

# PAST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY



Registered Office: University College London, Institute of Archaeology, 31–34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY

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## The first radiocarbon dates for the construction and use of the interior of the monument at Gavrinis (Larmor-Baden, France)

Following on from the initial recording of the representations of axes and axeheads in the passage tomb at Gavrinis (Morbihan) that was undertaken in 2007 as part of the JADE research programme (Cassen, S. in Pétrequin, P. *et al.* 2012, *Jade. Grandes haches alpines du Néolithique européen*, vol. 2, 1310–53), a more ambitious project was started in 2010. This project has aimed to acquire, process, interpret and present information pertaining to this famous Neolithic monument that forms part of Europe's architectural heritage. It has involved the compilation of a corpus of the symbolic engravings, along with a new topographical and archaeological survey of the mound and of the passage tomb underneath this mound. In order to test our interpretative models we needed to create an accurate representation of both the architecture and the symbols that had been pecked onto the stones (and perhaps coloured), taking advantage of

recent advances in digital imagery to achieve this (Lescop, L. *et al.* in Addison, A. *et al.* 2013. *Digital Heritage International Congress (Marseille, France)*, vol. 2, 561–8; Cassen, S. *et al.* 2014. *Journal of Archaeological Science* 45, 126–40).

The project also set out to obtain more precise dating information concerning not only the site in general, but also the engraved orthostats, the cap- and lintel-stones and the paving slabs in the passage. Several designs are effectively invisible, while others had been truncated when the stones in question were modified to fit the architecture of the monument. Yet other designs had clearly been created after certain orthostats had been erected. We attempted to understand better this *longue durée* in the use and understanding (or misunderstanding, or rejection) of the symbolic scenes thereby figured on the stones.



The passage, showing the location of S11 and S12

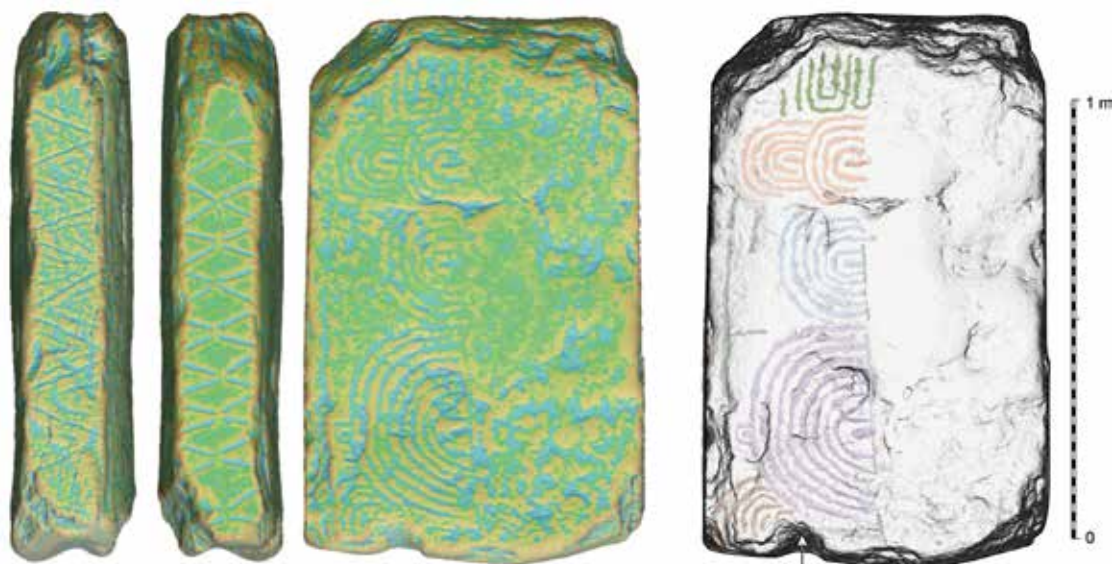


Slab S11

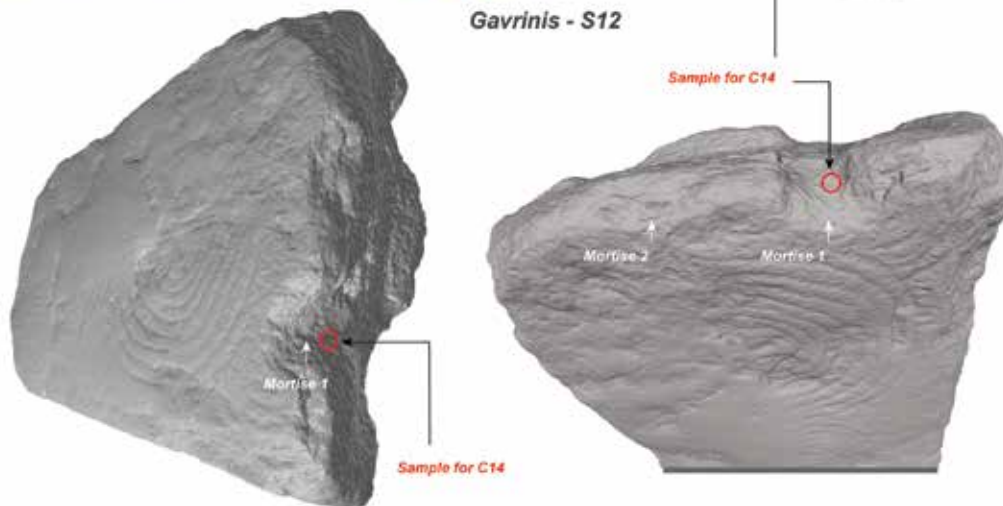
Up to this point, there had been only one radiocarbon date for Gavrinis (Le Roux, C. 1984. *Gallia Préhistoire* 26 fasc. 2, 309–33). This related to the blocking of the front of the monument with stones, thereby closing the passage and obliterating the façade. The date obtained from one of the carbonised posts found in this blocking material (GIF-5766:  $4470 \pm 80$  BP, 3360–2925 cal BC at 95.4% probability using OxCal v.4.2.3) indicates that this ‘condemnation’ of the tomb must have happened at the beginning of the final Neolithic.

The cleaning of the interior of the passage that took place to facilitate the photogrammetric recording of the floor of the tomb gave us the opportunity to work closely with two of the paving slabs (S11 and S12, both engraved) and with one of the covering slabs (P2), which was also engraved but is lying on its edge, with the design invisible to the eyes of the visitor.

**Slab S11:** Once this had been cleaned and the modern sediments that had accumulated from the shoes of visiting tourists had been removed, an oval concavity filled with yellowish sediment was discovered, preserved in a hollow in the granite monolith. This silty clay was sieved and four fragments of charcoal were recovered and analysed. Two species were present: *Pomoideae* (of the pear/apple variety) and oak. The two narrow-diameter (27 mm) fragments of *Pomoideae* were selected for dating; bearing in mind that the annual radial growth of this species is 2.71 mm, we were able to estimate that the wood that had produced these charcoal fragments had been around five years old. This allowed us to avoid the ‘old wood’ problem, and thus to obtain a date that would be closest to that of the use of the monument.



Gavrinis - S12



Slab S12

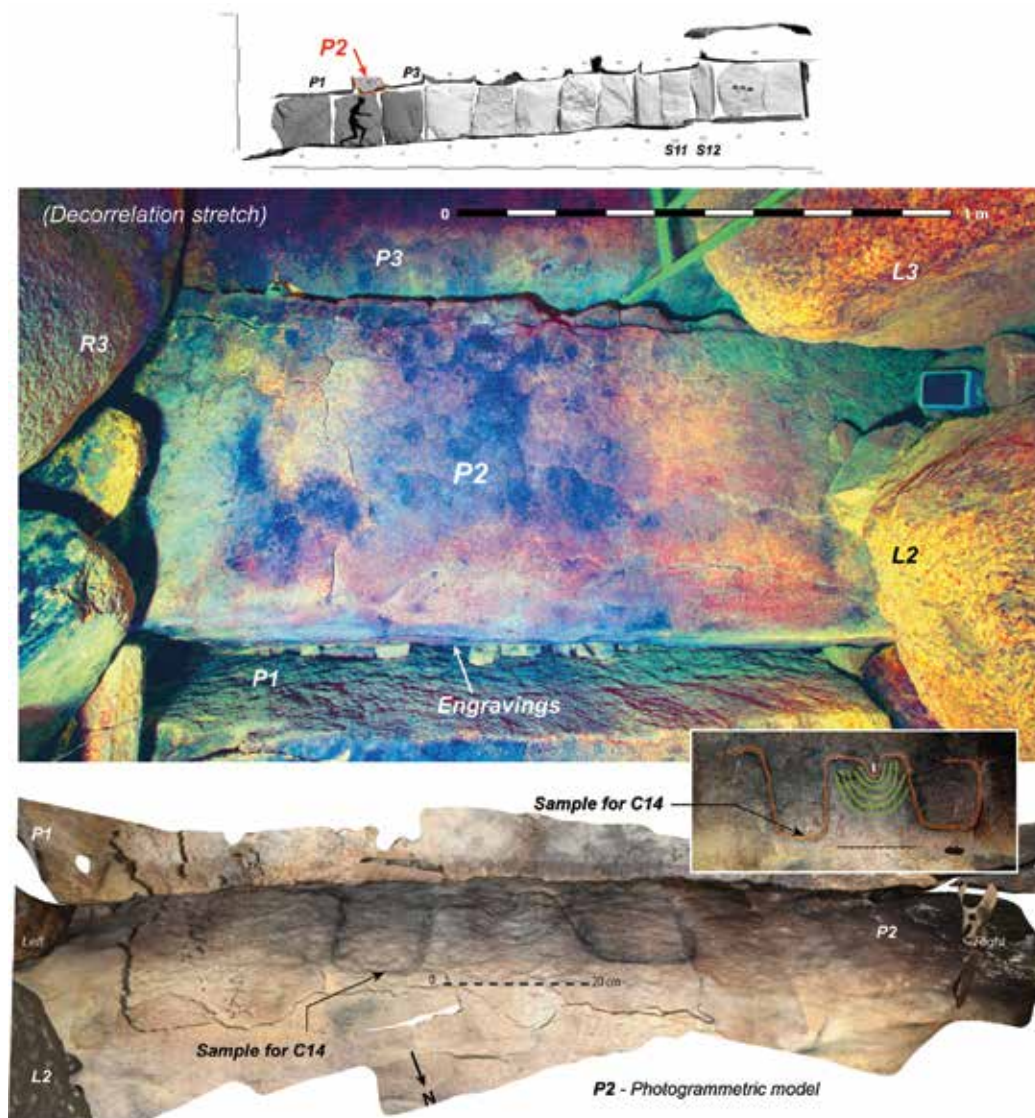
The AMS date that was obtained through the Artemis research programme in May 2014, and which is published here for the first time (Lyon-10787: 5065 ± 40 BP, 3964–3773 cal BC at 95.4% probability), offers us a first glimpse into the period of use of the passage tomb interior. It is exactly contemporary with the use of the façade of the Table des Marchands (Locmariaquer) passage tomb. It is already known, from previous work by Charles-Tanguy Le Roux (1985, *Antiquity* 59, 183–7), that these two sites are linked by the fact that two conjoining fragments from a fallen, pre-existing massive decorated standing stone had formed the capstones of the chambers at Gavrinis and the Table des Marchands.

**Slab S12** is better known, both as a threshold stone and – above all – for having decoration on both of its faces and both of its sides (Shee Twohig, E. 1981. *The Megalithic Art of Western Europe*). The lasergrammetrical and photogrammetrical recording of this monolith has, however, allowed us to spot hitherto unrecognised evidence for the deliberate fracture of this stone at one end: it takes the form of two deep mortice-hollows. Thus, this already-ancient stone

must have been exactly shaped in order to place it in the desired position in the passage. Our study of the remarkable condition of the surfaces (in terms of their fracture, shaping and finishing) allowed us to spot that several flecks of wood charcoal were encrusted onto the surface of the granite at the bottom of one of the mortice-hollows. One fragment (of oak) was examined under a binocular microscope and delivered to the Lyon laboratory in order to attempt its AMS radiocarbon dating.

The positive result (Lyon-10785: 5305 ± 35 BP, 4241–4005 cal BC at 95.4% probability) was very encouraging in providing us with a new means of examining and dating the elements of megalithic architecture. It is most likely to date to the foundation and initial construction phase at Gavrinis, at the point at which the slabs were introduced.

**Slab P2** is a roofing lintel near the entrance to the passage. The engravings which were recognised relatively late on, in 1925 (Le Rouzic, Z. 1935. *Bulletin Société Préhistorique Française* 2, 128–31), are scarcely visible on the edge facing the entrance, separated from the edge of P1 by several



Slab P2

centimetres. An area of dark colouration in the base of the engraving was unsuccessfully analysed using non-destructive portable X-ray fluorescence spectrometry: no peak among the normal colouring materials (such as manganese) was present. A sample was therefore taken for examination and analysis using a scanning electron microscope, and this revealed the presence of carbon.

An attempt was then made to obtain a radiocarbon date from this small amount of carbon in the sample. The result (Lyon-10786:  $100 \pm 30$  BP, cal AD 1682–1935 at 95.4% probability) came as a surprise! We finally realised that this dark material had probably resulted from the researches undertaken by Zacharie Le Rouzic in the 1920s: it appears that he tended to colour the engravings using carbon, in order to assist his tracing of the designs. This finding therefore casts doubt on the announcement in 2012 of the presence of black

Neolithic colouring on the walls of Gavrinis (Bueno Ramirez, P. *et al.* 2012. *Trabajos de Prehistoria* 69(1), 123–32).

### Acknowledgements

We extend our thanks to Alison Sheridan for having invited us to present these unpublished dates and for having translated the text of this note.

*Serge Cassen (CNRS, Laboratoire de Recherche Archéologique, Université de Nantes (France); serge.cassen@univ-nantes.fr), Valentin Grimaud (Laboratoire de Recherche Archéologique, Université de Nantes), Laurent Lescop (École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture, Nantes), Nancy Marcoux (Laboratoire d'Archéosciences, Université de Rennes), Christine Oberlin (Laboratoire du Radiocarbone, Université de Lyon), Guirec Querré (Laboratoire d'Archéosciences, Université de Rennes)*

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## Early evidence of the Tooth Fairy? A pair of front milk teeth found at Skara Brae, Orkney

Preparations for the definitive publication of excavations at the Late Neolithic settlement at Skara Brae by David Clarke and Alexandra (Lekky) Shepherd on behalf of Historic Scotland have involved revisiting parts of the finds archive held by National Museums Scotland. This has thrown up an intriguing and poignant discovery in the form of a pair of upper central deciduous human incisors – front milk teeth, in other words – that must have been shed by a child who lived in the settlement. The teeth have been identified by Kath McSweeney, who comments that ‘They would have been shed around the same time, not necessarily together, but perhaps days, weeks, or months apart’. They were not found together, however. One comes from the lowest occupation layer on the site (namely context 168, which has been radiocarbon dated to 3350–3020 cal BC – see *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* 13, 2012, 205, for details), while

the other comes from higher up stratigraphically: a clay/ash/refuse amalgam, context 162, laid over the remains of an early structure, Structure 1, and dated to *c.* 2900–2840 cal BC. In both cases, a principal component of the context is ash debris, probably derived from house floor or hearth sweepings. The most plausible explanation is that both teeth had belonged to the later context, but that one of these tiny items worked its way down to the lower level through bioturbation of some sort.

Had these teeth been found in a recess in one of the houses, it would have been tempting to concoct a charming picture of a Neolithic belief in the Tooth Fairy. How one chooses to interpret the actual evidence for discard (after curation?) is a moot point. These are not the only milk teeth to have been found on the site: two deciduous molars, shed (possibly, but not necessarily by the same individual) around the age of 10, were also recovered but details of their findspots are less clear.

These teeth are important as a tangible link to the inhabitants of Skara Brae and in particular to one, temporarily gap-toothed, child (whether s/he ever sang ‘All I want for Solstice is my two front teeth’, we shall never know). Human remains from within the Neolithic site are sparse, and the two famous adult female skeletons found under a bed structure in House 7 during Vere Gordon Childe’s excavations in the 1920s are sadly suspected to have been discarded during a rationalisation of collections several decades ago in Glasgow University. A round-up of all the human remains found in and around Skara Brae will feature in the final publication.

*Alison Sheridan (National Museums Scotland), David Clarke (Skara Brae project), Lekky Shepherd (Skara Brae project) and Kathleen McSweeney (Edinburgh University)*



*Pair of deciduous human incisors from Skara Brae (photo: Alison Sheridan).*

## A newly discovered inhumation burial with an amber 'necklace' from Amesbury, Wiltshire

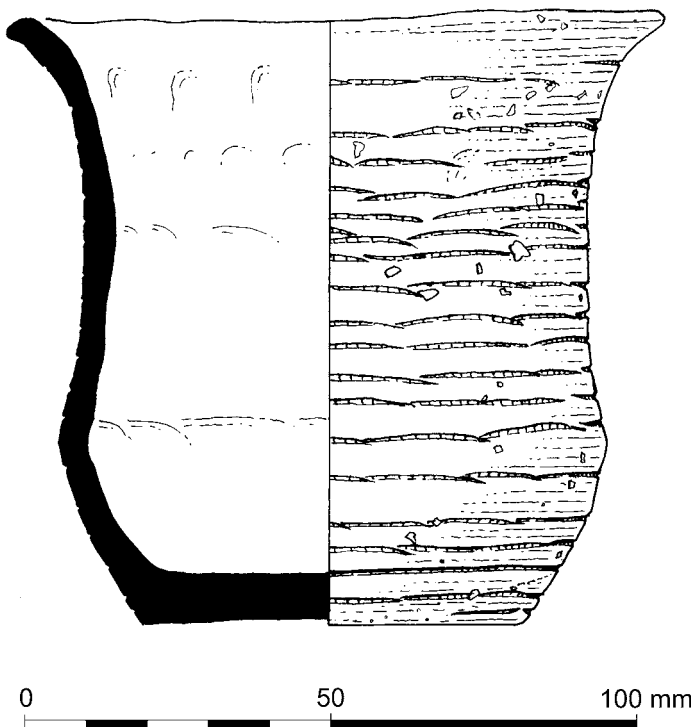
An inhumation burial of a woman aged 17–19 years, found with the remains of an amber 'necklace', was recently discovered during excavations on a housing development (funded by Bloor Homes). The grave was aligned approximately north-south, and the woman had been laid in a crouched position, on her left side, with her head to the north, facing east. Fragments from several amber spacer plates and three beads were found in the area of her left hand. This was the second burial with objects of amber to be found during the excavations, which have already produced a significant number of Beaker and Early to Middle Bronze Age burials, mostly from 'flat' graves. Two consistent radiocarbon dates (SUERC-49182 and 50639: 1440–1300 cal BC at 95% confidence) on the bone indicate that the woman died during the late fifteenth or fourteenth century BC.

The burial was covered by large flint nodules, packed along the east and west sides of the body and above the ribcage. Flint packing is a feature that has been noted in other graves of second millennium date from the excavations, and could indicate that the grave had been marked with a small flint cairn; alternatively it might have had some ritual or symbolic significance. Flint nodules could have been gathered for quite prosaic reasons during cultivation – we know from the remains of roundhouses, charred plants, quern fragments, and cereal impressions in pottery that the local population were settled and growing and processing cereal crops.

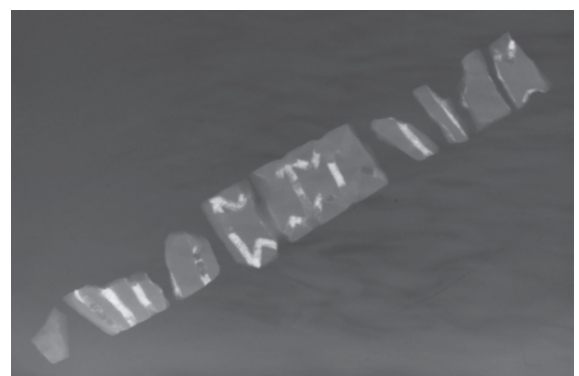
The grave lay immediately north of a possible tree-throw hole that was found to contain a near complete Beaker. It was not possible to establish with certainty the stratigraphic relationship between the two features, and although it is very unlikely that the amber and the Beaker are of similar date, it is still possible that they were buried at the same time. We have evidence from the excavations that a number of the graves were revisited in prehistory, with the possibility that some material, including objects and human bone, was removed from them. While it may be entirely coincidental, therefore, that the burial and pot were in such close proximity, it is also possible that we are looking at evidence for the deliberate removal, incorporation and reburial of old material as part of a later funerary rite.

The radiocarbon date from the burial is an important result as it would place it at the start of the Middle Bronze Age, at a time when Deverel-Rimbury style pottery was in use. It is possible that the beads were already old when buried but this awaits the results of research on the origins, style and character of the spacer plates. The Beaker in question is small, low-carinated and decorated all-over with impressed comb – very similar to a pot from the 'Amesbury Archer' burial. It is one of about 20 cord/comb-impressed early Beaker (twenty-fourth–twenty-third centuries BC) vessels recovered from graves and pits from the excavations. It is also one of three small Bell Beakers from the excavations that from their small size were possibly made for children.

*Alistair J. Barclay and Andrew B. Powell,  
Wessex Archaeology*



*The small all-over comb Bell Beaker (illustrated by S.E. James, © Wessex Archaeology)*



*X-ray image of amber spacer plates (L. Wootten, © Wessex Archaeology)*

## Europa 2014

Over 150 delegates descended on a warm but grey Cardiff to celebrate the awarding of this year's Europa prize to Professor Alasdair Whittle. As has now become tradition, the conference was spread over two days with the Friday sessions being delivered by Prof Whittle's ex-students and collaborators dealing with various aspects of the Neolithic of Britain. These papers ranged from the chronology of the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition (Seren Griffiths) and the origins of the British Neolithic (Duncan Garrow) to diet and the exploitation of wild and domesticated resources through palaeoenvironmental and biomolecular analyses (Amy Bogaard, Lucy Cramp and Rick Schulting). The abandonment of marine resources in favour of terrestrial foods as demonstrated by isotope analyses has been questioned in recent years but now seems to be supported by other strands of evidence such as absorbed residue analyses from lipids in early ceramics. The almost exclusive evidence for dairying in Carinated Bowl assemblages contrasts with an apparent decline in the exploitation of dairy products in the middle and later Neolithic though I suspect that this may be more a result of greater assemblage variation than a real economic indicator. The sudden appearance of dairying and Carinated Bowl over the whole of Britain and Ireland at the start of the Neolithic does seem to reinforce the idea of a Neolithic package. Alex Bayliss put us all right on radiocarbon dating in her keynote lecture at the end of the afternoon which was a veritable *tour de force* on the history and use of Bayesian modelling as well as highlighting the future direction of the 'dark art'. A wine reception sponsored by Cambridge University Press made for a very sociable end to an excellent day.

Saturday had much more of a European emphasis by Alasdair's collaborators on the 'Times of our lives' project – an ambitious project aimed at resolving Neolithic chronology at a European scale. Wolfram Schier and Eszter Bánffy discussed tell sites in southeast Europe while Penny Bickle spoke about Linearbandkeramik economy from lipid analyses. Leo Garcia Sanjuán examined social complexity in southern Iberia largely based on his work at the staggeringly large enclosure of Valencina de la Concepción (Seville) which encloses in excess of 400 hectares. Differing hugely in scale, David Clarke gave an introduction to the history of excavations and resulting problems in interpreting Skara Brae. His idea that it is not a series of houses but rather a single building enclosing similar cells is an attractive one and might explain



*Alison Sheridan presents the Europa prize to Prof Alasdair Whittle*

why house 8 lies outside the main building, especially if it is a later addition, as was suggested in the lecture. The Society's AGM was well attended and admirably steered by our President Alison Sheridan. It was Alison's last AGM having served her 4 years and after the election of officers she handed over the reigns to her successor Alex Gibson. Alison was presented with a leaving gift from council in the form of a replica of the Little Cressingham amber necklace pandering to Alison's love of Bronze Age 'bling'. Alison then took back control and presented the Europa prize to Alasdair Whittle who in usual form gave an extremely wide-ranging and detailed lecture on Neolithic Europe and in particular the preliminary results from his 'Times of our lives' project. The depth and range of Alasdair's knowledge left us in no doubt of his worthiness as a recipient of this prestigious award.

As usual, bookstalls by Oxbow, Cambridge University Press and BAR gave delegates the chance to swell their libraries and a series of excellent posters allowed new researchers to publicise their research. General consensus at the concluding wine reception was that this had been yet another jewel in the Society's crown: stimulating lectures, new research, an excellent Europa lecture and, above all, a celebration of prehistory. Thanks are due to Alison Sheridan, Niall Sharples and his team of brilliant student helpers for organising and ensuring the smooth running of the event.

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### *Errata*

The editor would like to apologise for two errors in the report on the Bronze Age Forum meeting that appeared in the last edition of *PAST* (April 2014, page 13–14). The co-organiser was named as Eileen Murphy but was in fact Gill Plunkett. Speaker Alice Rogers's name was also erroneously given as Alice Roberts. Apologies to both Gill and Alice.

## Goodbye President Alison, hello President Alex!

The 2014 AGM in Cardiff saw the end of Dr Alison Sheridan's four-year Presidency of the Society and the election of Dr Alex Gibson as her successor. The occasion was marked by (*inter alia*) the presentation of a magnificent replica of the Early Bronze Age amber necklace from Little Cressingham, Norfolk, made in amber by Kate Verkooijen. For once, the outgoing President was lost for words, but she has now recovered and offers the following valedictory comments:

I am overcome with delight and gratitude at Council's wonderful gift and at Alex's extraordinarily kind speech. The last four years have flown by, and I am truly proud of the advances made by this great Society over that time. The transition to publishing with Cambridge University Press has gone remarkably well, thanks to the expert guidance of our Managing Editor, Dr Julie Gardiner. The *Prehistoric Society Research Papers* monograph series goes from strength to strength, thanks principally to the drive and dedication of Dr Mike Allen, and *PAST* continues to flourish under Dr Jo Brück. The Society has a strong voice for archaeology, thanks to the advocacy work of Dr Jane Siddell, and its events programme continues to deliver a varied and popular series of lectures and excursions, thanks to Dr Tom Moore's efforts as Events Co-Ordinator. Our governance structure has been rendered more efficient and effective, due to the work of our Vice-Presidents, and our membership continues to grow, with Dr Tessa Machling keeping a steady hand on administration and Dr Courtney Nimura producing some stunning new fliers and merchandise. Our finances have weathered the recession remarkably well under the calm hand of our Treasurer, Dr Clare Randall, and the other members of Council have all helped to ensure the continuing success and development of the Society. To all of these people I extend my heartfelt thanks, and to the membership as a whole, my very best wishes. I know that my successor, Dr Alex Gibson, will work hard to continue this positive trend and I wish him the very best for his term of office.

I shall forever treasure the exquisite amber necklace, which has been made by this country's finest amber craft worker, Dr Kate Verkooijen. Kate has recently obtained her PhD from the University of Exeter, having studied amber spacer-plate jewellery across Europe, and her skills are astonishing. Not only is she an expert amber-worker,



*Incoming President Alex Gibson presents a replica of the Little Cressingham necklace to Alison Sheridan to express Council's thanks to her*



she can also turn out a mean faience bead! Judging from the reaction to the Little Cressingham necklace, Kate can expect to be badgered for many commissions in the future! Once again, I thank my dear friends in the Council, and extend my warmest best wishes to this venerable and much-loved Society.

### Editorial Assistant for *PPS*

The Society is seeking to appoint an editorial assistant to help the Editor, Julie Gardiner, with production of *PPS*. The post is unpaid and will require regular commitment. Under the direction of the Editor it will principally involve liaison with authors and referees with some proof reading and copy-editing. *PPS* is the flagship of the Society and a journal of international reputation so we are looking for a talented individual with the following experience and skills: familiarity with journal production procedures; experience of peer-reviewed publication in archaeology; good general knowledge of prehistory (specialism not required); demonstrable skills in copy-editing and proof reading; good communication skills; self-motivated and well-disciplined; able to commit to 2–3 days per month.

All likely candidates will be required to take a copy-editing and proof reading test as attention to detail is vital. For further information, in confidence, please contact the Editor: [jpg.escargots@gmail.com](mailto:jpg.escargots@gmail.com).

## Meetings programme 2014–2015

<i>Date</i>	<i>Venue</i>	<i>Details</i>
1 June–23 July 2014	Yarnbury, near Grassington, Yorkshire (NGR: SE013654; further details on our website)	<b>Prehistoric Society ‘Grand days out’</b> This summer’s programme includes the following (see our website for updates):  <b>Tour of excavations at Yarnbury henge and Neolithic settlement</b> Led by Dr Alex Gibson (University of Bradford). To confirm attendance please email A.M.Gibson1@bradford.ac.uk
Sat 21 June 2pm	Bradford Kaims, Northumberland	<b>Tour of Bradford Kaims, Northumberland</b> Prehistoric landscape of burnt mounds with excavations run by the Bradford Kaims Wetland Project. To arrange a visit and for directions please contact Paul Gething: paulgething@bamburghresearchproject.co.uk or gething1966@gmail.com or tel. 07957 611805.
Sun 13 July 2014 2pm	Burrough Hill, Leicestershire (directions and details on our website)	<b>Tour of excavations at Burrough Hill hillfort, Leicestershire</b> Led by Dr Jeremy Taylor (University of Leicester). To confirm attendance please email: prehistoric@ucl.ac.uk
Sat 19 July 2014	Meet at La Hougue Bie, Jersey	<b>Tour of prehistoric sites and excavations on Jersey</b> The opportunity to visit a range of sites, the exhibitions on recent finds from the region and current excavations at Les Varines. Organised by the Société Jersiaise and Dr Rebecca Scott (British Museum)  11am. Meet at La Hougue Bie to visit <i>Ice Age Island</i> exhibition. 12pm. Tour of Les Varines Magdalenian site (minibus will be provided but you can also bring your own transport). 1.30pm. Lunch (make your own arrangements): you might like to dine in St Helier and visit the Jersey Museum (including the new Iron Age hoard exhibition). 5pm. Prehistoric Society members are welcome to join the Société Jersiaise for a tour of La Cotte de St. Brelade: meet at Ouaisne slipway.  For further details and to register contact: beccyscottuk@gmail.com
Weds 22 October 2014 5pm	<b>Lecture</b> Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London	<b>The 13th Sara Champion Memorial Lecture: ‘The Personality of Britain reconsidered: evaluating the relationship between the social and physical geographies of Bronze Age Britain (c.2500–800 cal. BC)’</b> by Neil Wilkin (British Museum)  Followed by free wine reception and presentation of the Society Undergraduate Dissertation Prize.
Sat 4 Oct 2014 2.30pm	<b>Lecture</b> Castle Museum, Norwich	<b>‘Coins, kings and tribes? East Anglia and beyond in the Iron Age’</b> by Dr Ian Leins (British Museum)  Joint Norfolk Archaeology Society/ Prehistoric Society annual lecture.
Thurs 29 Jan 2015 Reception at 7.30pm; lecture at 8pm	<b>Lecture</b> Devon County Hall, Exeter	<b>‘The excitement of the ordinary: the context of the Whitehorse cist in relation to Early Bronze Age burials in the south west’</b> by Dr Andy Jones (Cornwall County Council)  Joint Devon Archaeology Society/ Prehistoric Society annual lecture.
Mon 2 February 2015 6pm	<b>Lecture</b> Law Faculty Building, Sidgwick Site, Cambridge University, Cambridge	<b>‘The making of the Middle Sea: how the Mediterranean world came into being’</b> by Prof Cyprian Broodbank (Professor of Mediterranean Archaeology, UCL)  Joint Cambridge Archaeological Society/ Prehistoric Society annual lecture
Sat 7 March 2015	<b>Day conference</b> Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London	<b>‘People in prehistory: creating communities’</b>  The third in our series of ‘People in prehistory’ day conferences will focus on the nature of communities in prehistory. Booking details and full programme will be on our website in due course.
End May/ beginning of June 2015	<b>Day conference &amp; Europa Lecture</b>	<b>Europa Conference, 2015:</b> tba – please see our website for details
Weekly, autumn to spring (with full list of dates/ times on our website)	<b>Lecture series</b> University of Bradford	<b>University of Bradford Archaeology Guest Lectures</b> Weekly lectures on prehistoric topics open to members by kind invitation of Dr Alex Gibson. For full details please see our website.



## Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 December 2013

	2013	2012
	£	£
<b>Incoming resources</b>		
<b>From generated funds</b>		
Voluntary income	32,422	48,165
Investment income	8,282	8,881
	40,704	57,046
<b>From charitable activities</b>		
Publication grants	4,361	10,506
Copyright fees	3,006	2,052
Publications	14,096	524
Back numbers of Proceedings	579	1,795
Conferences	8,271	5,290
Study tours	-	777
Other	-	19
	30,313	20,963
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>71,017</b>	<b>78,009</b>
<b>Resources expended</b>		
<b>Costs of generating voluntary income</b>		
	6,947	8,698
<b>Charitable activities</b>		
Grants	4,100	4,825
Lectures	280	1,719
Proceedings	23,307	34,001
PAST	4,146	10,436
Back numbers of Proceedings	2,863	1,755
Research Papers	1,250	-
Conferences	12,448	9,609
Study tours	-	407
	48,394	62,752
<b>Governance costs</b>	5,669	5,969
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<b>61,010</b>	<b>77,419</b>
<b>Net incoming resources</b>	<b>10,007</b>	<b>590</b>
Total funds at 1 January	161,657	158,913
Net incoming resources	10,007	590
Revaluation of investments	-4,946	2,154
<b>Total funds at 31 December</b>	<b>166,718</b>	<b>1,65761</b>

The Statement of Financial Activities is an extract from the full accounts of the Society. Copies of the full accounts for 2013 are available on the website or can be obtained from Tessa Machling at the registered office.

### **Report of the Treasurer**

The position of the Society's accounts has improved in cash terms over 2013. 2013 had been anticipated to be a difficult year with regard to cash flow, due to the change to Cambridge University Press producing the *Proceedings*. This was because income from institutional subscribers would in future be paid direct to CUP, whilst outstanding payments for *PPS* for 2012 would still need to be paid. However, due to continued success in obtaining grants for *PPS*, and managing to stay within budget for administrative and governance costs, the year was completed with no need to

dip into investments. Voluntary income (subscriptions and donations) from individual members have held up well with membership remaining buoyant. The change to CUP has made, and will continue to make a substantial difference to the Society's financial health. We have seen a considerable reduction in the printing cost for *PPS* and *PAST*, and the receipt of royalties for *PPS* in respect of the institutional subscriptions. This has in 2013 offset the fact that our investments saw a dip after several years of performing well. The Society was able to provide a similar level of grants in 2013 as in previous years, as well as support for conferences.

## Prehistoric Society Undergraduate Dissertation Prize

The Prehistoric Society invites submissions for the 2014 undergraduate dissertation prize. The award celebrates the dissertation that has made the greatest contribution to the study of prehistory in any part of the world. The prize is open to students from any university in Britain and Ireland.

Each department is invited to submit one dissertation by a candidate who completes her or his degree during the 2013/4 academic year. The judges will assess entries on the basis of the quality of work, the originality of the approach and the degree to which the research advances our understanding of prehistory.

The winner will receive three years' free membership of the Society, the choice of one of the Society's in-print monographs and £100. Three runners-up will be awarded a current copy of the *Proceedings*. An abridged version of the

successful dissertation will be considered for publication in the Society's *Proceedings*. The prize will be presented prior to the Sara Champion lecture on the 22nd of October 2014.

This prestigious prize represents an excellent opportunity for promising young scholars to have their work publicly recognised in the magnificent Burlington House. Entries for the current academic year are to be sent by the host department to Professor Bob Chapman, Dept of Archaeology, School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Sciences, University of Reading, Whiteknights PO Box 227, Reading, RG6 6AB, and in electronic form to [r.w.chapman@reading.ac.uk](mailto:r.w.chapman@reading.ac.uk), by **Friday 25th July**. Entries can only be accepted if accompanied by details of the email address, postal address and contact phone number **both** for the candidates **and** for their supervisors.

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## A celebration for Thurstan Shaw (27 June 1914 to 8 March 2013), former President of the Prehistoric Society

Between 8th and 11th May 2014, the largest-ever gathering of West African traditional rulers, archaeologists, dignitaries, museum curators and heritage practitioners converged on Cambridge to honour the life and scholarly contributions of Professor Thurstan Shaw, former President of the Prehistoric Society, who pioneered the development of universities, archaeology and museums in Anglophone West Africa. Fifty-two African guests obtained visas, attended a University memorial Quaker meeting at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and also participated in a series of related events which created and strengthened links between UK archaeologists and West African scholars in the fields of archaeology, museums and heritage studies.

The series of events entitled 'Archaeology and heritage in West Africa: building links and capacity through Thurstan Shaw's Legacy', organised by Thurstan's widow, Dr Pamela Jane Smith, began on the afternoon of Thursday 8th May with tours of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology's West African collections after which guests were greeted by Professor Graeme Barker, Professor Colin Renfrew and Mallam Yusuf Abdallah Usman, the Director General of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments in Nigeria. On 9th May, there was a full day of talks and discussions of successful existing collaborative programmes such as the British Museum's Africa Programme led by Julie Hudson, Malcolm McLeod and Zagba Narh Oyorrey, Executive Director of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board; there was also a report from the Cambridge-Africa Programme which governs over 200 research collaborations between the University of Cambridge and African institutions.

In the afternoon, Professor Susan Keech McIntosh gave a McDonald Institute keynote lecture to a packed theatre on 'The enigma of Igbo Ukwu: exploring the origins of West African civilization'. This was followed by a large public reception at the MAA where the Honourable Nkanta George Ufot, Federal Director of Culture in Nigeria, spoke. The



A youthful Thurstan on excavation in the summer of 1933.



*The Igbo Ukwu excavation team, 1959.*



*Processing through the streets of Cambridge.*

memorial meeting at Sidney Sussex College on Saturday the 10th was very well attended with Igbo drummers processing through the streets of Cambridge accompanying Thurstan's soul to eternity. Professor Isaac Folorunso Adewole, Vice-Chancellor, University of Ibadan, spoke at afternoon tea, paying tribute to Thurstan and urging UK archaeologists to work with their African colleagues. The descendants of the Igbo Ukwu excavation team in the photograph shown here then bestowed Pamela with the traditional title of *Lolo* at a quiet, private solemn Igbo Kola ceremony. On Sunday the 11th, Kevin MacDonald, Matthew Davies and Pamela organised a full day of academic papers which will be published quickly in a volume in Thurstan's honour. On Monday morning, there was a small gathering at Marie Louise Sørensen's home to discuss heritage collaborations.

Pamela would like to thank all those, many of whom are members of the Prehistoric Society, who housed guests, and would also like to encourage prehistorians interested in working with the African delegates to contact her for their addresses. Photos of the events are available to download from <http://our-event.org/UNI/Shaw>. A film of the proceedings created by the Nigeria Television Authority is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIVZIdVYB6o&feature=youtu.be>. A full programme of the events can be found at [http://www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/events/files/outline\\_programme2/view](http://www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/events/files/outline_programme2/view).

*Dr Pamela Jane Smith (email: [pjs1011@cam.ac.uk](mailto:pjs1011@cam.ac.uk))*

## Re-dating the Coneybury Anomaly and its implications for understanding the earliest Neolithic pottery from southern England

The large pit known as the Coneybury Anomaly (excavated and published by Julian Richards) plays a pivotal role in our interpretation of Early Neolithic Wessex and features in numerous accounts of the Neolithic period. Its prominence is down to the fact that it lies within the Stonehenge landscape of Salisbury Plain, its relatively large size and its finds-rich fill, which included an important and relatively large ceramic assemblage (comprising 40 carinated and non-carinated vessels). However, it is not the only Early Neolithic pit of this type from the Wessex area: other notable pits include those at Rowden (near Dorchester) and Roughridge Hill (near Avebury).

The midden-like deposit found within the Coneybury pit provides a snapshot of a pottery assemblage that was in use during the early centuries of the fourth millennium cal BC. But which century does it belong too? The fortieth, thirty-ninth or thirty-eighth? Generally interpreted as the result of feasting and/or occupation, from the presence of



*Selection of the classic Carinated Bowl/Southwestern style pottery from Roughridge Hill*

Vessel P7 from the Coneybury Anomaly



articulating bone and nested sherds of freshly broken pottery, it is considered to represent a relatively short-lived event. The pottery as a whole is considered a key group in understanding cross-Channel origins and the early development of ceramics in Britain. Crucial to this debate is its precise date: was this assemblage a primary group or were people already making pottery and, if so, for how long and of what style? The pit also contained a large and important animal bone assemblage that included both wild and domesticated animals – domestic cattle, roe deer, brown trout and beaver.

Material from the pit was re-dated as part of an English Heritage-funded project to provide a more robust chronology for understanding the development of pottery during the Early Neolithic of southern England. It builds on the work of Alex Bayliss, Frances Healy and Alasdair Whittle's *Gathering Time* project. Using Bayesian modelling, the aim was to re-date a series of key pottery groups and then place them in typo-chronological order, with the potential to precisely date such assemblages to within a century. Samples of carbonised residue adhering to sherds were targeted and cross-checked against samples taken from articulated animal bone.

In keeping with the times, only a single radiocarbon measurement (OxA-1402: 5050±100 BP on cattle bone) was obtained for Richards's original publication. This measurement with its large standard deviation and calibrated span of 4050–3640 cal BC has been used to suggest a very early date for the feature and its associated pottery. As part of the new study a further 11 measurements were obtained on seven samples, four of which were replicated.



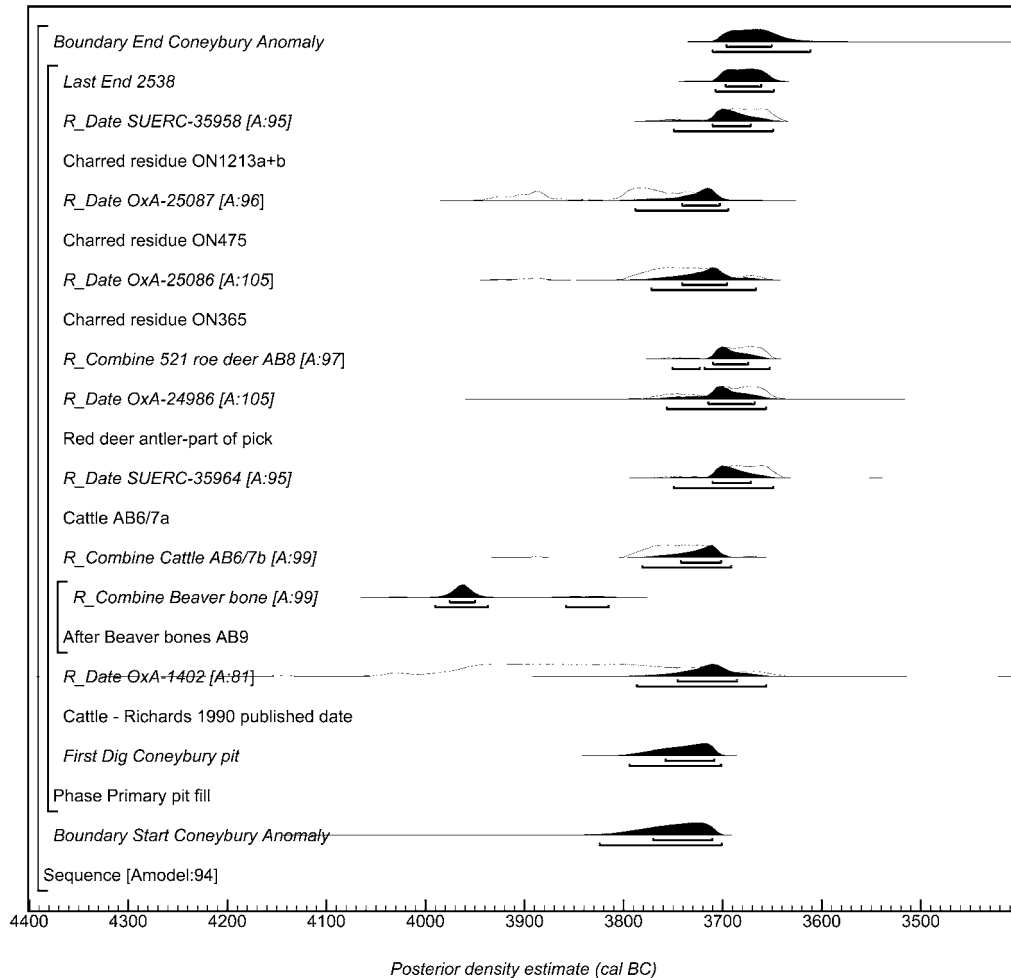
Charred food residue adhering to a sherd from the Coneybury Anomaly

Three measurements were obtained from carbonised food residues (OxA-25086-7 and SUERC-35958), seven on articulated animal bone including beaver, roe deer and cattle (OxA-24987-9 and OxA-25766; SUERC-35959-60 and SUERC-35964) and one from an antler pick (OxA-24986). The two dates on the beaver bone are significantly earlier (by at least 70 and perhaps as much as 200 years) than the other dates. This could indicate that they are older collected or curated material. However, there is also a technical explanation for this early result. Beavers are known to have a vegetarian diet and to consume large quantities of aquatic plants, with the high possibility of a reservoir effect, which would account for the offset in this measurement. The digging of the pit therefore probably took place at some point between 3800–3700 cal BC or more likely between 3760–3700 cal BC. Given that the creation of the pit and the occupation deposit, which included freshly broken vessels, are likely to be part of a related short event, then this also provides a robust estimate for the date of the pottery assemblage.

Twenty-five years ago the earliest pottery from southern England was redefined by Andrew Herne who suggested that these assemblages were generally characterised by a high proportion of carinated vessels. They can be defined as consisting of a range of forms that include fine and coarse bowls, deeper bowls and cups. Other traits include simple undeveloped rims, a lack of decoration and the use of smoothing and burnishing. Herne was able to distinguish between an early Carinated Bowl phase and a later phase (commonly referred to as Plain and Decorated Bowl) that was dominated by high-shouldered vessels with developed and sometimes heavy rims and the use of decoration. In the last twenty years, further subdivisions have been attempted based on the development of rim and vessel forms with the suggestion that Carinated Bowl ceramics could be divided into an early, 'classic' phase beginning in the fortieth or thirtieth century, and a late phase that pre- and post-dated c. 3800 cal BC. In reality, this division may just mark various developments in rim and vessel forms and, while this scheme may be applicable to parts of the Thames Valley and Wessex, there are other regions where such a development is harder to recognise. Wessex covers several overlapping distributions of Early Neolithic pottery, including the eastern extent of the Southwestern style, the western extent of Decorated Bowl and the western extent of Carinated Bowl. However, this nomenclature may disguise a more complex regional picture as Ros Cleal's work on the pottery from the southwest has demonstrated.

The Coneybury Anomaly assemblage can now be confidently placed in the later part of the thirty-eighth century occurring some 50–100 years after the construction of the Sweet Track (dendrochronology date: 3807/6 BC) and its assemblages of classic carinated, non-carinated and southwestern-influenced pottery. On present evidence, the date for the Coneybury Anomaly pit is earlier than the construction of long barrows on Salisbury Plain and adjacent areas (for example Fussell's Lodge), and is certainly earlier than causewayed enclosures from the general area – before the late thirty-eighth and thirty-seventh centuries cal BC. The same development of

## Coneybury Anomaly



Chronological model for radiocarbon dates from the Coneybury Anomaly pit

deep-bodied or baggy pots and possibly lugged bowls by the end of the thirty-eighth century is also found in the greater Dorchester (Dorset) area. Again, such innovation appears to predate the construction of enclosures and assemblages considered to be more typical of the Southwestern style.

The re-dating of the Coneybury Anomaly is just part of a wider study to understand the chronology of Early Neolithic pottery in Wessex and should be seen perhaps as a new direction and a starting point in producing a robust framework for the chronology, terminology and understanding of the early development of pottery in southern

England. The present study focused on Wessex but mirrors what has been suggested for the upper and middle Thames valley, which may also be applicable to the lower Thames and East Anglia. Other neighbouring regions such as Kent and Sussex, central England and the southwest remain to be tested and may present alternative histories, more so as the work of Alison Sheridan and others challenges us to test multi-strand models for the Neolithisation of Britain and Ireland. Being able to place the digging of the Coneybury Anomaly pit more precisely within the later thirty-eighth century BC also has implications for how we interpret cross-Channel connections and influences with late Castellaric and Michelsberg pottery.

*Alistair Barclay*

## Now you see it, now you don't: an incised stone of probable Neolithic date near Arisaig, on the west coast of Scotland

In the autumn of 2012, a group of local people set out to do a detailed walkover survey of Rhu, a peninsula some four miles long and two miles across at the widest point, located to the south of Arisaig (Highland Region) on the

west coast of Scotland. It was formed sixty million years ago by a volcanic event centred near Sligachan, Skye, then sculpted by several ice ages. The land today is unmanaged and is very difficult walking, over high basalt dykes and



Photo by Steve Wallace (© RCAHMS)

sandstone outcrops amongst bog and deep heather. Today Rhu only has two permanently-inhabited houses, but in the 1850s there were more than three hundred people working the land and it would have looked and felt quite different.

Rhu has few recorded archaeological features of note beyond the well-known cup-marked stone at Gaodeil and a spectacular vitrified fort at Rubh aird Ghamhsgail, both on the south coast. Our occasional outings over the following six months – recording walls, cairns, huge areas of *feannagan* (riggs), townships, houses, shielings and the like – had pushed our list up to over two hundred features, when one sunny April day in 2013, four of us approached a ruined building overlooking the western coast.

Elizabeth MacDonald glanced along a wall and spotted some odd marks on a stone. A cloud obscured the low sun, and the marks disappeared ... but became visible again as the cloud passed. ‘Runes!’ she yelled (Elizabeth has a thing about runes), but when I was called over (I own the archaeological trowel so I’m the assumed expert on everything we find), it was immediately obvious that the markings were far older than Viking – and even more exciting.

The stone is basalt, measuring 290mm × 180mm × 200mm (W × H × D), and the markings, incised lozenge shapes and cross-patterns, are less than 2mm in depth. They have now been interpreted as Neolithic: over the next few weeks I contacted a dozen specialist archaeologists for confirmation – as far as it could be confirmed, since it was completely out of any original context – but every single person said ‘Neolithic’. The closest parallels for the design are found in Late Neolithic contexts, such as the Grooved Ware-associated settlement at Skara Brae in Orkney. The striking thing about these markings is their delicacy, since the cuts are so shallow. In the flat light of a cloudy day, they are virtually invisible,

even when you know they are there; but if a light is shone along the surface, they show up with startling clarity, as can be seen from the photograph taken by Steve Wallace of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.

The stone was near the upper corner of a wall. It was very vulnerable – easy to remove and fifty metres from one of the few driveable tracks on the peninsula – so we felt we should keep the find quiet until its future was assured; surprisingly, there is a commercial market for such things. We have since scoured the area for indications of a cairn, or other similar stones, but beyond a comment by a visiting archaeologist that this is a ‘classic Neolithic farming landscape’, nothing has turned up. Every similar stone has six sides, of course, and there are thousands of stones both in the walls and lying around the building; oddly, there were no volunteers to inspect them all. What was the stone doing in the wall of that building? The house was last occupied about 1900 by William Moffat, a ditcher on the Arisaig Estate, and is a rebuild of an older one. Did the builder, perhaps William Moffat himself, recognise it as something old and perhaps magical, using it apotropaically to ward off the evil eye? Or was it simply the perfect shape and size to fit that gap in the wall?

Following discussions with the Scottish Treasure Trove Unit (who reported that the stone was not going to be claimed under the Scots law of *bona vacantia*, despite it now being a portable antiquity whose original owner was not known) and the landowner (by happy chance a local historian who felt that it should be available to the public), the stone has been moved to safety in the Land, Sea and Islands Centre in Arisaig, where it is now on display – with a very tasteful light angled across the surface. If you go to see it, make sure they remember to switch the light on for you – otherwise you’ll see nothing but a flat grey surface.

And next time you go field-walking, make sure you take a torch.

Ken Bowker, Lochailort ([bowkers@gmail.com](mailto:bowkers@gmail.com))

# Metalworking in the roundhouse: some recent finds from Cornwall

## Introduction

Most evidence for Middle Bronze Age metalworking in southern England takes the form of unstratified artefacts, often recovered during metal detecting. These finds have greatly expanded our knowledge of the distribution of finds across the landscape, but by their nature provide less information on the date of particular artefact forms and have, outside of providing evidence for hoarding, revealed little about the context of metalworking. However, two recent excavations of roundhouses dating to the Middle Bronze Age in Cornwall have given exciting new information on the dating of certain artefact forms and have led to the identification of a 'metalworker's' house.

## Trevalga roundhouse

The Trevalga roundhouse was excavated in 2009 during the construction of a South West Water pipeline along the north coast of Cornwall between Tintagel and Boscastle (see Jones and Quinnell 2014, *Lines of archaeological investigation along the north Cornish coast*, British Archaeological Reports). The roundhouse was approximately 8.5m in diameter and was defined by a wall of edge-set slabs with, in the entranceway, finely-built coursed stone walling. It was located on a north-facing hill-slope and in common with most Bronze Age roundhouses, but somewhat unexpectedly, had a south-facing entrance which was aligned upslope, directly into the edge of the terrace upon which it was set. Consequently, little daylight will have entered into the building and lighting would have been derived from its hearth.

Unlike many Cornish Middle Bronze Age roundhouses, which are associated with ritualised abandonments, the Trevalga roundhouse was destroyed through an influx of waterborne clay through its entrance. The force of this event is indicated by the collapse of part of the entrance walling which was sealed beneath colluvium. The flooding meant that artefacts within the interior were left where they were



The entrance area of the Trevalga roundhouse during excavation (© Historic Environment, Cornwall Council)

placed by the last occupants, who probably departed in somewhat of a hurry. Among these items was the mould for a copper alloy racloir. Raclairs are triangular-shaped objects with a central perforation, which are most commonly found in France. The few examples from England have generally been assumed to be foreign imports. Indeed, there has been little recent discussion of the English examples. This is partly because none are from well-documented contexts, but also because they have usually been conflated with other forms of Late Bronze Age knives and razors, such as 'hog's back' knives.



The racloir mould from the Trevalga roundhouse (photograph taken by Anna Tyacke)

Four radiocarbon determinations from features below the colluvium dated to the Middle Bronze Age: 3105±26 BP (1434-1312 cal BC; SUERC-42058), 3057±23 BP (1399-1265 cal BC; SUERC-42059), 3092±31 BP (1432-1273 cal BC; SUERC-42064) and 3092±26 BP (1428-1302 cal BC; SUERC-42065). These determinations indicate that the roundhouse dates to c. 1400-1300 cal BC. The radiocarbon dating shows that raclairs belong in the Middle Bronze Age; this is significant because there are comparatively few closely-datable associations for this class of artefacts. The Trevalga racloir is also important because it is of a local elvan stone. This suggests that communities in Cornwall were aware of the latest metalwork forms current in France and were possibly making them for an export market.

## Roundhouse 1, Tremough

Roundhouse 1 at Tremough (Penryn) was excavated in 2011. The analysis stage is underway and radiocarbon determinations have recently been obtained. Roundhouse 1 was located on a gentle south-facing slope. It was approximately 9m in diameter and the main post-ring was, like most lowland Cornish roundhouses, set within a hollow. In common with the Trevalga roundhouse, the entrance was on the southern side of the structure. Again, like other Cornish Middle Bronze Age lowland roundhouses, it appears to have been formally abandoned and the interior of the hollow infilled.



Roundhouse 1, Tremough fully excavated (© Historic Environment, Cornwall Council)

Four radiocarbon determinations have been obtained from features and layers within the roundhouse. Three of the determinations were on charcoal from postholes: 3169±29 BP (1501-1400 cal BC; SUERC-47292), 3109±29 BP (1441-1407 cal BC; SUERC-47293) and 3065±31 BP (1415-1252 cal BC; SUERC-47297). The fourth date, 3091±27 BP (1429-1297 cal BC; SUERC-47298), was from the infill layer but did not differ from those from the postholes. This might be due to material from the occupation of the house being used as backfill, or to the structure being relatively short-lived. The determinations suggest that the building dated to the centuries between *c.* 1500–1300 cal BC, with the weight of the dating suggesting the mid-fifteenth to fourteenth centuries BC.

The abandonment of the house was associated with the deposition of numerous artefacts. These included around 600



One of the moulds found within the Tremough Roundhouse 1 (© Historic Environment, Cornwall Council)

sherds of Trevisker pottery and stone tools, some associated with metalworking. Importantly, there were also parts of nine stone bivalve moulds for socketed tools, chisels and ring-headed pins broadly of the Taunton metalworking phase. All mould fragments were retrieved from infill layers, mostly around the area of the hearth. In addition, a fragment of copper alloy pin was recovered from the upper fill of a posthole, and a copper alloy ring was found in the top of another.

As these finds were from the abandonment layers, it could be argued that they were not directly associated with the use of the roundhouse but represent material introduced onto the site. However, the results from other analyses suggest that this is not the case. Samples taken from layers within the roundhouse revealed droplets of copper alloy slag and geochemical analysis has shown high proportions of copper and other metals in samples from postholes and a hearth pit, which are consistent with metalworking. We therefore suggest that roundhouse 1 was associated with the production of copper alloy objects and with occupation by a 'metalworker'. At the end of the occupation it is backfilled with material associated with and derived from its occupation, and this may have been a deliberate attempt to mark the biography of the house in a particular way.

### Conclusion

The Trevalga and Tremough roundhouses have shed light on the date and context of metalworking during the period between *c.* 1500–1300 cal BC. Given the general lack of close dating for Middle Bronze Age metalwork forms, the results from the dating of the roundhouses will help refine the chronology for these objects beyond their local context. The excavations were also significant because they have identified places where metalworking was taking place. It seems, like many other aspects of life and ritual during the Middle Bronze Age, that the production of metalwork may have taken place within the domestic roundhouse during this period.

### Acknowledgements

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*Andy M. Jones (Historic Environment, Cornwall Council),  
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Cornwall Council)*

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