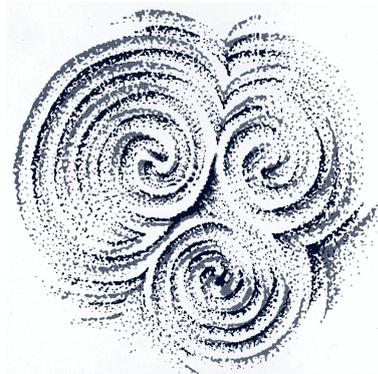


PAST



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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY

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NEW WORK NEAR NUTBOURNE, WEST SUSSEX

On the crest of the Greensand escarpment in Pulborough parish, near the hamlets of Nutbourne and North Heath, lies an area containing both Borough Farm Roman villa and Beedings "Castle". The latter is a nineteenth century house and during its construction and in recent years archaeological investigations have found both Upper Palaeolithic and Late Iron Age material. The 2007 volume of PPS contains a superbly detailed account by Roger Jacobi of the original Upper Palaeolithic finds which amply demonstrates their significance. The Late Iron Age and early Roman material was retrieved by Con Ainsworth and a report by Caroline Wells in relation to those finds is in preparation. The presence of Dressel 1A and 1B amphorae fragments is notable. Recent PPG16 work confirmed this evidence for late prehistoric and early Roman activity without finding clear structural details to help analysis. The land around the site now belongs to Redfold Farm and is earmarked for viticulture. Surveyed fieldwalking prior to vine planting was conducted in February 2008 and a broad scatter of finds of prehistoric, Roman and medieval date was retrieved; these are currently being processed as part of a new English Heritage-funded review of the site.

Renewed Upper Palaeolithic research excavations targeted the crest of the hill in the summer of 2007. The work, directed by Matt Pope (UCL) and with the help of volunteers from Worthing Archaeological Society, focussed on a field to the immediate east of Beedings Castle. The trenches were situated on anomalies revealed by earlier geophysical surveys which had been carried out by Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society at the request of Caroline



Middle Palaeolithic artefact from the fissure at Beedings

Wells. The trenches were placed across areas of lower resistance which proved to be fissures in the underlying Lower Greensand (Hythe Beds) rock formations.

Two trenches showed only superficial deposits above geological bedding structures and upper layers contained some Mesolithic flint work and a single piece of Samian ware. The principal and largest trench revealed a geological feature of a different character, a 3 metre-wide fissure more than 3 metres deep filled with fine grained sediments of a loessic nature. This feature differed in that it contained a small but significant assemblage of blue-patinated, sediment-polished flint which includes large flake elements, a scatter of tiny spalls of flint and part of a large blade (of non-Mesolithic character). The tiny spalls suggest that this fissure fill contains flint-working traces either *in situ* or derived from the immediate locality without much lateral movement.

The copy date for PAST 60 is 1 October 2008. Contributions to Joanna Brück, School of Archaeology, Newman Building, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland. Email: 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: aea.escargots@gmail.com Queries over subscriptions and membership should go to the Society administrator Tessa Machling at the London address above.



Beedings Castle

Although small, the assemblage presented some surprises. Aside from the blade element, which could perhaps sit happily within the original Beedings Upper Palaeolithic leaf-point assemblage, the additional material is of a quite different character. The deeper patina may indicate a greater age and different depositional history and, while technologically ambiguous, the material has greater affinity with the Late Middle Palaeolithic (LMP) technology of late Neanderthal hunting groups than with the Early Upper Palaeolithic technologies traditionally associated with anatomically modern humans. An initial comparison of these pieces with material from the LMP site of Oldbury, Kent, confirms some broad technological similarities and almost identical patination, which is significant considering that Oldbury sits adjacent to fissured beds of the Kentish Greensand and close to the Ightham fissure which produced a rich Pleistocene faunal assemblage in the nineteenth century.



The site of the 2007 excavations

Consideration of two other previous finds from the Beedings area also suggests a Neanderthal presence. A single artefact, recorded as having come from the

hill, is in the original Beedings assemblage. This artefact sits uncomfortably alongside the Upper Palaeolithic artefacts in that it bears a blue-white patina and technologically seems to be a large side scraper, manufactured on a large flake with indications of working at the tip of the piece. Typologically, it is a piece which would sit better with a Late Middle Palaeolithic assemblage, and yet until the 2007 excavations there had been no hint of further LMP artefacts from the hill. In addition, a single finely-made sub-triangular or Bout Coupé biface typical of LMP assemblages from Britain was found, in an identical topographic position, at the top of the Lower Greensand scarp-slope at Woods Hill, West Chiltington, only 2km to the east of the site. These finds, interpreted alongside the possible *in situ* artefacts from the Beedings fissure, support the idea that Neanderthals, prior to the activities of early Upper Palaeolithic hunters, were also occupying the hill. The continuity of the use of the hill, seen also in the substantial quantities of Mesolithic flintwork from the site, supports Jacobi's suggestion that the hill offered a superb location for game observation posts or hunting camps.

The newly excavated finds may be of national significance. Not only do they indicate the survival of both Middle and Upper Palaeolithic material on the hill, we think that these assemblages cover the replacement period from the last Neanderthal hunters of the British Isles and incoming early 'modern' peoples. Further excavation planned for the summer of 2008 will throw more light on this site and will form the first phase of an English Heritage-funded review of potential for similar fissure sites fringing the Weald. This work, to be carried out by Archaeology South East and the Boxgrove Project in the coming year, will determine whether the fissure at Beedings is unique or is pointing the way to a hitherto untapped component of the British ice age record.

Matthew Pope (UCL), m.pope@ucl.ac.uk; Caroline Wells, C.R.Wells@sussex.ac.uk

A COASTAL SURVEY OF WESTERN MARMARICA

The area between Tobruk and Bardia, Libya, represents something of a terra incognita to the wider archaeological community, with only sporadic attention being paid to a region devoid of the extensive ruins that attracted early travellers to Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. Oric Bates spent a limited amount of time there in 1906, exploring as far west as Seal Island, 66km west of Tobruk, in search of Bronze Age Libyans. Theresa Howard

Carter visited the same island in 1963 in her search for archaeological correlation for foundation myths of Greek colonisation. Both were disappointed in their quest; only a number of circular structures, most probably animal pens, were found on the island.



Water channel, site 17, fifth-sixth centuries AD

A team of five (Linda Hulin, University of Oxford; Robert Morkot, University of Exeter; Carol Bell, British School in Athens; Duncan Sayer, University of Bath; and Alexandros Giannakoulas, University of Oxford) spent three weeks in Tobruk with the invaluable guidance of Mr Fathaleh Salem from the Department of Antiquities in Tobruk, and Dr Idris al-Rifadi, Professor of Roman Prehistory at Gar Yunis University. Our aims were to gain an initial picture of the range and date of settlement in the area, to look for evidence of interaction between Libyans and the Mediterranean sea trade (relating to either Bronze Age trade, the Phoenician expansion or Greek colonization), and to trace the spread of Marmaric ware, identified in the western desert of Egypt with a local, mobile population of the fifth to seventh centuries AD.

We worked mainly in two areas: in coastal wadis north of the village of Kanbut, 55km east of Tobruk, and in the lower wadi Lukk, 15km east of Kanbut. Our strategy was a mixed one: targeting sites previously identified using Google Earth or being taken to sites known to the Department of Antiquities, Dr al-Rifadi, or local farmers. We came across numerous other entirely unknown antiquities on the way to all these spots and all sites were

located for the first time with a handheld GPS. We also grid-walked selected sites to gain a more detailed picture of the extent of the remains. We visited 38 sites in all, the majority of them previously unknown. We even managed a boat trip out to the island of Azlat el-Gabar, covered with buildings of the third to fifth centuries AD and dotted with later buildings, thanks to the generous assistance of Mr Ali Nagi Mahmud.



Cairn burial with enclosure, site 07

A wide range of sites were found, from long-term sites close to the sea to inland agricultural settlements and farmsteads with evidence for water management including channels, cisterns and wadi walls. Most date to the Late Roman period (fifth to seventh centuries AD) with another cluster in the Early Roman period. Iron Age/Classical, Hellenistic and early Islamic (eighth century AD) sherds were also found. Eleven sites showed evidence of kiln slag, probably associated with pottery production, and at four sites the kilns themselves were clearly visible. Marmaric ware pottery was found on the edges of a small number of Late Roman settlements but was primarily associated with cairn and enclosure burials.

The 2008 season was brief, but has populated a previously blank area of the map. Future work will concentrate upon characterising each type of settlement, examining the kilns and cairn burials more closely and, of course, still looking for the elusive Bronze Age Libyans.

Dr Linda Hulin, G. A. Wainwright fellow in Near Eastern Archaeology, Oriental Institute, University of Oxford.

Acknowledgements

The 2008 season was funded by grants from the Prehistoric Society, Society of Antiquaries, British Academy, Institute for Aegean Prehistory and Meyerstein Fund.

CHILDE FIFTY YEARS AFTER

A conference to remember the intellectual legacy of Vere Gordon Childe (1892-1957) on the fiftieth anniversary of his death was held by Durham University on 1st December 2007. The meeting was co-funded by the Prehistoric Society, the AREA project and the History of Archaeology Group in the Department of Archaeology. The conference was introduced by its main organiser, Margarita Díaz-Andreu, who paid homage to two of the main scholars of Childe's thought, Andrew Sherratt and Bruce Trigger, precisely, as she remarked, on the first anniversary of Trigger's death. She also explained the difficulties of discussing once again a figure such as Childe about whom so much has already been said, but pointed out the benefits that archival work can bring to the study of this renowned archaeologist.

The conference was organised into two main parts. The first, with five papers, dealt with 'Childe in History'. A general introductory paper by Jacek Lech (Polish Academy of Science in Warsaw) discussed Childe's life and thought. He argued that Childe is still considered one of the greatest prehistorians of European archaeology. Childe's main successes were his proposals on the Neolithic and urban revolutions. Childe was a master synthesizer who translated into the language of history the messy mass of knowledge on finds and archaeological sites.

The three next papers followed Childe's life through the different places he resided in Britain: Oxford, Edinburgh and London. Timothy Champion (University of Southampton) examined Childe's period at Oxford University, providing a masterly analysis of the exciting intellectual environment in Classical antiquity and anthropology at Oxford at the time. He pointed out the benefits that Childe had from this but also the challenges he faced in his quest to study European later prehistory, a topic for which no expertise existed. Childe in Scotland was the focus for Ian Ralston (University of Edinburgh). He described the teaching of and research in archaeology at the University during the nineteen years Childe held the Abercromby chair.

David Harris (University College London) described Childe's years as Director at London Institute of Archaeology. He explained about his appointment as both Director and Professor of the Institute (1946-1956) and the life at the Institute during these years. Harris also evaluated Childe's attitudes towards new advances in archaeology, painting a different picture than that proposed by Green (1981) for example as regards radiocarbon dates. It has been pointed out that in 1950 Childe published in *Nature* a critical letter about radiocarbon dating. Yet, the evident inadequacies of the method in its early years make understandable Childe's reaction towards the first results obtained. He rightly pointed out that despite

its potential the method was still not fully reliable and some of the results were problematic.

The last presentation of the first part of the conference was given by Margarita Díaz-Andreu. She detailed how Childe's thought was received in other parts of the world. She pointed out that Childe had not been the first in producing a synthesis of European prehistory, and that he was aware of this. She also argued that Childe's work was disseminated in other European countries mainly thanks to his very active involvement in the organisation of the International Congress of Prehistoric and Protohistorical Sciences, and his constant trips to Europe and elsewhere. She ended her paper evaluating the potential of translations to analyse when, where and who was reading Childe.

The second part of the conference was entitled 'Childe and knowledge' and had five papers. The first, by John Chapman (Durham University), discussed the implications of *The Danube in Prehistory*, the second book published by Childe. Chapman argued that *The Danube* had an impact in certain parts of Europe because it was the first synthesis that systematized and interconnected the many local archaeological cultures in that part of the world.

Elzbieta Jastrzebowska (Academia Polacca di Roma) based her paper on the negative comments made by Childe about late Classical antiquity in *What happened in History?* Jastrzebowska discussed the basis for such comments and the work of two of Childe's contemporaries, Michael Rostovtzeff (1870-1952) and Fritz M. Heichelheim (1901-1968). She argued that it would not be possible to understand the work of these three thinkers and their vision on late Classical antiquity without taking into consideration their own life experiences resulting from political upheavals at the time.

The following paper was given by Robin Coningham and Mark Manuel (Durham University) who presented a paper about willing subordination in the Indus. Coningham and Manuel asserted that Childe and his contemporaries' understanding of prehistoric Indus communities was based on traditional ideas regarding the timeless, spaceless and rigid nature of the caste system. Coningham and Manuel mentioned that, contrary to diffusionist interpretations formulated by his peers, Childe considered that the caste system was an indigenous development and he emphasised the importance of economic change in the Indus Valley. In the last part of the paper, however, the authors argued that the archaeological evidence allows alternative interpretations than those exclusively focused on caste.

Peter Rowley-Conwy (Durham University) discussed different approaches to culture focused in context, culture and system. He considered that there have been at least three main theoretical approaches to

'culture'. Each of them, he argued, criticizes the previous one and claims to supersede it, while, in fact, little changes. Rowley-Conwy finished his contribution by saying that there are no 'new directions' representing a good approach to understanding 'culture' and that we still live with the concept originally developed by Childe.

The last paper of the second part was by Peter Gathercole (Darwin College, Cambridge), who evaluated Marxist ideas in Childe's thought and political activity. Following Marx's ideas, Childe considered that material culture determined spiritual culture.

The conference was closed by one of Childe's former students, Don Brothwell (York University). He showed the human side of the great thinker that Childe was. Firstly, Brothwell noted the scientific contribution of Childe to archaeology. From a scientific perspective, Childe was a greater gatherer of information. Brothwell finished with some sensible questions - which probably never will have an objective answer - about Childe's sexuality and suggested the possibility of him having some type of disability that would explain his often mentioned strange behaviour.

The conference was well attended. Vere Gordon Childe has been one of the most influential archaeologists in European archaeology and prehistory in the twentieth century. His contributions continue to influence current debates. Indeed, the translation of Childe's books into other languages brought his ideas to countries which Childe never visited. Childe was a man who contributed to understand how Man makes himself throughout history and society. He wrote many books summarising the history of humankind itself. Finally, he went back to the country in which he was born and, walking with his lonely soul he signed what was his last brilliant play: if man makes himself, he can also unmake himself.

César Villalobos, PhD student, Durham University

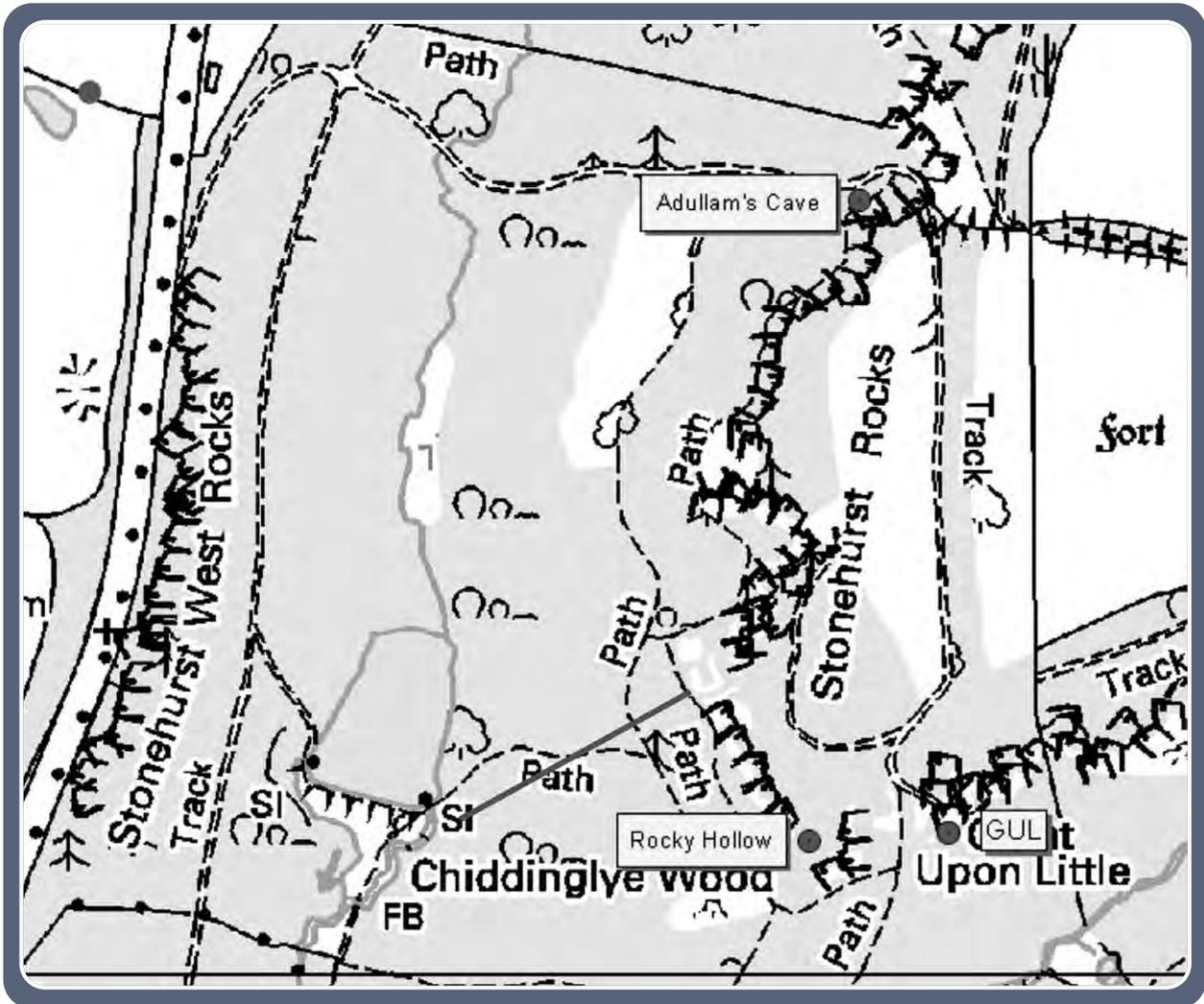
RAPID FIELD INVESTIGATION METHODS AND A NEW MESOLITHIC SITE APPROACH FOR THE WEALD, UK

Mesolithic activity in south-east England includes evidence from rock shelters such as High Rocks and open air sites commonly on the Lower Greensand such as Rock Common, Iping and Oakhanger. The former are often restricted in their archaeological use, albeit containing *in situ* debris and potentially good palaeo-environmental data; conversely open-air sites produce a wider range of activities, but lack stratigraphy and consequently are often devoid of, or

sparse in, *in situ* and palaeo-environmental data. Recent rapid geoarchaeological survey (augering) at Chiddinglye Wood Rocks near Philpots Camp, West Hoathly, West Sussex, has demonstrated the existence of buried and sealed potentially *in situ* Mesolithic sites and soils close to a complex of sandstone rock outcrops on the Sussex High Weald.

The area of Chiddinglye Wood embraces a sandstone outcrop, upon which is the Iron Age promontory hillfort of Philpots Camp. The outcrop has long been known for Mesolithic finds, many of which have been found around the base of the cliff, and for putative rock shelters that may have been used in Mesolithic times. The sandy soils presented the possibility of deep stratigraphy within the rock shelters that might seal and contain well-preserved Mesolithic activity and palaeo-environmental sequences; however, where excavation has been conducted on similar sites, it has been severely hindered by significant rock fall debris. In addition, the slopes from the rock outcrops overlooking the adjacent river valleys also seemed likely places for Mesolithic activity, and here there was a possibility of colluvial deposits preserving and sealing evidence of Mesolithic activity on these slopes. Flint artefacts had previously been recorded in shallow sequences near the rock outcrops. In order to test this hypothesis and the feasibility of excavation, a walk-over survey of the environs was conducted which led to a simple augering programme. Permission was kindly given to conduct this work on the private land of Chiddinglye Estate by the owners and their manager, Bill Blunt. We were delighted to receive funding from Natural England for the augering programme through the auspices of Louise Hutchby, as part of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme Agreement to inform a conservation management plan for the site which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and contains the Scheduled Monument of Philpots Iron Age hillfort. The work was also endorsed by English Heritage. Subsequently, excavation was conducted funded by the Margary Fund of the Sussex Archaeological Society.

A nested auger programme was instigated to examine heritage conservation issues such as the damage of any deposits by rooting of the extensive and invasive *Rhododendron ponticum*, and the consequences of the necessity to clear the *Rhododendron* in areas where Mesolithic activity may be present. Thus, it enabled us to examine aspects of Mesolithic presence and preservation, the associated palaeo-environment, and even consider pragmatic concerns of investigating potential rock-strewn deposits and possibly deep loose sandy sequences. Investigation would determine whether there were large quantities of rock debris beneath the surface preventing augering, but hopefully would also identify the presence of any geoarchaeological and palaeo-environmental sequences and establish whether Mesolithic evidence might be buried and preserved beneath the sandy colluvium.



Location of auger surveys and auger transect

Thus, the augering examined archaeological, palaeo-environmental, geoarchaeological and conservation issues.

Due to the nature of the deposits (typically sandy) and the necessity to record full soil and sediment sequences, as well as keep intrusion to a minimum, hand augering was conducted using 40mm diameter dutch augers and a 30mm diameter gouge auger. This geoarchaeological survey comprised three separate surveys. First, a walkover survey to define suitable locations for the auger survey and probabilistic augering to 'test-the-water' and examine the feasibility of the survey were carried out. The second survey involved the construction of the profile from the rock outcrops, down the slope to the valley and river, examining the possibility of organic deposits or the presence of colluvium and defining the soil catenary sequence. An archaeological survey targeting zones around the foot of the rock outcrops in locations where Mesolithic artefacts had been recorded in the past completed the nested strategy.

This nested programme of survey and targeted and considered augering was conducted over just three days with a small group of students from the

University of Sussex in November 2007. It transpired that contrary to our initial beliefs, there was little or no rock debris around the foot of the rock outcrop, nor indeed within the rock shelters. This is highly significant as it meant that augering was easily possible in a number of locations, and that other investigations were unlikely to be significantly hindered by rock-fall and could be considered viable.



Augering near Great-upon-Little

Unfortunately no organic peaty or stratified alluvial deposits lay in the river valley from which we could obtain a good palaeo-environmental sequence (but this will be explored further in the opposite valley). However, sandy colluvial deposits were present as a 'necklace' encircling the rock outcrop on a break of slope. These deposits, recorded in one transect up to nearly 1.2m thick, extended for up to about 25m obscuring and protecting areas of the upper hillslope - in fact precisely the areas that one could envisage Mesolithic people knapping flints in the lea of the rocks, whilst surveying any wildlife. It was very pleasing, therefore, to record at precisely this topographical location a buried soil sealed beneath more than 1m of sandy colluvium adjacent to Great-upon-Little (GUL). In addition, from just a 30mm diameter gouge auger core, not only could the complete soil profile be described, but recognisable pieces of charcoal were observed, recovered and even identified from the buried soil. The charcoal was identified by Dr Alan Clapham as *Betula cf. nana* (birch, probably dwarf birch), a particularly interesting identification since this species is extinct in southern Britain today, and is a classic type-fossil of the later glacial and early Holocene (i.e. the Mesolithic) period. A single pollen sample assessed by Dr Rob Scaife produced preserved pollen of oak, lime, hazel and rare occurrence of holly, with some grass, other acid loving ferns/polypodiums and *Calluna*, as well as a single grain of birch. This is typical of a generally wooded landscape with,

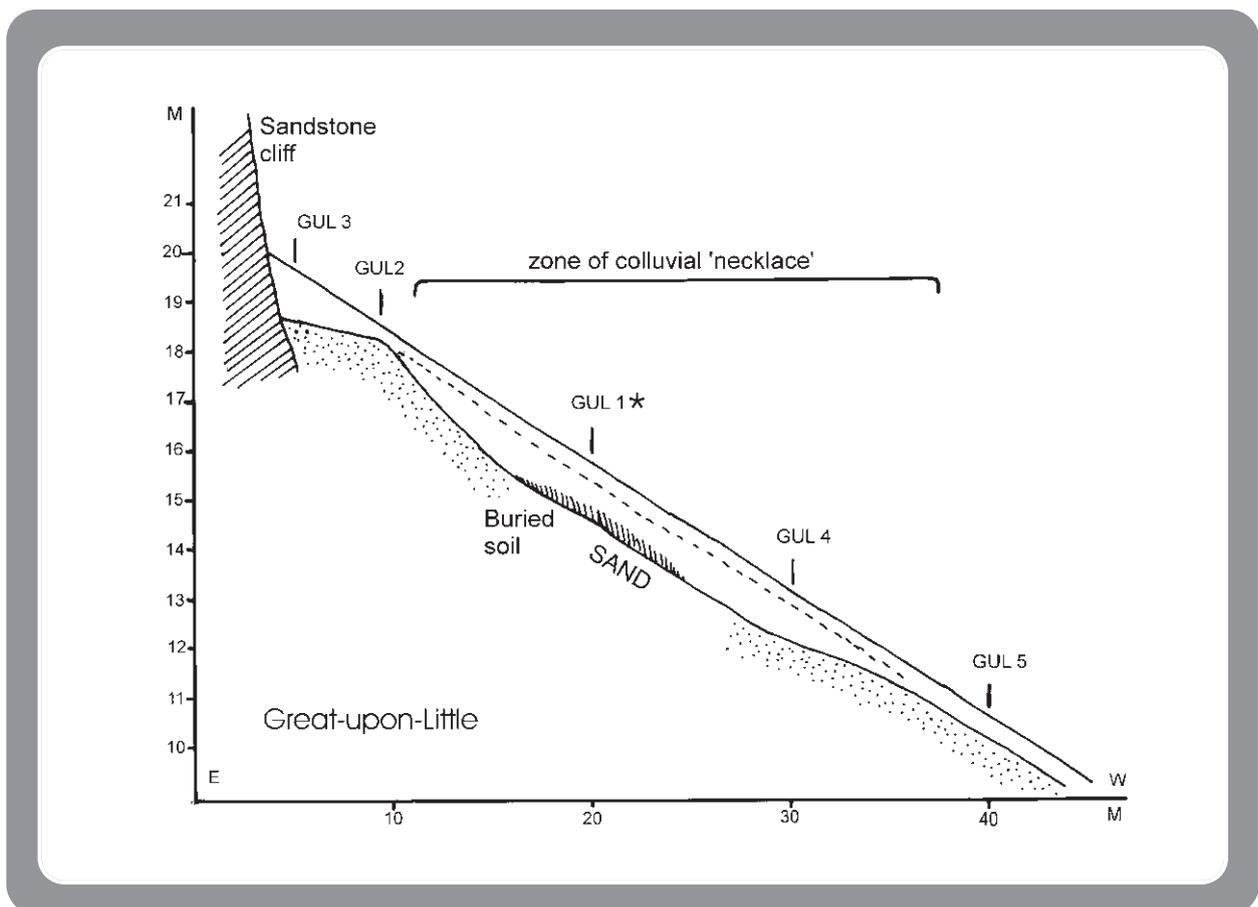
perhaps, some heather and more open ground locally; a pollen spectrum characteristic of Atlantic flora (Late Mesolithic or even Early Neolithic), with some evidence of soil acidification.

Obviously, we would like this buried soil to contain evidence of Mesolithic activity, as that is the period upon which our research is focused. Although Mesolithic flints have been recorded in excavation previously, and as surface finds more recently, there is very little possibility of recovering diagnostic flints from such small auger intrusions, so a limited excavation (2m x 2m) was conducted in April 2008. This confirmed the presence of a preserved Mesolithic soil, and recovered c. 135 flints, mainly the by products of Mesolithic blade and microlith production.

Overall, it appears that rapid and targeted fieldwork has revealed a Mesolithic buried soil and site on the upper slopes of the Cobb valley, away from the local rock face and putative shelters and sealed beneath c. 1m of sandy colluvium.

The significance of the survey results

So what are the implications of this find? Obviously, the results are a great contribution to the study of the Mesolithic in Chiddinglye Wood, but they also have some much wider and more significant implications. In particular:



Profile showing the buried in situ soil under sandy colluvium

1) Augering as a survey method demonstrated excellent value in terms of minimal resource time, and minimal intrusion versus maximum research gain. We were able to confirm that both at the base of the cliff and within the rock shelters relatively little rock fall had occurred. At the foot of the rock outcrop, deposits seem to have been eroded and removed, a process probably exacerbated by human activity and trampling during the Victorian and later periods. Significantly, it did indicate the presence of a colluvial 'necklace' on the upper slope away from the rock outcrop. Further, this was proven to seal and bury an *in situ* Mesolithic soil, which was confirmed by limited excavation. The recovery of Mesolithic flints in the area and excavation confirms a Mesolithic date. Both upslope, and in particular along the downslope margins of the colluvial 'necklace', Mesolithic flint detritus was also present on the surface.

2) The results here, if repeated elsewhere at similar topographical locations in southern England, might provide evidence for widespread Mesolithic activity in the Weald, not previously recognised. Rock shelter sites often contain evidence of a limited array of activities; they may be seasonally used and related to specific activities so may not be truly representative of the Mesolithic lifestyle. All too often, Mesolithic finds, even when encountered, have been restricted to artefact distributions, lacking in a contemporaneous sediment and palaeo-environmental context, or even where such deposits are encountered, palaeo-environmental enquiry is not instigated. Previous research has focused on the shelters themselves and areas within a few metres of the base of the rock outcrops, while this work indicates that important evidence could be present further from the rocks and which is afforded greater protection by virtue of being sealed by hillwash. At Chiddinglye Wood Rocks, it is possible that we have a site that is neither a rock-shelter nor a typical open-air site, but one with stratigraphy, potentially *in situ* artefacts and deposits, and possibly a full

array of palaeo-environmental data. Furthermore, it is located on a hillslope bench, away from any rock outcrops, overlooking the valley and stream below, and is an ideal spot for Mesolithic activity. It is a topographical location not often previously explored archaeologically and one with numerous topographic parallels locally, as well as across the Weald of southern England.

These early research results invite further questions. Is this buried soil and burning activity Mesolithic? What further important Mesolithic evidence lies preserved in Chiddinglye Wood, and how many other similar such sites lie undetected with potentially excellent preservation? Research led by Andrew Maxted, a D.Phil. student at the Centre for Continuing Education, University of Sussex (supervised by Dr Richard Carter), with Mike Allen (AEA: Allen Environmental Archaeology) hopes to explore these and other important questions.

*Mike Allen, Richard Carter and Andrew Maxted
AEA: Allen Environmental Archaeology &
University of Sussex*

MEETINGS PROGRAMME 2008-2009

The programme for next year's lectures and meetings is coming together. However, details for a number of events have yet to be finalised - these will be posted on our website, together with contact information and booking forms as applicable, as soon as they become available. We are also planning some one-day visits to 'live' field projects but these may be organised at fairly short notice and will be very much on a first-come-first-served basis, so for all events please do keep checking the website. Booking forms will be included in later editions of PAST. If you would like to be kept updated by email please contact Tessa Machling on prehistoric@ucl.ac.uk (see front page).

Sun 24 Aug 11am	Lecture and site visit: Star Carr Venue: TBC
Wed 29 Oct 5pm	Lecture: London Venue: Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly
Wed 12 Nov 7pm	Lecture: Bournemouth Venue: Shelly Lecture Theatre, Bournemouth University
Sat 6 Dec	Day conference: Bradford Venue: Bradford University

Visit to the Excavations at Star Carr
Led by Dr Chantal Conneller

The 8th Sara Champion Memorial Lecture
'Wheeler's Legacy: The Bioarchaeology of Maiden Castle' by Dr Rebecca Redfern

'Preseli-Stonehenge Bluestone Project: Stonehenge Excavations 2008' by Prof. Timothy Darvill & Dr Geoffrey Wainwright
Joint Prehistoric Society/Bournemouth University

Cave Archaeology in Britain: Recent Work
Bringing together the results of a variety of recent investigations and surveys covering a wide geographical and chronological range

Mon 5 Jan 6pm	Lecture: Cambridge Venue: Law Faculty Building, Sidgwick Site, West Road, Cambridge	'A Bronze Age Pompeii? Interpreting the Must Farm Platform' by Mark Knight Joint Prehistoric Society/Cambridge Antiquarian Society
Sat 7 Jan 10am	Day conference: London Venue: TBC	Neolithic of the Thames Valley (details TBC)
Sat 10 Jan 2.30pm	Lecture: Norwich Venue: Town Close Auditorium, Norwich Castle Museum	'Understanding Change 6000-3500 BC on the Eastern Fen-Edge' by Dr Fraser Sturt Joint Prehistoric Society/Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society
Jan TBC	Lecture: Exeter Venue: TBC	Speaker and Title TBC Joint Prehistoric Society/Devon Archaeological Society
Fri 3-Sun 5 Apr	Conference: Bournemouth Venue: Bournemouth University	Tribes and Prejudice: Exploding the Late British Iron Age An examination of many aspects of the Late British Iron Age, aiming to break down the seemingly impermeable terms 'Iron Age' and 'Roman' Joint Prehistoric Society/Bournemouth University
Fri 24-Sun 26 Apr	Weekend study tour: North Wales Venue: Bangor	4th Student Study Tour Led by Dr Bob Johnston
Sat 25 Apr 2.30pm	Lecture: Lewes Venue: St Thomas a Becket Church Hall, Lewes	'Living at the Limit: A Sussex Perspective on the Palaeolithic of Northern Europe' by Dr Matthew Pope Joint Prehistoric Society/Sussex Archaeological Society Price: £2. Places must be booked in advance. Cheques should be made payable to 'Sussex Past', and sent to Lorna Gartside, Sussex Archaeological Society, Barbican House, 169 High Street, Lewes BN7 1YE
Fri 15-Sun 17 May	Weekend study tour: Dillington House Venue: Dillington House, Ilminster	Middens and Deposition in Prehistoric Britain Lectures on Friday and Saturday followed by a field trip on Sunday. For details please contact Wayne Bennett, Dillington House, Ilminster TA19 7DZ. Tel: 01460 52427, email: dillington@somerset.gov.uk
May TBC	Day conference and Europa Lecture: York	Title TBC by Prof. Peter Woodman NB There will be a fee for the conference (TBC) but the Europa Lecture will be free to members.
June TBC	Budget study weekend: Isle of Wight	Prehistory of the Isle of Wight
July TBC	Conference: Jodrell Bank Venue: Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics, Macclesfield	Archaeology and Astronomy Joint Prehistoric Society/Royal Astronomical Society
Mon 17-Fri 21 Aug	British study tour: Wessex Venue: Urchfont Manor, Wilts	Hidden Wessex Revisited Back by popular demand, a re-run of our 2006 tour of Salisbury Plain and the Wylve Valley

Sat 12-Sat 19 Sept Overseas study tour: Sardinia

Summer 2010 TBC Overseas study tour: USA

In the planning stages:

Field trip and lecture: Creswell Crags

Lecture: 'The Prehistory of the American South West' by Pete Topping

Day conferences:

Recent Investigations in the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site (venue: Salisbury)

The Creation of 'Homes' in European Prehistory (venue: Durham)

Launching the English Heritage Research Strategy for Prehistory (venue: London)

Recent Developments in Palaeolithic Archaeology: The Impact of the Aggregates Levy

Environmental Techniques: Recent Applications for Interpreting Archaeology

Conferences: Archaeology and Climate Change

RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE BRITISH PALAEOOLITHIC

English Heritage and the Prehistoric Society are pleased to announce the launch of a new Research and Conservation Framework for the British Palaeolithic, published with the help of a grant from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund through Defra and English Heritage. The Framework has been developed by a working group representing a broad range of interests in all aspects of Palaeolithic and Pleistocene research. Building on the success of an earlier document published in 1999, and acknowledging the major developments in studies of the Palaeolithic that have taken place over the last decade, the Framework outlines a number of primary and strategic themes for current and future research, ranging from understanding the impact of Pleistocene climate change to developing new audiences for the story of early humans in Britain. The editors and specialist contributors hope that the document will become a useful resource for all those researching or managing Palaeolithic sites, deposits and artefacts, whether in the academic, curatorial, commercial or voluntary sector.

To receive a copy of the Research and Conservation Framework for the British Palaeolithic, please contact Jonathan Last, Head of Research Policy for Prehistory at English Heritage (email: jonathan.last@english-heritage.org.uk).

Highlights of Prehistoric Sardinia

Led by Colin Burgess

American Mid-West (Mound Builder) Tour

If numbers allow - another trip to the USA, following the successful 2007 tour to the South-West. For more information contact Dave McOmish at David.McOmish@english-heritage.org.uk'.

BOOK OFFER

The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq

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RECENT DISCOVERIES OF PETERBOROUGH WARE IN CENTRAL LONDON

The prehistoric archaeology of central London is both figuratively overshadowed and literally buried by that of the later periods of the capital's history which always grab the news headlines. Therefore, it is sometimes overlooked that before the Romans arrived, Londinium and its environs were part of the Lower Thames Valley, the rest of which we know has a rich and varied prehistoric archaeology. The aim of this article is to highlight two recent discoveries of Peterborough Ware in the City of London and Southwark.

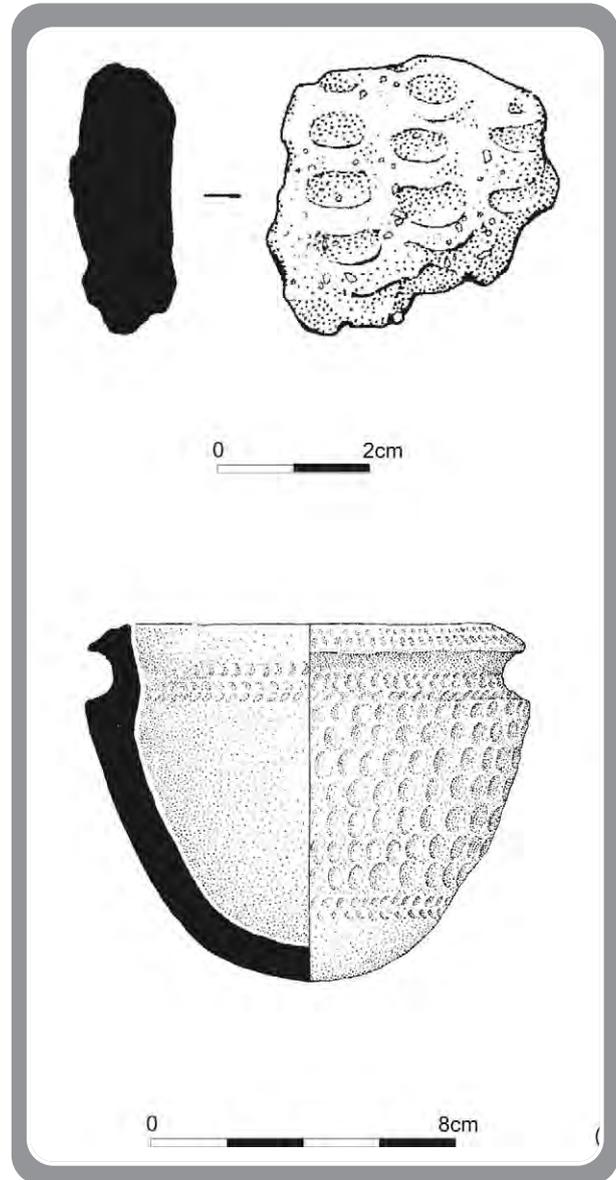
20-30 Gresham Street, Blossom's Inn, City of London (GHT00)

In the southwest corner of this site, excavations during 2001 revealed a prehistoric palaeochannel, which was gradually transformed into a marsh as it silted up and natural soil horizons developed across the area. The resulting wet hollow persisted until the 1st century AD. The local environment of this feature during the pre-Roman period seems to have been open grassland according to the surviving pollen, but as preservation was poor, this would favour the survival of the more robust herbaceous grains. Clustered around the palaeochannel were a number of shallow prehistoric hollows or pits of uncertain function. The fill of these hollows and the overlying brickearth soil horizons contained some 30 sherds of undiagnostic Neolithic pottery and one decorated sherd. This sherd is decorated on one side with rows of deep fingertip impressions, and the fingernail crescents can be clearly seen on most of the indentations. This decorated sherd is almost certainly Peterborough Ware and the rows of fingernail impressions are most consistent with the Mortlake sub-style of this type of pottery. The clay used for the sherd has a silty, slightly micaceous matrix and sparse, ill-sorted, medium to very coarse (up to 3mm) calcined flint inclusions; similar pastes were used for the eponymous vessels found at Mortlake and sherds from Whitechapel.

Further evidence of prehistoric activity on site was provided by the discovery of 81 residual flint artefacts, mostly flakes which cannot be precisely dated. The vast majority of these flints were found within early Roman deposits. The presence of this material confirms that there was human activity on site, the duration and character of which is uncertain. A recent study of the distribution of Neolithic material within the City of London by Holder and Jamieson shows that there is a broad scatter of finds including a number of axes, but there is no clear evidence of settlement; this evidence may have been destroyed by later activities during the early Roman period such as extensive top soil stripping and terracing

London Bridge City, Tooley Street, Southwark (TYT98)

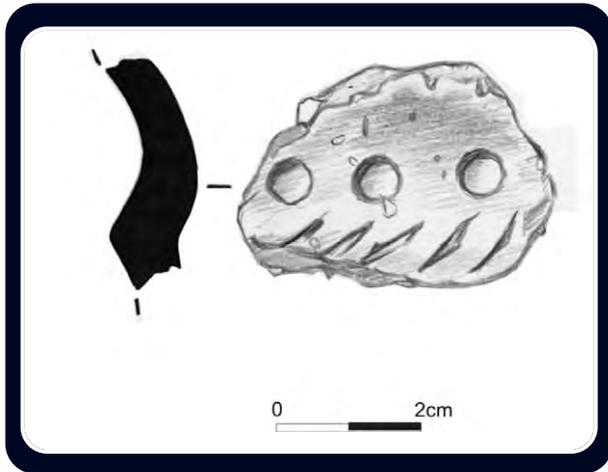
The original topography of the Southwark area consisted of a maze of estuarine channels and low gravel islands or eyots, which were the focus of prehistoric activity. The 1998-99 excavations at London Bridge City were located on the western edge of the Horsleydown eyot, and revealed evidence of prehistoric activity in the form of a number of struck flint flakes and pottery. A total of 161 sherds of mixed prehistoric date were recovered from eight contexts, mostly from channel fills and the others from dumped material believed to be derived from nearby occupation. Sieving of the latter deposits revealed a small quantity of bones belonging to the major mammalian domesticates. The majority of the pottery consists of abraded undiagnostic body sherds



The Peterborough ware sherd from Gresham Street and a reconstruction of the same vessel

and direct evidence for settlement or occupation, in the form of cut features, is lacking.

Of some note are two sherds of Mortlake-type Peterborough Ware bowl. They are made from a micaceous fabric with a fine matrix, moderate medium well-sorted quartz, moderate medium to coarse ill-sorted crushed calcined flint, rare coarse roseate quartz and coarse burnt organic inclusions. The use of flint and limited sand inclusions are typical of this type of pottery. The larger of the two sherds has some deep diagonal slashes on the rim and collar of the bowl, and there is a row of three clear deep impressions on the cavetto area under the collar. These impressions have been made with a blunt stick and there are corresponding bulges on the inside wall where the impressions have been made. Research on Peterborough Ware vessels from other sites in the London area has shown that they were variously decorated using slender fingertips, whittled sticks or twigs.



The Mortlake-type Peterborough Ware bowl sherd from London Bridge City

A small assemblage of 83 pieces of worked flint was recovered from the excavations, mostly in residual contexts. No diagnostic artefacts were recovered, but it is likely from the composition of the assemblage and the technology employed that the majority of the material is of mid-late Neolithic date. The retouched component is dominated by serrated and retouched flakes. The assemblage suggests domestic activity with evidence for knapping, various processing tasks and possibly hide preparation. The other retouched forms include scrapers, one made on a fragment from a polished implement, a piercer and a miscellaneous retouched piece.

Discussion

Peterborough Ware is part of the pan-British and Irish 'impressed ware' phenomenon, which appears shortly before 3300 BC. Recent re-evaluation by Alex Gibson of the radiocarbon dates available for Peterborough Ware pottery indicates that all three of the Peterborough Ware types - Ebbsfleet, Mortlake and Fengate - were fully developed by 3000 BC, but that these were 'no longer in vogue' by the middle of the third millennium.

Peterborough Ware sherds have been recovered from a number of sites in the City of London and its environs. The general pattern for the Thames Valley is that Peterborough Ware has been recovered from pits, middens, monumental ditches, burials and watery deposits. In the London region, research by Cotton and Johnson has shown that most of the Peterborough Ware finds have come from pits (49 instances); the next most common depositional context is a river channel or foreshore (16 instances). It is of note that in the London area the vast majority of the complete and semi-complete Peterborough Ware vessels come from the Thames. The closest find spots for Peterborough Ware in south London to the London Bridge City find are 29 Addington Street; 11 St Thomas's Street, Southwark; and Skinmarket Place, Bankside.

Charlotte Thompson (Archaeology South-East) with David Saxby and Bruce Watson (MoLAS)

Acknowledgements

The excavations at 20-30 Gresham Street were undertaken by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) and were funded by Land Securities plc. The excavations at London Bridge City were undertaken by MoLAS and funded by CIT/Markborough. The flint reports were produced by Tony Grey (GHT00) and Philippa Bradley (TYT98). Figure 1 was produced by Faith Vardy and figure 2 by Sandra Rowntree of the MoLAS Drawing Office.

CONFERENCES

British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology

St Anne's College, Oxford, 5-7 September 2008

The tenth annual BABAO conference will be jointly hosted by Oxford Archaeology and the University of Oxford. Sessions include 'The modified body: bio-cultural approaches to the study of human skeletal modification' and 'Ten years down the line: osteoarchaeology at the molecular level'. There will also be a round table discussion on human remains and ethics in Britain. The conference is open to both members and non-members. Registration details, session abstracts, details of conference venue and accommodation are available at www.babao.org.uk. For any further enquiries please contact Louise Loe (l.loe@oxfordarch.co.uk) or Ceri Boston (c.boston@oxfordarch.co.uk) at Oxford Archaeology, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 OES; tel 01865 263800.

From Desert to Wetland

A weekend conference in honour of Professors Bryony Coles and Valerie Maxfield on their retirement. University of Exeter, 27-28 September 2008

Speakers will include Lindsay Allason-Jones, Alan Bowman, David Breeze, John Coles, Ralph Fyfe, Frances Griffith, Bill Hanson, Anthony Harding, Mark Hassall, Neil Holbrook, Linda Hurcombe, Rebecca Jones, Paul Mellars, Henrietta Quinnell, Denis Ramseyer and Alison Sheridan. Programme and application form available at <http://www.sogaer.ex.ac.uk/archaeology/conferences/present/desert-wetland2008-programme.shtml>

Bronze Age Forum 2008

University of Sheffield, 22-23 November 2008

The next meeting of the Bronze Age Forum will be hosted by the Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield. The meeting is open to anyone with an interest in the Bronze Age archaeology of Britain, Ireland and our nearest Continental neighbours. 20 minute papers are invited on new research and recent discoveries in any of these regions. To propose a paper, please visit www.shf.ac.uk/archaeology/conferences/baf2008. The deadline for paper proposals is 30 September 2008.

THE SOUTHERN KINTYRE PROJECT: INTERACTIONS ACROSS THE IRISH SEA

Background to the project

Recent research on the early prehistory of Britain and Ireland has highlighted how little we understand about social interaction between communities. Historically, there is plenty of evidence to show close connections between western Scotland and eastern Ireland, but were these also present in prehistory? The evidence as it currently stands is rather ambiguous. In the Late Mesolithic (c. 6000-4000 BC) different styles of stone tools were found either side of the Irish Sea which has led scholars to suggest that people were not in contact. However, we also know that people were excellent sailors and fishers in the Mesolithic, and were more than capable of crossing the Irish Sea. By the beginning of the Neolithic (c. 4000-2500 BC), there is much stronger evidence for contact between Scotland and Ireland. Antrim flint is found in Scotland, Arran pitchstone is found in Ireland, and polished stone axes were regularly crossing the Irish Sea. Monument and pottery forms were also similar. However, the nature of interaction across the Irish Sea in the Neolithic is still poorly understood, and it is often modelled as episodic. This project was thus designed to gain a much fuller understanding of interactions across the Irish Sea, and Kintyre, just 12 miles from Ireland, is a perfect study area for investigating these questions.

Previous work

Prior to this project, members of the Kintyre Antiquarian Society had identified flint scatters through fieldwalking in southern Kintyre. In 2006, we fieldwalked 20 fields, most of which are located in our study area around Southend, Blasthill and Macharioch. We found a considerable quantity of flint which indicates Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age occupation of this landscape. Of particular note was an assemblage of Neolithic finds from Brunerican Farm, including arrowheads. We re-walked a field at Macharioch where a Late Mesolithic scatter had already been identified by Angus Martin. Here, we found more Mesolithic flints. We also conducted a small excavation at Macharioch and found the remains of a wooden structure which may be prehistoric in date.

Fieldwalking 2007

In 2007, we walked a total of 11 fields. We found so much flint that we are still in the process of analysing it. However, we have completed the analysis on the material we found at Macharioch, where we re-walked the field where last year's excavations were located. We have also analysed the flint found by Angus Martin in this field, and it confirms the previous interpretation that this was a major Late Mesolithic occupation site. Last year, we took some soil samples from the remains of the wooden structure associated with this scatter at Macharioch,

and these have produced charcoal from trees as well as a small fragment of a hazelnut shell. These are exciting finds because it means that we can get them radiocarbon dated. This means we may well be able to date the wooden structure and the flint assemblage from this field.

We found sizeable assemblages at Low Machrimore and in another field at Macharioch which appear to be Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age in date. At Gartvaigh, we walked three fields: two of these produced a large assemblage of burnt flint, as well as some diagnostically Neolithic and Bronze Age artefacts. The assemblage of burnt flint from these fields is very interesting. Flint does not occur naturally in western Scotland so people in prehistory would have had to collect beach flint or import flint (from Antrim for example) and this has led to suggestions that flint was quite a rare resource. If this was the case, why were people burning large quantities of it? Was this a form of conspicuous consumption, the deliberate destruction of a valuable resource?

At the site of Machribeg we found many thousands of flints, which look to be Mesolithic in date. This site is potentially very exciting since this will be the second major Mesolithic site in southern Kintyre.

Survey 2007

We also conducted a walkover survey of Blasthill where we found a number of possible structures, including a possible round house. This was subsequently chosen for exploratory excavation (see below). A series of boundary walls were also found on Blasthill, and a few possible cairns. We also examined the molehills and erosion scars on our walks and found a surprising quantity of material including a very nice thumbnail scraper and some prehistoric pottery.

Geophysical survey was conducted at Macharioch over the structure excavated in 2006. Unfortunately, results did not show the remaining part of the structure. This may be because the structure was so ephemeral in the first place. We also conducted geophysical survey around the unscheduled part of the chambered tomb at Macharioch. Nothing was visible in the plots, which suggests that any cairn which may once have existed at this site has been completely ploughed away. We also conducted geophysical survey on Blasthill over a section of boundary wall. This was more successful, and there is the possibility that geophysics could be used to trace these walls where they disappear into peat.

Excavation 2007

Our walkover survey of Blasthill revealed a number of hitherto unknown archaeological features and in the summer of 2007, we decided to open a number of small exploratory trenches to examine these.

Blasthill site 1: this was the site of a possible round house. We opened a small trench over what appeared



Blasthill round house outer facing wall (view looking south)

to be the wall of the round house. We did not excavate this as we did not have the means to conduct the post-excavation analysis potentially required from such a site. However, we did find a clearly defined faced wall in our trench, which confirmed that this was a round house. This is the first of its kind in southern Kintyre. The interior of the house was not excavated but topsoil finds included two thumbnail scrapers, almost certainly indicative of a Bronze Age date. The site bears a striking resemblance to Bronze Age round houses in the Inner Hebrides. We opened a small test pit to the south of the round house and although there were no archaeological features, we did find the tip of a flint knife. This is also probably Bronze Age in date.

Blasthill site 2: in our walkover survey, we identified a boundary wall running close to the round house. We put a small trench through it, to reveal that it would once have been a boundary of considerable size. It was primarily constructed of earth, with some stones. We took samples of the soil from the boundary which were analysed for macrofossils in Glasgow, but unfortunately no material was found. At present, then, we have no idea if this feature was contemporary with the round house, but future excavation may be able to answer this question.

Blasthill site 3: this site was also found through walkover survey, and was the remains of a sub-rectangular structure. On excavation, it appears we found the remains of a post-Medieval structure (late eighteenth/early nineteenth century). The walls were made of turf, so it may have been a fairly short-lived construction. A small assemblage of post-Medieval material culture, including ceramic and glass, suggests that people lived here. There was also a small quantity of earlier flint finds from this site which suggests that the post-Medieval structure may have reused an earlier feature.

Conclusions and plans for 2008

Our four weeks of work in 2007 were very successful. We have found more material that adds to our picture of life in southern Kintyre in prehistory. We have also shown that Blasthill has many prehistoric remains which would benefit from further archaeological investigation. Both walkover and geophysical survey are useful ways of finding more archaeological sites in this area. We plan to return to southern Kintyre this year to carry on with the project, with more fieldwalking and more excavation planned.

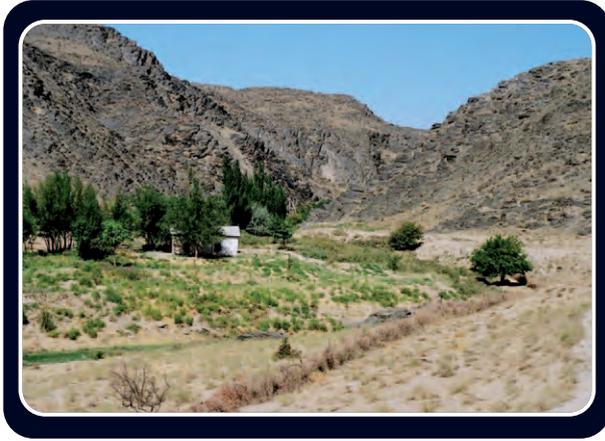
Vicki Cummings (University of Central Lancashire) and Gary Robinson (University of Wales, Bangor)

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the farmers who gave us access to their land, and to Messers McCorkindale at Machariorch Farm who granted us permission to excavate on Blasthill. Many thanks to Angus Martin, Frances Hood and Mary-Ann and Andy Buntin for all their help, and to the excavation team from Cardiff and Preston. Many thanks to the British Academy and the Prehistoric Society for funding the project in 2007.

RAMBLES IN ROCK ART PART 3: THE PETROGLYPHS OF SARMISHSAI

Bumping along the narrow tarmac road across the sweltering sands of central Uzbekistan, there is no hint of the richly decorated chasm which lies ahead. For miles the road undulates across the barren landscape as it heads towards the low rounded hills of the Karatau ridge, a westerly extension of the larger Zarafshan mountain range. But then the road turns and descends rapidly into a previously hidden valley, soon passing exposures of the blocky sedimentary rocks which higher have eroded to provide the base minerals of the desert. Farther on, and deeper still, the exposures are of jagged metamorphic rocks, highly fractured by tectonic movement and blackened through long exposure to sun and wind. The floor of the valley, however, contains a narrow strip of relatively flat land crossed by a fast-flowing stream which offers life to both a ribbon of luxuriant trees and a small community of inhabitants. A single whitewashed farmhouse near well-tended plots stands at the entrance to a narrow winding gorge but just round the corner looms the bizarre spectacle of a fantasy land - a holiday camp for children of the industrious workers from the district's factories and mines. With the necessary authorisation, paperwork and guides, keys can be obtained from the camp to unlock the gates to the wild landscape beyond and the rich archaeological treasure trove it contains.



Thus, one reaches Sarmishsai, a natural gorge situated in the centre of Uzbekistan, 30km north-east of Navoi, a major mining town on the southern fringe of the extensive Kyzyl Kum desert, and 170km north-west of the better known Silk Road city of Samarkand. It is not marked on maps but the use of a GPS places it at 40° 15' 47" N, 65°35' 09" E at an average elevation of 750m a.m.s.l. Abandoning the vehicle, one follows narrow paths that hug the base of the steep craggy cliffs. Soon it becomes apparent that many of the vertical rock faces (and some of the horizontal ledges) on both sides of the valley bear pecked engravings of animals, people and abstract symbols. The rock itself is naturally split into blocks of various sizes so the proportions of the 'canvas' available for decoration are varied, but they are usually flat and smooth. In some apparently special locations the symbols seem to cover every rock face from below the level of the path to as high as it is possible to see. Some are quite distinct while other, deeply patinated examples are more difficult to discern.

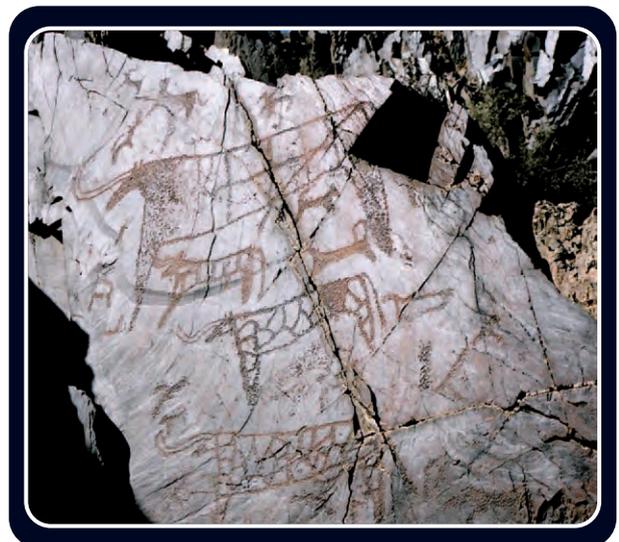
Though doubtless known to generations of local people, the petroglyphs of Sarmishsai were only 'discovered' by an archaeologist (K. I. Mukhammedov) in 1959, and the first description with drawings was published in 1966 (by N. K. Tashkenbayev). However, there followed several seasons of fieldwork in the 1960s (by A. Kabirov), which led to a major publication ten years later. Subsequently, there has been an even more detailed study by a joint Uzbek-Polish team, which resulted in a number of comprehensive reports (including an excellent introduction, *Symbols through time: interpreting the rock art of central Asia*, written by Dr Andrzej Rozwadowski and published in 2004 by Instytut Wschodni, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, ISBN 83-86094-94-X). These studies have identified some 4000 petroglyphs throughout the gorge, the majority concentrated in its narrow middle section.

The Sarmish Gorge is the most exuberant of the 150 rock art sites in Uzbekistan, and has been compared with other important Central Asian locations, such as Tamgaly in Kazakhstan (PAST 56, 2007), the

almost inaccessible Saimaly Tash in Kyrgyzstan, and Gobustan in Azerbaijan, amongst others. The distribution of such rock art sites also extends eastward into the Bardaku and Altay mountains of Xinjiang, Siberia and Mongolia. There are undeniable similarities between the sites, especially in the animal species depicted, but each has its own distinctive range of styles. At Sarmishsai, the superimposition of images and the use of different techniques of execution are often apparent.

The most striking designs are those of bulls with long curved horns, their coats and musculature indicated by complicated internal patterns. Some of the representations with elongated bodies, raised heads and upward curved horns are considered to be the earliest, and are thought to depict aurochs rather than domesticates. Most commentators place their execution at the end of the Mesolithic, in the third millennium BC, and argue against an earlier (Upper Palaeolithic) date. Human figures with bows and accompanied by dogs are often placed beside the wild animals, and the compositions seem to depict hunting scenes, acts of bravery, or even metaphoric battles against the forces of life. But it is often questionable whether all the images are contemporaneous. Human figures with strong legs and thin arms, often held aloft, seem to represent something totally different. The majority probably date from the Bronze Age, the time when the territory was settled by Indo-Iranian people. Elsewhere, images of delicate ungulates with long curved horns, possibly argali (wild mountain sheep) or ibex, abound. The flowing style of these images is thought to belong to the so-called Sako-Scythian tradition associated with the early nomads of the first millennium BC. Later scenes show warriors with crown-like hats, riding saddled horses and brandishing scimitar swords. Clearly, the artwork is a palimpsest from many different periods.

The surrounding area also contains a range of archaeological sites which are the subject of ongoing research. They include settlements, enclosures, funerary precincts and burial mounds, some of

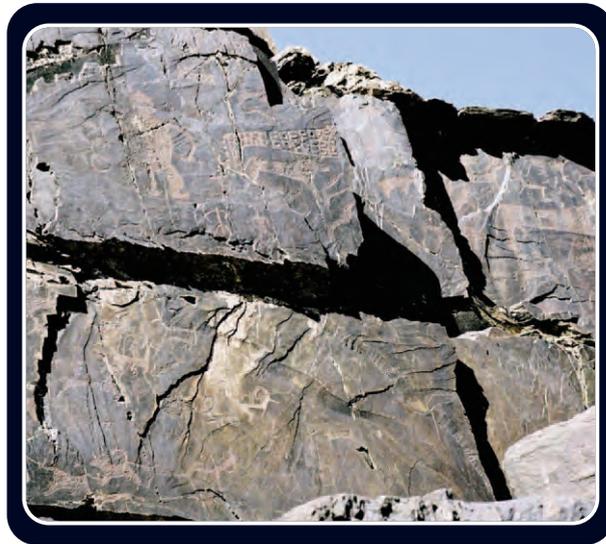


which have recently been excavated by a joint Uzbek- Norwegian team. Similar collaboration has extended to the recording of oral traditions amongst local villagers and, with the aid of a Japanese university, the removal of painted graffiti, as well as the documentation and interpretation of the rock art noted above. Nonetheless, according to the site managers, Sarmishsai 'still remains poorly studied and little known to the world community'. This note in PAST can, therefore, make a small contribution to the broadening of knowledge about the site, and the importance of central Asian rock art in general.



Nationally, the area has been designated a natural and cultural reserve of great significance but the site has not yet been accepted on to the World Heritage List. Uzbekistan already boasts four sites on the List (namely the centres of the ancient cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, the abandoned site of Itchan Kala, and Shakhrisabz, the birth place of the national icon, Amir Timur). The research and documentation noted above, together with grant aid from Norway, are making invaluable contributions to the process involved with official recognition by UNESCO. However, as the guardians of the now-famous sites of the Foz Côa in Portugal have discovered (PAST 36, 2000), firm measures will be necessary to secure the conservation of this open site, as well as to educate visitors. Although the geological exposures are often robust, some of the faces which bear the impressive glyphs are friable and vulnerable. It is now possible to visit the site with commercial tour groups but neither local people nor tour guides restrain visitors from climbing the rock faces to take a better view. Nor do they point out routes that can best sustain the visitor pressure. As people enthusiastically scramble up the faces, the 'chink' of falling shards of the slaty rock warns those below of

the crumbling surface beneath the feet of the climbers. However, scrambling up the cliff may take the visitor so close to the decorated panels that the images cannot be appreciated, and often a better view is gained from the ground, especially with a pair of binoculars. Close scrutiny shows that the most visible engravings have acquired their pale colour through recent 'cleaning' (abrasion) and occasional 'modification'. Personal initials accompanied by the dates of visits are clear evidence of unwelcome modern graffiti.



Such problems are common to all remote rock art sites but more stringent ways of controlling access and the behaviour of visitors requires costly investment and the willing cooperation of the local community whose day to day priorities lie elsewhere. The economy of Uzbekistan is improving rapidly, thanks in part to its natural resources, but also to joint ventures with foreign investors (for example, what we used to know as Vauxhall Astra cars are now manufactured in the country thanks to a collaborative project with the South Korean manufacturer, Daewoo). The type of international collaboration noted above is timely and may offer one route towards the future conservation of one of central Asia's most important archaeological sites. The country has a wealth of fascinating archaeological monuments of all periods, many constructed solely from sun-backed brick. Both these and the different artistic styles represented at Sarmishsai point to varied ethnic origins. The rock art is thus a perfect symbol for the multi-cultural society evident in Uzbekistan, an identity which the country is proud of, especially since its independence from the former Soviet Union.

Andrew J. Lawson