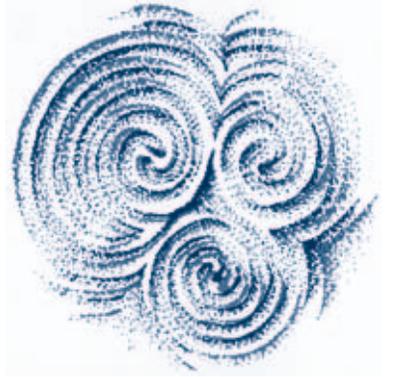


# PAST



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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY

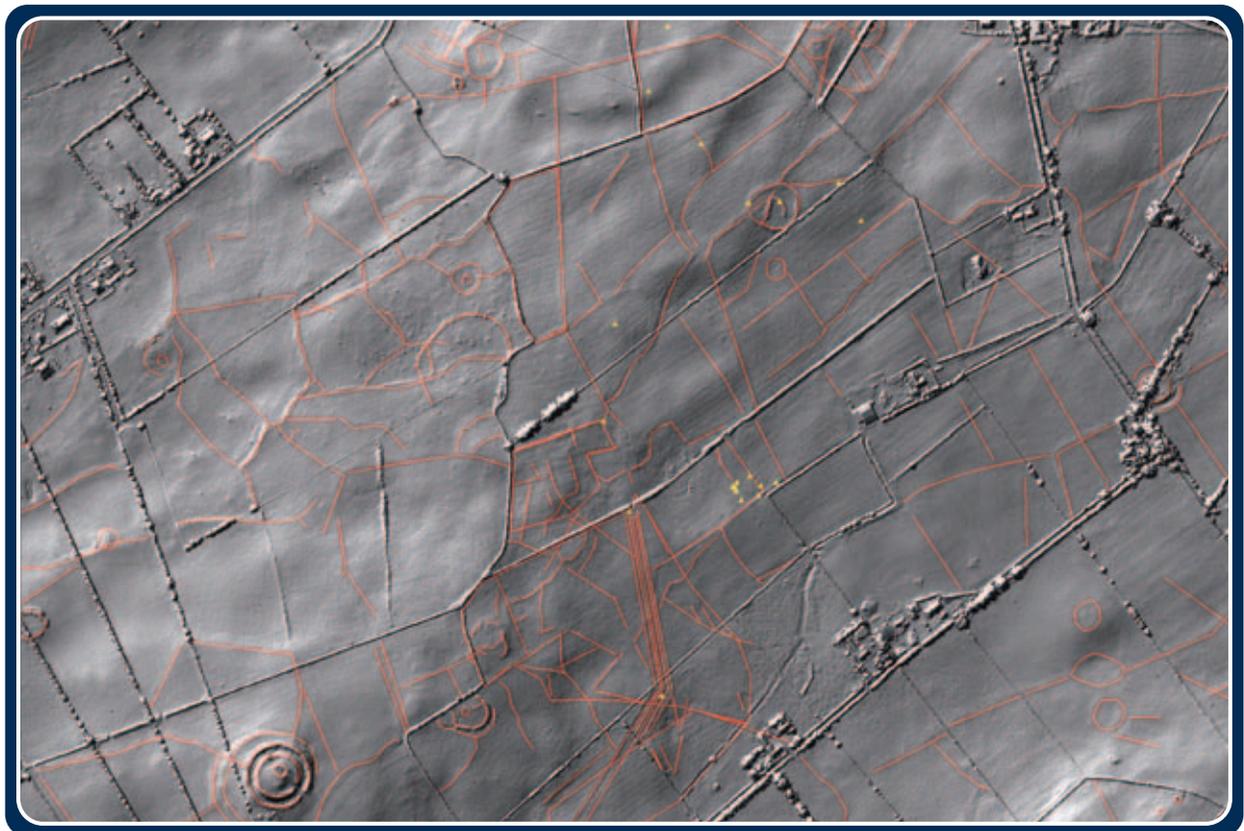
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<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prehistoric/>

## THE LOUGHCREW LANDSCAPE PROJECT

Megalithic sites in isolation are often impressive, both intrinsically and through their setting in the natural landscape. This is clearly so for the Loughcrew passage tomb cemeteries on the Slieve na

Calliagh hill and adjacent Carnbane West and Patrickstown summits in northwest County Meath in Ireland. The clusters of cairns that occupy the top of the Loughcrew hills include the well-known Cairn T with its megalithic art and passage alignment towards the equinoctial sunrise. Together, the cairns are the largest concentration of megalithic monuments in the central plain of Ireland. The Loughcrew hills, as is noted in all early publications,



*Digital surface model at 50 cm interval of part of Summerbank and Ballinvally townlands, relief shaded from the north-west, with transcription of field and monument details (red), and re-surveyed location of standing stones (yellow triangles) (image: C. Roughley).*

The copy date for PAST 52 is 1 March 2006. Contributions to Joanna Brück, School of Archaeology, Newman Building, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland. Email: [joanna.bruck@ucd.ie](mailto:joanna.bruck@ucd.ie) Contributions on disc or as e-mail attachments are preferred (either word 6 or rtf files) but hardcopy is also accepted. Illustrations can be sent as drawings, slides, prints, tif or jpeg files. The book reviews editor is Dr Mike Allen, Wessex Archaeology, Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wilts, SP4 6EB. Email: [m.allen@wessexarch.co.uk](mailto:m.allen@wessexarch.co.uk). Queries over subscriptions and membership should go to the Society administrator Tessa Machling at the London address above.

have a commanding view of the central Irish landscape, with there being only slight disagreement of how many of the counties of Ireland can be seen from them on a clear day, 18 being regularly quoted. However, such a statistic denies the impressive immediate landscape prospect across the central lowlands. The central position in midland Ireland is emphasised by the hills being the watershed between the river Boyne to the south, its tributary the Blackwater to the northeast, and the Shannon to the west.

More recently, archaeological attention has been drawn to the land below Slieve na Calliagh, in particular to the north. Here Conor Newman noted for the first time a cursus-like monument 150 metres to the southwest of the Ballinvally stone circle, in a landscape in which Elizabeth Twohig has identified a range of monuments, including the stone circle, a henge, standing stones, open-air rock art, and cist burial sites, all of which point to a ritual landscape below the passage tombs that, if not contemporary with their initial construction, may nevertheless reflect their ongoing influence on the use of this landscape.

The Loughcrew Project is studying in detail the wider environs of Slieve na Calliagh. The project developed from Elizabeth Twohig's interest in Corinne Roughley's doctoral research use of aerial photogrammetry to study the location of megalithic monuments in the Carnac region of Brittany and how it might be applied to Loughcrew. This coincided with Colin Shell's work on the potential of a new technique, airborne laser scanning (lidar - light detecting and ranging), to obtain an even more detailed definition of the landscape than possible by photogrammetry, and explore its use both to detect sites and to monitor their state of survival. A lidar survey of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site, the first major field assessment of the technique, confirmed its potential both to discover new sites and extend known ones through its ability to detect slight surviving surface evidence of buried archaeology. The value of the lidar data also was immediately appreciated for computer-based study of sites and their inter-relationships in the landscape. Stonehenge is in a still largely arable landscape. The lidar survey of Loughcrew provided the opportunity to investigate its use in a predominantly improved grassland environment. In this, Gill Swanton has brought her monument recording expertise to the assessment of the lidar features in the field.

For archaeological purposes, lidar survey involves the measurement of the height of the ground and the buildings and vegetation upon it, at an average spacing of between 0.5 and 1m, to create a digital model of the landscape. The survey is built up by the laser scanning side to side through a small angle

(typically 10-15°) as the aircraft flies a straight path, measuring from 25,000 to 100,000 points per second. By continually measuring the position of the aircraft with a differential Global Positioning System and recording the aircraft's changing attitude in flight with an onboard inertial measurement unit, in the best circumstances the point heights are measured to a 15cm positional accuracy in x, y and z, defined with respect to the national survey grid. The digital surface model can be processed to remove the buildings and trees to create a digital terrain model so that monument intervisibility can be studied. For the Loughcrew landscape, this is especially valuable as field walls built from stone clearance interrupt completely the appreciation in the field of the relationships between the standing stones and other monuments.

The first stage of the project, funded by the Irish Heritage Council 2003 Archaeology Grant Scheme, surveyed a 5x6 km area around Slieve na Calliagh with the Cambridge University Unit for Landscape Modelling's airborne lidar, and photogrammetrically surveyed a surrounding 10x12 km area. Relief shading of the lidar model with low oblique lighting picks out the fine surface detail, incidentally including the remains of the later field clearance operations. This has enabled many new sites to be discovered and over 150 km of ancient field system to be transcribed, with clear evidence of the survival of surface features in the stone-cleared, improved grassland. It also became apparent that many of the sites recorded in the digital Register of Monuments and Places were not accurately located.

With the aid of second stage support from the Heritage Council under its Archaeology 2005 Grant



*Measurement and differential GPS location of previously unrecorded standing stone (photo: G. R. Swanton)*

Scheme, it has been possible to take forward the way in which the lidar data is used, by using field checking to resolve interpretation of ditch/bank combinations apparent in the lidar data, to accurately locate with differential GPS and total station survey the standing stones, which were not detected by the lidar, and refine the digital transcription of the sites and field systems. Techniques have been developed to create the accurate digital terrain model from the digital surface model so that the monument inter-relationships can be investigated, including the progression from one standing stone to the next across the landscape.

In the ground checking, several of the new sites have been geophysically investigated, including an interesting, previously unrecorded, set of small enclosures with low surrounding bank and no obvious ditch, that occupy particular topographic locations. Geophysics has also investigated the relationship of the 'cursus' monument to a meandering field bank which it cuts, as well as examining its own structure including the position of the ditch cuts. A pair of aligned post/pit features have been found associated with a standing stone, and an extensive area of possible pits around a newly recorded rock-art site.

In the course of surveying the exact location of standing stones using differential GPS and total station, new ones have been recorded. These are not newly discovered - their owners were already well aware of them. The stone shown in the photograph here faces towards Slieve na Calliagh and the Ballinvally henge, from which it is clearly visible. Whilst recording this flat standing stone, Gill Swanton found a second pillar stone in an adjacent field.

The most significant of the newly recorded sites is an open-air cup and ring rock-art location in the area already known for a concentration of this type of art. The site is probably the most extensive example of cup-and-ring decoration known so far in Ireland outside of County Kerry, with over 65 separate elements identified. Elizabeth Twohig and Ciaran O'Reilly had previously noted cup marks on the Mass Rock at the foot of Slieve na Calliagh. A Minolta Vi900 terrestrial laser scanner has been used to record these new sites and document all the existing open-air rock-art, both in the field and in the National Museum of Ireland collections. This is being used to assess its value for clarifying the recording and interpretation of art on open, weathered, surfaces.

As well as realising the high research potential of lidar, this study has emphasised the contribution it can make to planning and landscape management.



*Panel of new cup and ring rock art site (photo: G. R. Swanton)*

The survey data will assist in the current checking of the Register of Monuments and Places for County Meath. Following from a presentation to Loreto Guinan, the Meath Heritage Officer, and her Planning colleagues, it is hoped that examples can be used from the survey to illustrate the new County Meath Development Plan, with the possibility of the Loughcrew landscape being considered as a special archaeological area. It is not without a certain irony that one notices the cairns and their landscape are signposted as part of a Boyne Valley tourist route.

*Colin Shell, Dept. of Archaeology, University of Cambridge, Cambridge CB2 3DZ.  
Email: cas4@hermes.cam.ac.uk*

## **EXCAVATIONS AT PEȘTERA UNGUREASCĂ IN THE CHEILE TURZII GORGE (TURDA, TRANSYLVANIA)**

Cheile Turzii is located a few kilometres southwest of Turda, in central Transylvania. It is a natural reserve of the limestone of the Trascăului Mountains formation, crossed by the Hășdatelor River, which flows in a northwest-southeast direction through a narrow gorge some 3 km long. The gorge is very rich in natural caves, 42 of which have yielded traces of prehistoric or historic occupation. Of particular importance for the prehistory of the region is the cave at Peștera Ungurească which opens on the right side of the gorge at the bottom of a steep cliff called Preteler Vulturior. The cave, whose opening faces north-north-east, is some 76 m long.



*Excavations in progress in August 2003 (photograph by P. Biagi).*

The first research at this site was carried out by E. Orosz at the end of the nineteenth century. This was followed in the 1970s by the excavation of a test-trench, measuring 4x6 m, at the entrance of the cave by N. Vlassa. The excavations were resumed by the writer and G. Lazarovici of Reșița University in August 2003 and 2004. The new excavations, which were funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) and the Prehistoric Society, were carried out in order to check the stratigraphic series brought to light by Vlassa, the preliminary results of which had already been published. The sequence, some 1.50 m thick, is composed of ash and charcoal lenses, and sterile, sandy layers, in which various structures, including pits and fireplaces, were discovered. This sequence is of unique importance, because it is the only one to have yielded traces of

occupation. Occupation of the cave spans a long period of time from the Middle Neolithic (Lumea Nouă Culture) to the Bronze Age. At the bottom of this sequence, a layer, some 20 cm thick, containing almost exclusively micromammal remains, was discovered.

The 2003 and 2004 excavations were carried out over an area of some 5 m<sup>2</sup>. Given the absence of running water in close proximity to the cave, all the archaeological soil was carried down to the Hășdatelor River and wet-sieved through a 1 mm mesh. Most of the excavation was carried out in the left part of the trench, where the stratigraphy shows a well-detailed sequence, some 1 m thick, comprising Chalcolithic 'Toarte Pastilate' occupation. This lies beneath the Coțofeni occupation and above the Petrești levels. The lowermost 'Early Toarte Pastilate' level revealed the presence of one man-made structure delimited by a series of very small post-holes. Furthermore a clay kiln, rebuilt at least three times, was brought to light within the 'Middle Toarte Pastilate' levels. Four radiocarbon dates have been obtained from this latter part of the sequence. They show that this local aspect of the Transylvanian Chalcolithic most probably flourished during the period between the last two centuries of the fifth and the first two centuries of the fourth millennium BC.



*Obsidian and flint artefacts from the Toarte Pastilate layers (photograph by P. Biagi).*

Of particular importance is the date obtained from a fragment of a *Bos primigenius* tibia (GrN-29102, 3990-3790 cal BC at 2 sigma), collected from the same layer in which the kiln was discovered and

providing a likely date for this structure. Several gold beads, some 2 mm in diameter, and a rectangular gold plaquette were collected from the same layer. This should indicate that the kiln was most probably linked with the moulding of gold items.

The wet-sieving of the Toarte Pastilate layers led to the collection of a great quantity of micromammal remains, among which are rodents, fish and bird bones, charred hazelnuts and *Cornus mas* fruits and charcoal pieces. The chipped stone assemblage is very rich. It comprises both obsidian and flint artefacts. The hydration analysis of the obsidian is currently under way in order to define its provenance. Apart from the cores, retouched and unretouched tools, the obsidian assemblage also includes a large number of waste flakes indicating that obsidian tools were manufactured inside the cave.

To sum up: the excavations carried out at Peștera Ungurească in 2003-2004 have revealed that this cave site is of particular importance for various reasons. First of all, the cave sequence has shown that at least five cultural aspects, from the Middle Neolithic to the Bronze Age, are represented inside the cave; second, the radiocarbon dating of the Toarte Pastilate horizon has defined, for the first time, the absolute chronology of this Transylvanian Chalcolithic aspect; and third, the peculiarity of the structural remains and gold items brought to light during the 2004 season suggest that the cave played a special role within the Chalcolithic community that inhabited the Cheile Turzii Gorge during this period.

*Paolo Biagi, Ca' Foscari University, Venice*

## FLINT ARTEFACTS IN THE BGS FOSSIL COLLECTION

Archaeologists probably do not immediately think of the British Geological Survey as a repository of specimens of particular interest to them. It is certainly true that archaeology does not figure much in this organisation's current activities. However, it is worth pointing out that the BGS is 160 years old, and over this time has amassed an enormous collection of rock and fossil specimens, several million of which are housed in its national collections at Keyworth, near Nottingham. Among these is a small number of artefacts ranging from relatively recent (in human terms) to Palaeolithic, including a set of flint axes and other tools.

Assembly of the BGS collections began in the mid nineteenth century. Shortly after the establishment of the Survey, the first Director, Henry de la Beche, with the support of the Prince Consort, oversaw the opening of the Museum of Practical Geology at 28

Jermyn Street, off Piccadilly, in May 1851, the same year as the Great Exhibition. This housed the Survey's growing collections until it reached the limits of its capacity and was superseded, in July 1935, by the art deco building of the Geological Museum in South Kensington. However, even this became too small, and a further move of the collections to the new BGS headquarters at Keyworth took place in 1985, while the old museum was integrated into the galleries of the Natural History Museum. At Keyworth, the specimens are carefully and securely housed, but there is little museum display area, and few other than professional geologists have had the chance to examine them.

It was not until the late 1990s that resources were earmarked for construction of the digital catalogue of the fossil collections, known as "Palaeosaurus". During this, renewed interest was triggered in the presence of some 526 registered specimens of flint implements along with the other palaeontological specimens of Holocene age. By drawing attention to them, we hope to stimulate archaeological interest and so gain a better understanding of their significance.



*Flint axe [collection number GSM 73313, scale in centimetres] from Knight's Pit, near Paine's Field, Farnham: presented by H. Bury in 1946 and described as a Late Acheulian hand axe from Pleistocene river terrace gravels.*

© British Geological Survey (Natural Environment Research Council), 2003.

There is clear overlap between geological interest in Holocene sediments and history in the British Isles and that of archaeologists and historians. For geologists, the BGS fossil collection is a working resource of fundamental importance in understanding palaeo-environments and establishing stratigraphic correlations. Worked flints and flint implements can play an important role here in helping to decipher palaeogeography and palaeoclimates. In previous years, the central location and importance of the Geological Museum helped establish the collection as a national repository for specimens of worked flint, most of which were donated or submitted as enquiries. There was a body of archaeological expertise within the Survey's staff, and the museum provided excellent public display areas and general enquiries were answered.

This is less the case today, not least because the stress of moving such a venerable institution out of London disrupted the continuity of record keeping, creating a hiatus that is only now being closed. The specimen records provide only limited insight into the potential archaeological significance of the artefacts, which ought to be better known if only for



Flint axe [collection number GSM 62836, scale in centimetres] from Milton Street Pit, Swanscombe, Kent: presented by A. S. Kennard in 1940 and described as an Acheulian hand axe from Pleistocene (Hoxnian) middle gravel.

© British Geological Survey (Natural Environment Research Council), 2003.

their educational value in the East Midlands. Re-examination by specialists in Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and later flint artefacts would be most welcome.

What are these samples? Among them are impressive Palaeolithic axes, some labelled as "Acheulian", as well as examples of Bronze Age tools including an exquisitely fashioned flint dagger. The artefacts come from a range of localities, many very well known. Most are within the south and southeast of England, but the range extends to northern England and southern Scotland.

The following are selected highlights, with information taken from specimen labels and Palaeosaurus records:

- 46 Eolithic '*worked flints*' from the Plateau Gravels near Ash and Ightham, Kent (donor B. Harrison, 1896).
- 2 '*Clactonian flakes*' from Hoxne, Suffolk (British Association, 1896, and unknown donor, 1938).
- 12 '*Clactonian flakes and implements*' from Lions Point, Clacton, Essex (donor S. Haggleden Warren, 1938).
- 36 implements including an '*Acheulian hand-axe*' from Hoxnian Middle Gravel at Swanscombe, Kent (donor A. S. Kennard, 1940).
- 81 '*Palaeolithic implements*' including '*Early Chellean pick*', '*Levalloisian hand-axes*' and '*Acheulean hand-axes*' from Pleistocene river terrace gravels around Farnham, Surrey (H. Bury, 1946).
- 9 '*flint implements*' from Wookey Hole '*hyaena den*', Somerset, (donor uncertain).
- 12 '*flint implements*' from Cissbury, Sussex, collected during BGS field work.
- 24 Early Bronze Age '*flint flakes & cores*' from flint mines at Findon, Sussex, collected during BGS field work.
- 17 '*flint implements and flakes*' from Blackpatch Flint mines, Clapham, Sussex, collected during BGS field work (referred to in The Times on 27 October 1978).
- 14 implements including '*stone rubbers, worked bone, flint flakes, flint scraper*' from Pinhole Cavern and Robin Hood's Cave, Cresswell Crag, Derbyshire, collected during BGS field work.
- 9 implements of Pleistocene age and variously identified as '*Magdalenian*', '*Proto-Solutrean*', '*Aurignacian*', '*Mousterian*' and '*Acheulean*' from caves near Torquay, Devon. These specimens were donated by the Geological Society in 1911 and formed part of the collection of the Reverend J. MacEnery from before 1859.
- 9 '*Middle Acheulian*' flint implements from Furze Platt on the outskirts of Maidenhead, Berkshire (donated by Mrs. H. G. Dines, 1965).
- 22 '*flint implements*' from fields at Elstead, Surrey (donated by Mrs. H. G. Dines, 1965).

- 17 'flint implements' from Pleistocene terrace gravels exposed in pits near Romsey, Hampshire (donated by H. Dewey, 1965).
- 8 'Acheulian flint implements' from Pleistocene terrace gravel at Warsash, Hampshire (donated by H. Dewey, 1965).
- 12 'flint implements' from Corfe Mullen, Wimborne, Dorset (donated by H. Dewey, 1965).
- 12 'flint implements' from Cams hall, Portsmouth Harbour, Hampshire (donated by H. Dewey, 1965).
- 10 'flint implements' from Bolberry, Kingsbridge, South Devon (donated by H. Dewey, 1965).
- 11 'flint implements' from near Bridlington, East Yorkshire (donated by H. Dewey, 1965).
- 24 'flint implements' from Warren Hill, Mildenhall, Suffolk (donated by H. Dewey, 1965).

The collection of flint artefacts is held at the BGS offices at Keyworth, near Nottingham. Examination is by appointment which should be arranged by contacting the Chief Curator, Dr Mike Howe ([+]115 936 3105: mhowe@bgs.ac.uk).

*N. J. Fortey, M. Howe, R. Sparham, P. Taylor and S. Wheeler*



*Flint dagger [collection number GSM 54121, scale in centimetres] from the surface of a ploughed field at Hardwick, near Cambridge: presented by R. J. Hodson in 1935 and described as "Early Bronze Age".*

© British Geological Survey (Natural Environment Research Council), 2003.

### Acknowledgements

This paper is published by permission of the Director of the British Geological Survey (NERC). The contribution made by the late Pauline Taylor is incorporated by kind permission of her family.

## THE CROATIA STUDY TOUR

Between 12 and 19 September 2005, a group of Society members, led by Dr Preston Miracle (University of Cambridge), spent a very full week looking at the prehistory of Croatia for this year's overseas study tour. The tour was organised by the Society in conjunction with Andante Travels. Roger M. Thomas (English Heritage), who retired from Council in June, represented the Society in place of the President, who was unfortunately unable to go.

The tour took in much of the Adriatic coast of Croatia, starting in the north (at Pula) and working south by coach and ferry to Dubrovnik. The group then flew to Zagreb (where the national archaeological museum was opened specially for the Society - it is normally closed on a Monday) and returned from Zagreb to London.

Thanks to Preston Miracle's extensive range of contacts in Croatia (he has been working there for over twenty years), it was possible to visit a wide range of sites, to see work in progress and to meet a number of Croatian prehistorians.

Perhaps the centre-piece of the tour was a series of visits to cave sites, most of them reached by an arduous walk (or 'leisurely hike', as Preston preferred to put it) through dramatic scenery. The first cave visited was Pupičina in Istria, the site of Preston's own excavations. This cave was occupied from the Late Upper Palaeolithic onwards. The second was Kopačina on the island of Brac, where Late Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Bronze Age remains have been found. The third was Mujina Pećina near Split, a Late Mousterian site. This visit caught the interest of the media, and an interview with Preston was filmed at the site and broadcast on Croatian TV later that day. The next was Vela Spila, on the island of Korcula - a huge cavern where recent excavations have produced abundant Late Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age material. We were most fortunate to be given a tour of the site by its excavator, Dinko Radić, who also showed us the museum where material from the excavations is displayed, and gave members the chance to handle material from the site. The final cave site which we visited was Nakovana, in the south of the country. Here, a previously undisturbed chamber was recently located by archaeologists who had been excavating at the front of the cave. In this chamber, a large and very phallic stalagmite



*Dinko Radić introduces the group to the site at Vela Spila.*

(possibly not in its original position) had been the focus of possibly ritual activity in the Hellenistic period.

Other sites visited included Neolithic sites on the present-day coastline of Istria (the sea-level has risen substantially since prehistoric times), Monkodonja Bronze Age hillfort (where Professor Bernard Hänsel of Berlin was excavating at the time of our visit), Bronze Age stone tumuli and fortifications on Brač Island, and the recently investigated Neolithic site of Danilo, where excavations have been led by Andrew Moore, Tony Legge and Marko Mendušić. The visit to the national museum in Zagreb allowed us to see the excellent (and newly redisplayed) prehistoric collections there.

Non-prehistoric diversions enjoyed by the group included the Roman 'arena' (amphitheatre) and other monuments in Pula, the astonishing remains of Diocletian's palace in Split and the defended coastal towns of Korčula and Dubrovnik. Much appreciated too were the local food and wine, the beautiful scenery, the fine September weather and the opportunity to swim in the invitingly warm and blue Adriatic Sea.

Perhaps what impressed the group the most, though, was the energy, and enthusiasm of the Croatian archaeologists who we met. We were warmly welcomed everywhere, and our Croatian colleagues gave generously of their time to make the tour the success that it was. Much is being discovered in Croatia, and the area clearly has a huge potential for prehistoric archaeology.

Particular thanks are due to Preston Miracle, Darko Komšo (Archaeological Museum of Istria, Pula), Marko Mendušić (Croatian Ministry of Culture, Šibenik), Damir Kliškić (Archaeological Museum, Split), Ivanka Kamenjarin (Kaštel Museum), Dinko Radić (Cultural Centre, Vela Luka), Ivan Pamić

(Nakovana Village), and Sanjin Mihelić (Archaeological Museum, Zagreb).

*Roger Thomas, Prehistoric Society Council member, 2002-2005*

## SOCIETY NEWS

This year's Sara Champion lecture was given by Dr Melanie Giles of the University of Manchester. Her thought-provoking and enjoyable talk, entitled *Seeing red: art, artefacts and colour in the Iron Age of Britain and Ireland*, explored the social significance of aesthetics, focusing in particular on the grave goods deposited with burials of the Arras culture of East Yorkshire. Drawing on recent writings in anthropology, Mel argued that the ability of Iron Age art to entrance the viewer gave it particular social efficacy. She considered the symbolic and sometimes even magical qualities of coloured and decorated objects, and convincingly examined the role that these would have played in shaping inter-personal relationships and in maintaining links between the living and the dead. The lecture was very much enjoyed by all present and stimulated plenty of discussion afterwards!



*Society President, Professor Miranda Aldhouse-Green (left), with Dr Melanie Giles (right).*

## PPS 71

*PPS 71* for 2006 is nearly ready for printing. Unfortunately, a recent close family bereavement meant that the Editor lost three crucial weeks in the production schedule. Every effort is being made to get the *Proceedings* out on time but members are asked, please, to bear with me - depending on how



*Current President, Professor Miranda Aldhouse-Green, presents her predecessor, Professor Graeme Barker, with a token of the Society's appreciation for all his work during his term of office.*

close to Christmas we get with the printing, you may not actually receive your copy until the New Year.

*Julie Gardiner, Editor, PPS*

## SOCIETY STUDY TOURS

Readers may be interested to know that arrangements for the UK Study Tour to Caithness and Sutherland in June 2006 are nearly complete; details and a booking form will be sent out with *PPS* 71. Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond the control of the Society, the proposed Overseas Study Tour to Austria in September 2006 has been cancelled, but has been rearranged for September 2007. Instead, it is hoped that the Society will visit Denmark in September 2006 – again, the booking form and further information will be circulated with *PPS*.

*Dave McOmish, Meetings Secretary*

## PREHISTORIC SOCIETY STUDENT STUDY TOUR

**Hidden Wessex - what you don't see from the road**  
Fri 28-Sun 30 April 2006

An affordable tour for students, with leading prehistorians as guides, of some of the important but less frequently visited monuments of Wessex. Further details can be obtained from the Administrative Assistant, The Prehistoric Society, Institute of Archaeology, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY, UK

## PREHISTORIC SOCIETY PRESENTS FOR CHRISTMAS

The Society still has merchandise for sale. Why not treat those loved ones to our exclusive jewellery, tee- and sweatshirts or a tie? All can be purchased from Julie Gardiner, Prehistoric Society, c/o Wessex Archaeology, Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury SP4 6EB. Please make your cheque out to The Prehistoric Society.

### Jewellery

Pendant/brooch	£28
Earrings (stud)	£26
Cufflinks	£32
Enamel badges	£1.50

### Ties

Polyester	£ 7.95
Silk	£14.95

### Teeshirts and sweatshirts

All one size, choice of red, green, gold, light blue, green, grey (please state preference and alternative)	
Teeshirts	£8
Sweatshirts	£18

Prices include VAT. Postage free in UK. Overseas P&P (t-shirts): £2 per order.

Overseas P&P (sweatshirts): £5 per order. Overseas postage for ties and jewellery is free.



## CONFERENCE NEWS

**Land and people: conference in honour of John G Evans**

Prehistoric Society and Cardiff University conference, Cardiff, March 24-26, 2006

The conference will explore a wide range of issues dear to the interests and life-time research of John. Sessions will reflect those interests and will embrace topics such as Neolithic people and landscapes,

Wessex chalklands, coastal sand dunes, northern European wetlands, snails in archaeology, and Pleistocene environments. Offers of papers on these and other topics specific to John's research interests are welcome. Papers of 30 minutes length are invited; colleagues who would prefer to offer a poster are also invited to contact the organisers. The conference organisers include Niall Sharples, Mike Allen, Terry O'Connor, Paul Davies and Alasdair Whittle. Write c/o Niall Sharples, School of History and Archaeology, Cardiff University, PO Box 909, Cardiff, CF10 3XU.

#### **Understanding monuments in their landscape**

Conference organised by Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in memory of Graham Ritchie  
Lecture Theatre, Royal Museum, Chambers Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1JF, April 29 2006

Programme and tickets will be available in February 2006 from the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Royal Museum, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF. Tel. 0131 247 4163; website [www.socantscot.org](http://www.socantscot.org); email [administration@socantscot.org](mailto:administration@socantscot.org)

#### **Understanding the Scottish Iron Age?**

Edinburgh, June 6, 2006

Day seminar organised by the First Millennium Studies Group. For further information, contact Dr Fraser Hunter, National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh, or email: [f.hunter@nms.ac.uk](mailto:f.hunter@nms.ac.uk)

#### **A New Dawn for the Dark Age? Shifting Paradigms in Mediterranean Iron Age Chronology**

XV UISPP Congress, Lisbon, September 4-9, 2006  
Call for papers

Conventional chronologies for the first half of the last millennium BC in the Mediterranean are still based largely on 'historical' dates and sources, despite the fact that dendro-dates and calibrated radiocarbon dates have come into increasing conflict with our established framework. In addition, recent discussions of chronological issues in different parts of the Mediterranean have all too often taken place in isolation from each other, rarely addressing the underlying methodological issues in a coherent manner. This colloquium will address these problems by bringing together scholars from all relevant areas of interest, be they experts in science-based dating methods, in Biblical, Phoenician and Greek archaeology, or any other field of Mediterranean Iron Age archaeology. For further information, please contact Dr. Dirk Brandherm, Institut für Archäologische Wissenschaften, Fach Ur- und Frühgeschichte, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Universitätsstrasse 150 (GA 6/56-60), D-44780

Bochum, or email [Dirk.Brandherm@ruhr-uni-bochum.de](mailto:Dirk.Brandherm@ruhr-uni-bochum.de)

## **LET US "HAVE A LITTLE CHAT" AROUND PEMBROKESHIRE: THE UK STUDY TOUR 2005**

In July of this year, thirty members of the Prehistoric Society journeyed to Pembrokeshire where Dr Geoff Wainwright welcomed us to his home county and, together with Professor Tim Darvill, introduced us to some of the work they have been doing over the past few years. During the tour they would share with us their finds and their thoughts.

On the first day, well 'booted and suited', the two mini-buses set off across the Pembrokeshire countryside towards the Preseli hills. Our first stop was at Gors Fawr stone circle, an almost perfect ring of sixteen pillars, which lies on low ground with Carn Menyn in the distance. Nearby is a pair of standing stones, perhaps defining a place of transition between different land types. Other pairs of standing stones sweep across the terrain.

After a steep climb to Moel Trigarn hillfort, we travelled on to Carn Menyn, a landscape of fingers of dolerite appealing skywards, to the spot where the bluestones for Stonehenge were quarried. Eagle eyes are needed in this landscape of stone surrounded by stone with stone scatters! Although many have visited this site, it was only recently noticed that a low wall joins one dolerite outcrop to another - enclosing the platform of this very special place. To stand on the highest point is an experience in itself, revelling in its conjunction of people over so much time whilst experiencing the breathtaking views. Within the same landscape lies Carn Menyn chambered tomb, and across the valley is Bedd Arthur, a bluestone 'horseshoe' oval - the blueprint for Stonehenge, perhaps?



To accompany a splendid day, we enjoyed an aerial display by red kites. In true Prehistoric Society style, we arrived back at the hotel with just 15 minutes to spare before an excellent presentation by Ken Murphy about St David's Head where he was to escort us the following afternoon. For anyone who was tired and maybe thinking of having a day off, Ken's talk inspired most to an early night to be ready upon the morrow.

Next day, first stop was Carreg Samson, Mathry, a most excellent dolmen. Discussion ensued encouraging us to think about these monuments as three-dimensional - the great capstone seeming hardly to touch the fingers of the orthostats supporting it. Perhaps this could inspire a research project (with apologies to Richard Bradley) "Floating above the Earth"?

A visit to St David's Cathedral followed. Most unusually, it is built some 100 feet below sea level. We were personally guided by Dean Wyn Evans, who first came to the cathedral in 1971 on an excavation. He returned in 1975 as Dean and has enjoyed the cathedral ever since, looking after this wonderful idiosyncratic building as if it were his own.

On St David's Head, a wonderful landscape on the edge of the Atlantic, Ken Murphy showed us a range of monuments including boundary walls, enclosures, hut circles and a 2m thick defensive wall. There are also field systems - some well-defined by aerial photography - but currently hidden under gorse and bracken. The site also doubled as a field hospital where plasters were provided to those who had gone to war with the gorse and lost! Finally, we visited the promontory fort and its inner hut circles - a wonderfully peaceful spot and today an idyllic place to be.

The next morning was overcast and misty which in many ways was appropriate, as approaching a range of tombs and propped stones through the mist was a rather mystical experience - the mist seemed only slowly to give up the treasures we had come to see. In the afternoon the mist cleared; we could enjoy the



views and a visit to Garn Fawr hillfort and Dinas Mawr promontory fort where, alongside the archaeology, we saw choughs and a colony of seagulls with the last of the chicks just leaving the nest. On our last evening, we enjoyed an entertaining and witty presentation by Harold Mytum on his 'short term' project at Castell Henllys which has lasted for the past 25 years.

Our final day saw a stiff climb to our first monument, the hillfort Carn Ingli where the western entrance of stone would certainly have deterred any invaders! Down on the lower slopes of the hill, Geoff talked of the five identified villages that inhabit the slopes. One enclosure was full of waist high ferns, and our challenge before lunch was to find the roundhouse within it! Geoff and Tim had also discovered a linear ditch and bank of unknown date and of unknown useage: was it finished, and why was it cutting through this part of the landscape? There is still lots of research to do in the area and volunteers are welcome - apply to Dr G. Wainwright.

Our last upstanding monument of the tour was Pentre Ifan cromlech, the iconic seven foot high portal dolmen with its classic 'H'-shaped stone arrangement, including some stones of spotted dolerite. After this, we travelled to Castell Henllys Iron Age fort, where the party were greeted with tea, for which Harold Mytum was viewed as a god by many of the party who craved this very English ritual. A partially reconstructed promontory fort, Castell Henllys has undergone, and is still undergoing, excavation and we were privileged to have our own tour of the site lead by the ever enthusiastic Harold. Castell Henllys is also a visitor attraction with its rebuilt houses and demonstrations of Iron Age crafts, but don't let that put you off - it is an excellent place to visit. A very rare feature is the *cheveaux de frise* outside the main entrance. Or is it so rare: have they just not been noticed in other locations? Another research project perhaps?

As we came to the end of the prehistoric era and moved into the Romano-British period, so the tour also started to come to an end. Some faded away to catch trains, others went back to the hotel to collect cars and with cheery goodbyes returned to the 21st century. Finally, my thanks (and the thanks of all of those who enjoyed the tour) goes to the organisers and leaders, Tim Darvill and Geoff Wainwright, to Frances Healy, our drivers Nick and John, and all the speakers who made waiting for dinner worthwhile! Oh - and the reason for the title of this piece, *Let us 'have a little chat' round Pembrokeshire?* That was one of Geoff's favourite sayings as he called us all to order to impart yet another piece of thoughtful wisdom.

Val Moore FIBA ACMI



the Levallois flake from Otterford, Somerset. An artefact sampling programme was also undertaken in the regional museums of the south-west. This programme indicated that there is a significant body of non-diagnostic artefacts (e.g. debitage flakes) of Palaeolithic or possible Palaeolithic age that are currently unclassified (dating of such material is understandably difficult) and also poorly provenanced. Further analysis and synthesis of the findspots and artefacts and their implications for the Palaeolithic occupation of the region will be undertaken in phases two and three project (pending funding).

The desktop and limited field-based assessment of the Pleistocene river terrace resource indicated that the resource was of considerable scope and potential, especially for the rivers Exe and Otter (although potential was also identified in Cornwall and Somerset). Examination of the British Geological

Survey (BGS) mapping has indicated variability in mapping quality, with the most recently re-mapped sheets (inevitably) providing the most up-to-date interpretations and greatest detail. It is possible that traditional perceptions of a limited river terrace resource in the region partially reflect this mapping variability. However, it was also clear that while terrace landforms and deposits are present across the entire region, the largest exposures are located in Devon, where there is also the greatest degree of differentiation between the individual terrace landforms. Differential GPS mapping of the Exe and Culm (a tributary of the Exe) terraces also indicated that while the river terrace sequences of the south-west are different to the classic sequences of the south-east, the terraces can be defined as distinct, altitudinally-separate entities, in-keeping with David Bridgland's evolving models of terrace formation. Initial OSL dating (by Jenny Bennett, University of Exeter) has also highlighted the potential antiquity of the higher terraces (Devensian dates have been generated for terrace 3). It had previously been assumed that because the majority of the south-west was not glaciated, the Exe catchment would have persisted throughout the Pleistocene. However, the shape (planform) of the Exe basin, the existence of high-level terraces on internal interfluvies, and the mismatch between terrace distribution and present river size all suggest that at some point in the Pleistocene the Exe catchment has altered significantly, probably by capturing a northerly drainage and by losing easterly drainage areas. Developing understanding of the palaeo-drainages of the south-west is clearly critical to the further investigation of the environment and 'routeways' of early hominins in the region. Finally, the assessment also identified paired terraces (i.e. where terrace deposits that correspond in terms of altitude above the floodplain are found on either side of the current river) on many of the rivers in the south-west region (e.g. the River Axe). These are especially important as they indicate that a particular section of the river has not shifted laterally by any great amount since the terraces were formed (as otherwise the landforms and deposits would have been eroded). These areas therefore effectively represent fluvial landscape remnants (potentially of great antiquity), providing evidence regarding the size of the river and its floodplain, past drainage patterns, and the potential for recovering Palaeolithic artefacts from minimally-disturbed secondary contexts.

A key further goal of the overall project is the engagement of the public with the project, with particular emphasis upon the identification and reporting of privately-held collections. Information about the project (including contact details for project staff) can be found at the project website: <http://www.rdg.ac.uk/archaeology/HORG/projects/PalaeoRivers/arch-intro.htm>



*A fluvial terrace gravel exposure at Broom (Pratt's New Pit), on the Devon/Dorset border.*

The first phase of the project has therefore provided an up-to-date assessment of the archaeological and geological resource of the south-west region, with reference to the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic occupation. The proposed second and third phases of the project will seek to build on this assessment to address the key questions of the nature of the occupation in terms of its chronology, landscape preferences, and the probable routes of access into and around this region at the north-western extremes of the earlier Palaeolithic world.

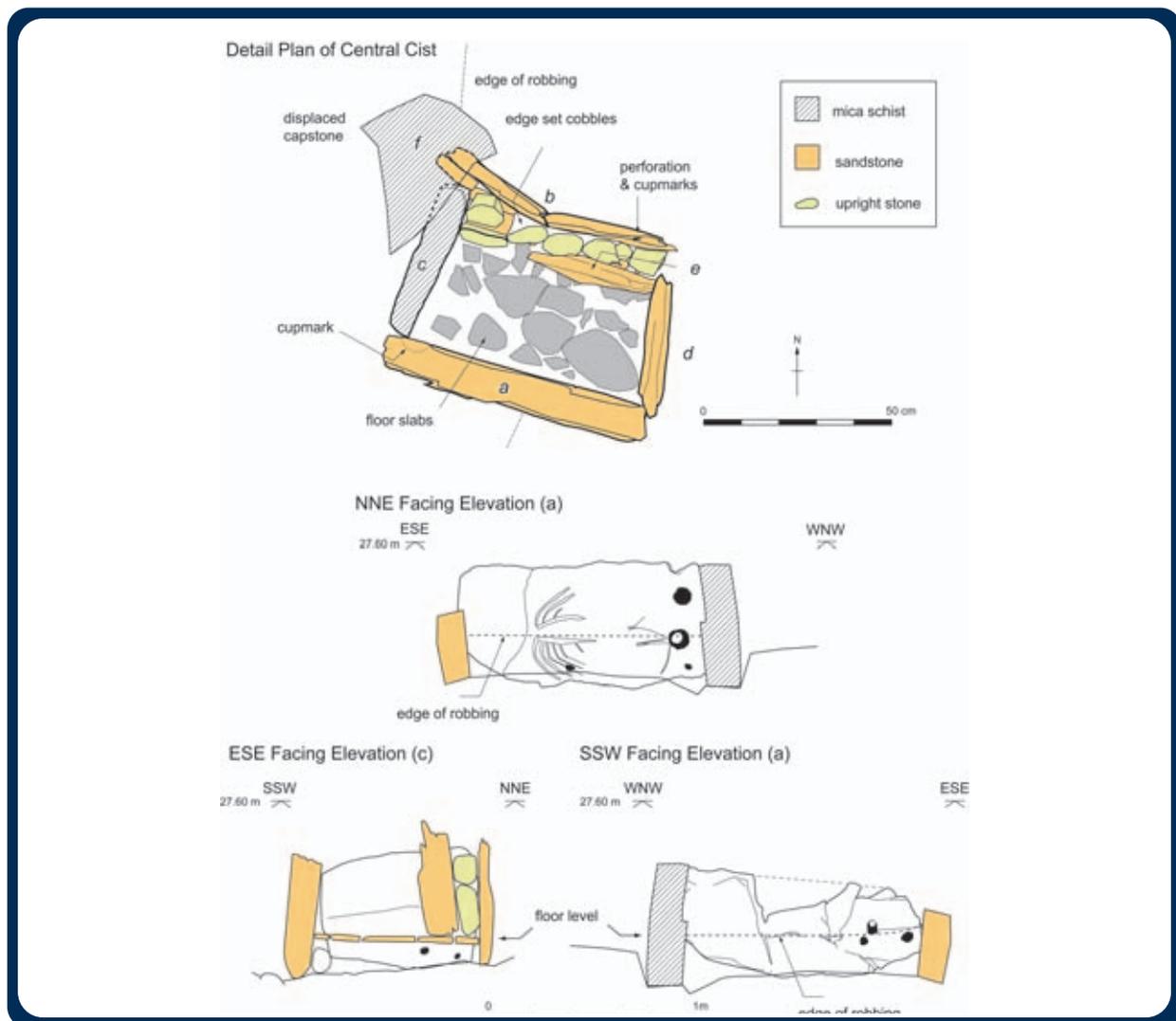
*Dr Robert Hosfield (University of Reading), Professor Tony Brown (University of Exeter), Laura Basell (University of Exeter), and Dr Simon Hounsell (University of Reading)*

## ROCK ART FROM A BRONZE AGE CAIRN AT BALBLAIR, NEAR INVERNESS

Excavations by Headland Archaeology on behalf of Aggregate Industries (UK) Ltd have recently

provided an opportunity to fully excavate the remains of a large funerary cairn at Balblair near Inverness. The cairn was sub-circular, approximately 20m diameter and was situated on the western edge of a natural gravel terrace. It covered a single central burial, a slab lined cist that had been robbed in antiquity. The cist was composed of mainly sandstone slabs, although the headstone and a capstone were of schist. Three of the slabs were decorated, one in particular with a complex and unusual design. The cairn itself never appears to have had its edges formalised in any way; there was no evidence for any kerb and the monument, although impressive in its own way, never seems to have amounted to more than a large pile of rocks.

The evidence from the excavation strongly suggests that the cist itself was damaged and subsequently repaired during the construction process. The long thin slab on the north side (labelled *b* on the plan) was fractured, presumably by the weight of material placed against it or over it, but it had been made good by placing edge-set cobbles along the inner face of the cist and supporting these with a further



Plan and elevations of the central cist (© Headland Archaeology).

sandstone slab. This significantly reduced the original internal dimensions of the cist, although the resultant space is of average size for cists in north-eastern Scotland. Penetrating ground waters and the natural acidity of the glacial gravels precluded the survival of any skeletal remains, and as the surviving grave goods were recovered from secondary contexts, they tell us little about the original position of the burial. The complete absence of any cremated bone would suggest that the burial may have been an inhumation.

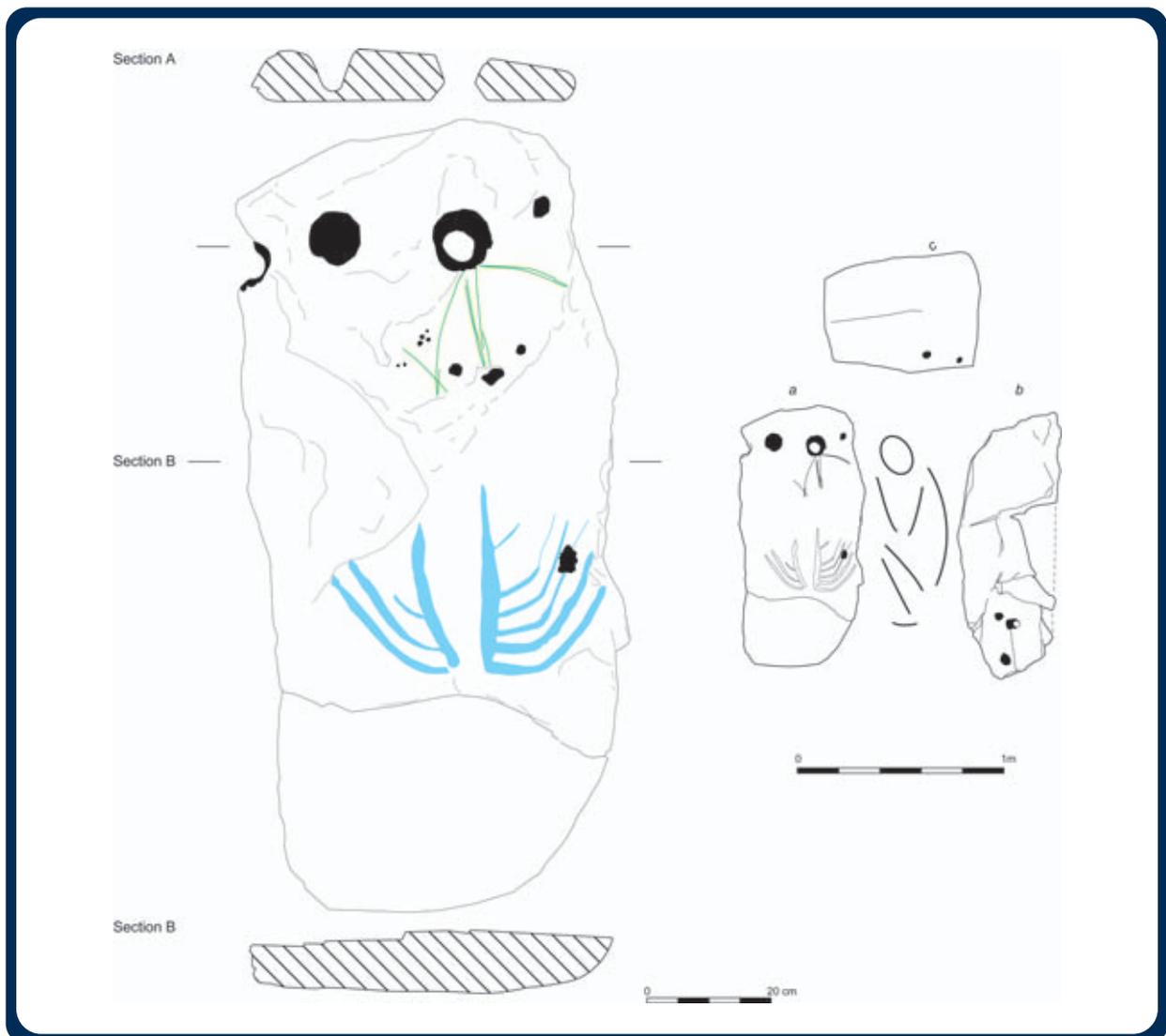
A number of conjoining rim sherds of Food Vessel type pottery and a single flint scraper were recovered from secondary contexts and provided the only dating evidence; no other finds were recovered. Although the modification of the cist could be seen as indicative of multi-episode burial practice, there was no evidence from its construction to suggest that the decoration on any of the cist slabs was not already present at the time the cist was first constructed. In fact, given the floor levels within the cist and the later insertion of the cobbles and slab

along the north side, much of the finer decoration would not have been visible until revealed through excavation.

#### Decorated stones

The extent of the decoration on the internal faces of the side slabs was only revealed when the cist was fully excavated. Slab (a) formed the south side of the cist and was the largest and most strikingly decorated stone. It is described here viewed lengthways, with the curvilinear motif to the bottom.

The slab, some 150mm thick, bore a single perforation worked from both faces. This was one of three similar-sized sub-circular designs adorning the western end of the slab, including a cup mark of similar radius and a probable third cup mark surviving at one edge of what was presumably once a larger stone. All three were of pecked workmanship. Off-centre on the slab was a striking, deeply scored, but asymmetrical linear decoration. A similar, albeit inverted design comprised of four light



*The decorated cist slabs. The different execution techniques on slab (a) are highlighted. The likely juxtaposition of a corpse to the decorated faces within the cist is shown to right (© Headland Archaeology).*

but confident incisions can be seen running away from (or perhaps into?) the perforation, and there was clear evidence of smaller cup marks and lighter pecking around it.

Scoring was used to create the line decoration immediately below the perforation, and similar marks identified in some Irish and Orcadian megalithic tombs are regarded as preliminary sketches before more complex designs were executed. It is possible that a similar technique was used on the Balblair slab. Only one definite area of superimposition has been observed on the slab: slight pecking over the third 'rib' to the right on the lower part of the decoration. The decorated face of the stone was uneven and all surfaces were clearly weathered suggesting reuse. The striated surface visible on the opposite face of the slab suggests that it may have been quarried from a surface exposure.

Slab (*b*) formed the opposite northern side of the cist and was at no point thicker than 90mm. It bore two small but distinct pecked cup marks and a single perforation of similar dimensions. These were situated in close proximity at the eastern end of the slab and were diagonally opposed to the cup marks and perforation on slab (*a*). Like slab (*a*), both faces of the stone appeared to be weathered. The squat west-end slab (*c*) was composed of schist and had evidence of slight pecking and one shallow but well-defined cup mark which was located centrally and close to its base. There was no evidence of any decoration on the east-end slab (*d*) or on the inserted slab (*e*), neither was there decoration on the reverse side or edges of any of the other decorated stones. Likewise, there was no evidence of any form of decoration on the putative capstone, slab (*f*), nor on any of the other slab fragments recovered and examined during the course of the excavation. Like slab (*a*), the cupmarks and perforation on slab (*b*) were pecked and the internal surface of the perforation polished. The cupmarks on slab (*c*) were smaller and less distinct, probably because they were pecked into a harder surface.

In the context of 'single grave art', the cup-marks on the Balblair slabs are typical Early Bronze Age motifs. However, the complex curvilinear design has more in common with Neolithic passage-grave art, although no direct parallels have as yet been identified. The reuse of decorated slabs in Early Bronze Age cist burials, procured either from open-air sites or from earlier monuments, is a common phenomenon. Circumstantially, it is more than likely that the slabs in the Balblair cist and especially slab (*a*) were procured from an earlier tomb; a ruined chambered cairn, still containing similar but undecorated sandstone slabs, lies within 200m of the Balblair site. Although no definite origin for the Balblair slabs can be determined, it can confidently be asserted that the weathering patterns, style of



Slab (*a*) in situ after removal of floor deposits  
(© Headland Archaeology).

design and truncation of the upper cup-mark indicate that the stone has been reused.

The position of decorated slabs within cists follows some deliberate patterns; where skeletal remains survive, the more complex face of the slab is usually turned in towards the corpse. Although no skeletal remains survived at Balblair, burials of the period tend to be on an east-west alignment, with the head to the west. This suggests that the head of any corpse in the Balblair cist would have rested below the large perforation and cup-mark on slab (*a*). All other cupmarked faces on the Balblair slabs were also turned inward. Similarly, the occurrence of decoration that is partly or even wholly obscured by the stones of a cist or burial matrix is another common phenomenon, one that occurs at Balblair, where the constructed floor level of the cist obscured the majority of the curvilinear design and cup marks.

Unlike a number of other excavated examples, there is little evidence for reworking of the Balblair slabs although the smaller cup-marks may be a later addition and it is possible that the light areas of pecking around the scored lines and the curvilinear design indicate unfinished reworking. No other positive assertions can be made, however.

### Conclusions

Despite the unusual nature of the curvilinear motif decoration on the principal Balblair slab, the monument as a whole and the evidence it provides for burial practice during the Early Bronze Age fit comfortably with other known examples and traditional interpretations. The style of the carvings, however, provide their own problems, for as no parallels exist, no confident comparisons can be made.

Andrew Dutton & Kelly Clapperton, Headland Archaeology Ltd