

# PAST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY



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## Cup marks and quartz in Strath Tay

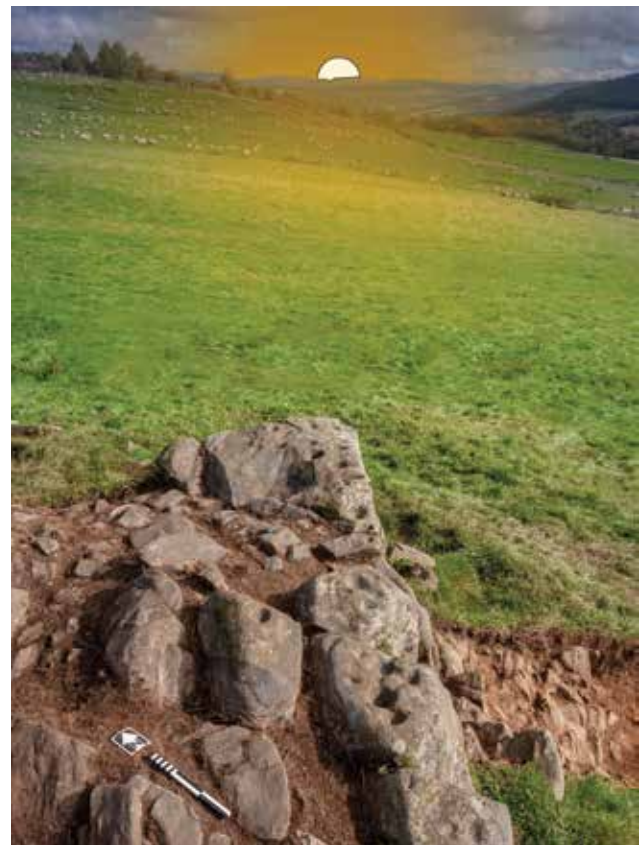
The River Tay extends from Loch Tay in the southern Highlands to Dundee on the North Sea coast. Towards its source there are many sites with rock art. Some overlook the loch from the slopes of Ben Lawers, one of the highest mountains in Scotland, while others are distributed further to the east along Strath Tay. The valley has a rich prehistory and includes a notable concentration of mounds and stone settings. They are predominantly of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age date and include such well-known monuments as the round barrow at Pitnacree and Croftmoraig stone circle. Fieldwalking in the 1990s identified a series of lithic scatters on the river terraces and showed that flint had been in short supply. Instead, the main raw material was quartz.

That raises a significant problem, as fieldwork elsewhere in Scotland suggests that quartz was not used just for making artefacts. At Torbhlaren in the Kilmartin complex, broken fragments were deposited on and around the decorated outcrops. Much the same happened on Ben Lawers where pieces were inserted in cracks within the rock. Here there is evidence that quartz hammers were used to refresh the surface of the stone in order to make it sparkle. That is not surprising as the process of breaking quartz gives off light and heat. It has been used in rituals in both the Old and New Worlds.

A newly excavated site above Aberfeldy provides some more information. It shows the same association between quartz and rock art, but in this case the motifs are mostly restricted to cup marks with close parallels in Early Bronze Age contexts. The site is an elongated natural mound at the entrance to an upland basin. At the southern limit of this mound there is a conspicuous outcrop which resembles the capstone of a chambered tomb. Its surface is embellished with 34 cups, two of them enclosed by rings. The panel is directed towards the position of the midsummer sunrise over the Cairngorms. A cairn was built at the opposite end of the mound, but little trace of it has survived because of

post-medieval disturbance. It may have been better preserved when it was first recognised in 1884.

The rock itself has some notable features. It includes a series of dykes and fissures. They look like drystone walls and contain prominent exposures of quartz. In one case blocks of this material were selectively removed to create an angular design on the surface of the outcrop. At least one of the fissures was emptied in order to obtain the stone. Most of the quartz was



*The cup-marked outcrop with a visualisation of the midsummer sunrise on the horizon*



The principal features identified in excavation behind the cup-marked outcrop

of poor quality and was not used to make artefacts. Instead, some of it was replaced in the ground. A comparable practice took place at both ends of the outcrop where the surface of the rock was subdivided by an angular lattice of cracks. Small pieces of worked and unworked quartz were deposited in these openings. Comparable deposits were identified where the fissures entered larger basins, and in between the cup-

marked slabs there were individual fragments that might have been used to make the motifs. At Kilmartin, surfaces with a similar configuration of fissures and cracks were selected for pecked designs. Notable examples include Baluachraig, Ormaig and Achnabreck.

The final phase of activity is even more difficult to interpret as the surface of the mound is badly disturbed, but it seems as if pieces of worked and unworked quartz were spread across its surface. This could have brought activity to an end. Similar practices have been identified at other sites in Scotland, where they are associated with the final use of cairns and other monuments. One of them was in Strath Tay. Croftmoraig features the same combination of cup-marked stones and crudely worked quartz as the site at Aberfeldy, which is only 4.5 km away. Radiocarbon dating shows that it was spread across the interior of the stone circle during the Middle or Late Bronze Age. When Stuart Piggott and Derek Simpson excavated there in 1965 they were among the first people to record such evidence. Half a century later cup marks and quartz continue to raise questions which are easy to ask and more difficult to answer.

#### Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Donald Ogilvy Watson for permission to carry out the excavation, and to his staff for much practical help. The excavation team included Amanda Clarke, Maria Cowie, Ronnie Scott and Moyra Simon. We must also thank George Currie for sharing his knowledge of the area.

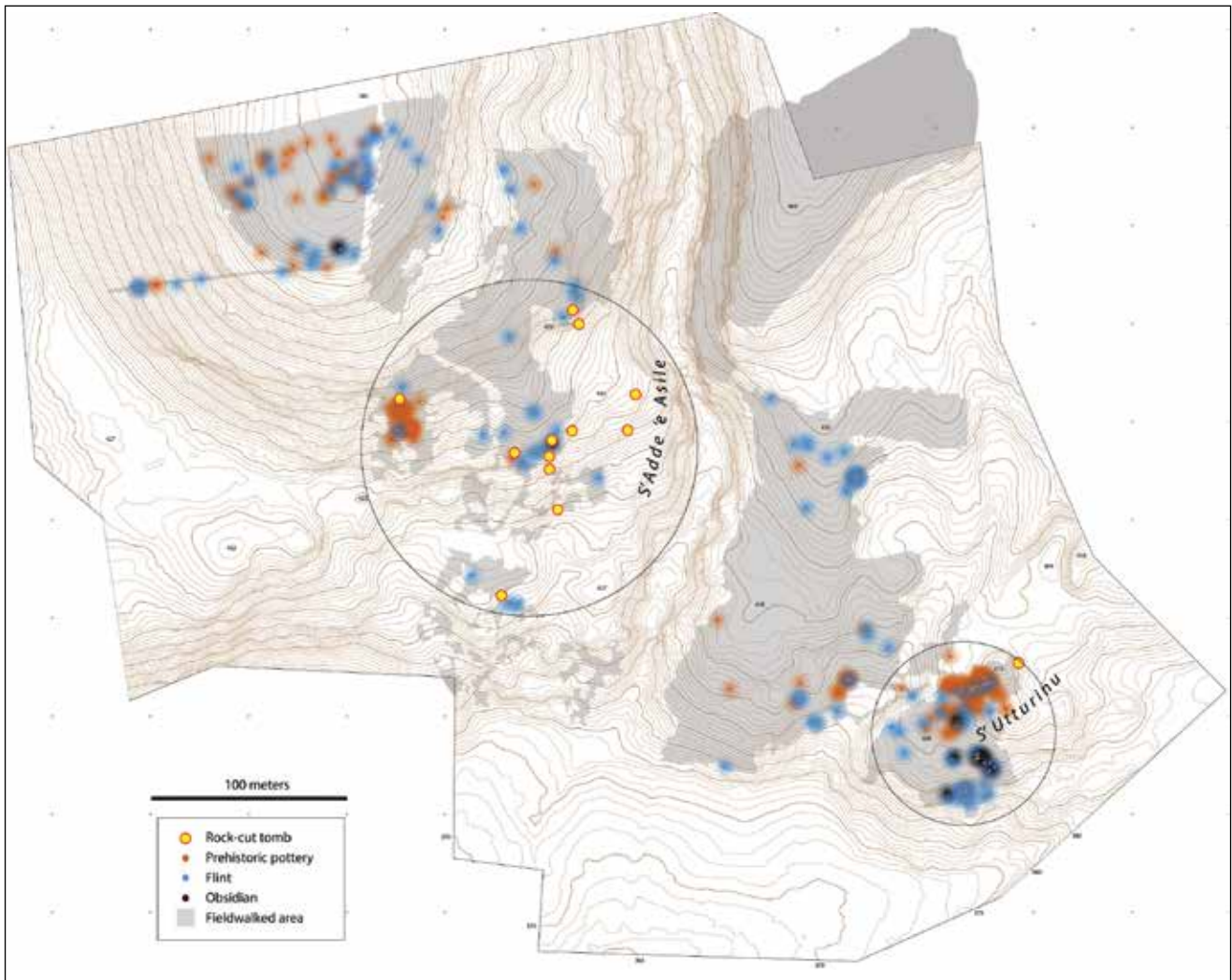
*Richard Bradley, Reading University (r.j.bradley@reading.ac.uk) and Aaron Watson, Durham University*

## Contextualising Late Neolithic rock-cut tomb cemeteries in Ossi, Sardinia (Italy)

Sardinia is well known for its Late Neolithic underground rock-cut tombs that were used over generations for collective burials (4400–2300 BC). Some tombs were decorated to resemble house interiors, and cemeteries are often referred to as villages of the dead. Research so far has focused on excavating stratigraphic contexts within some of these monuments, or on typological classifications of tomb plans and wall decorations, but the landscape context of these cemeteries and their relationship to settlements have been largely overlooked. The main challenge is the elusive nature of the settlements associated with the cemeteries: did Neolithic villagers live nearby or far away? How easily could they visit their ancestors? Did landscape features play a role in shaping these relationships?

Started in 2017, the Ossi survey project is investigating a cluster of large rock-cut tomb cemeteries in the south of the townland of Ossi (north-west Sardinia, Italy). The first

objective is to retrieve the location of settlements associated with the cemeteries. Systematic fieldwalking in parcels of land surrounding the cemetery has been carried out in order to map surface finds (chiefly prehistoric pottery sherds, alongside worked flint and obsidian). The exact location of these were recorded with a Differential Global Positioning Systems (dGPS) and later processed in a GIS environment in order to produce ‘heat maps’ showing concentrations of artefacts. The 2017 season focussed on the Mesu ‘e Montes cemetery with its 18 rock-cut tombs and resulted in the discovery of a large concentration of prehistoric artefacts (c. 14,000 ceramic and lithic pieces), as well as structural remains (stone wall foundations, rock-cut postholes) on the hill of Monte Mannu. This hilltop settlement site provides the best viewpoint onto the cemetery’s rock faces with the tomb entrances, located 200 m away on the other side of a small valley. Diagnostic artefacts suggest occupation from the Middle Neolithic to the Middle Bronze Age (c. 4400–1300



Topographic map of S'Adde 'e Asile cemetery, showing location of the 12 rock-cut tombs and distribution of surface finds. Fieldwalked areas are shown in red. Topographic data based on georeferenced drone-borne photogrammetry

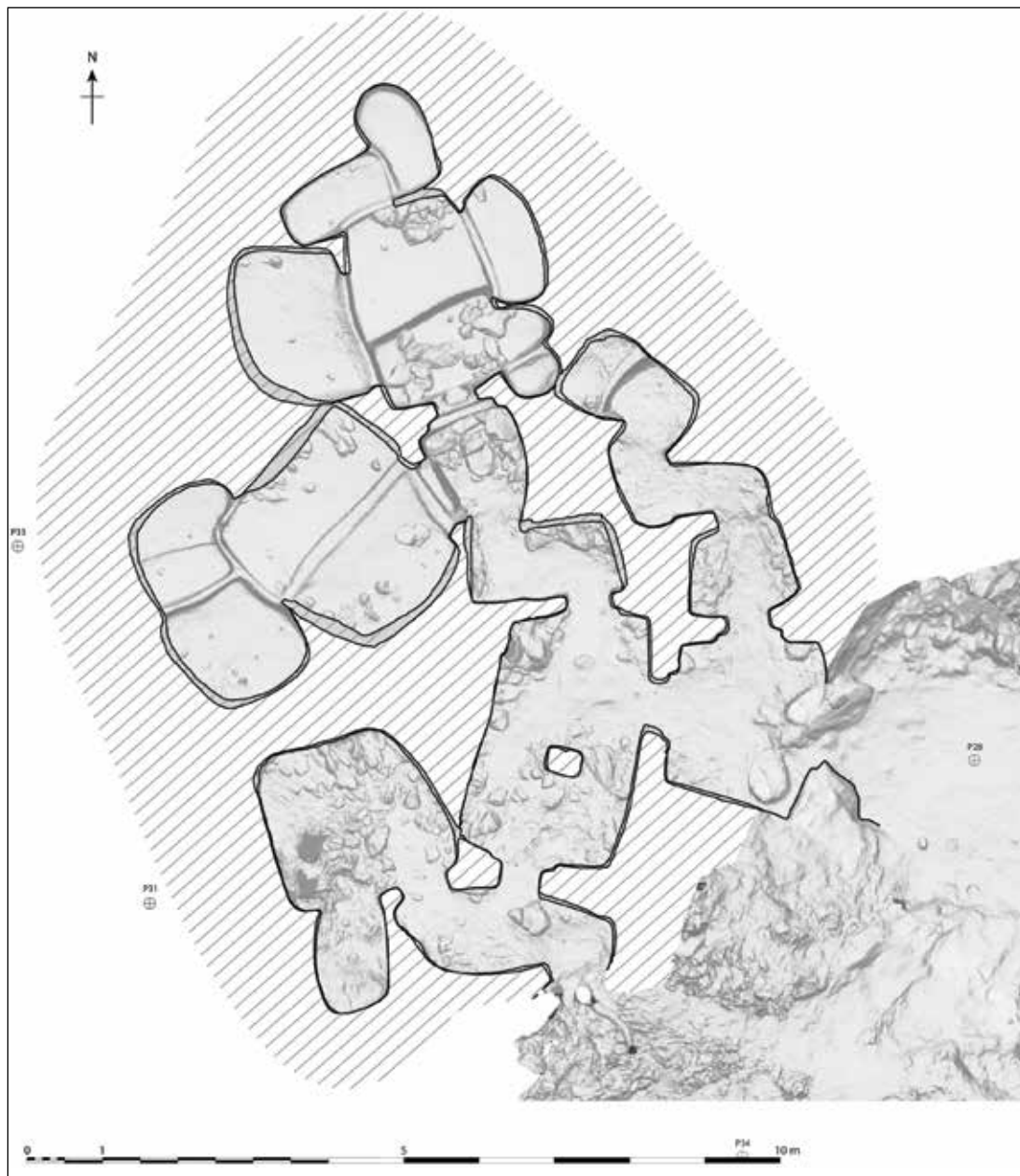
BC), which is consistent with the tomb architecture in the cemetery.

The 2018 season, reported here, focussed on another cemetery site, S'Adde 'e Asile (12 tombs), which is about 1.5 km away. Fieldwalking concentrated on accessible hilltops around the cemetery. The denser vegetation in the area made it more challenging to recover surface finds, and less data was collected than during the previous season. However, an important density of surface evidence was recorded in the locality of S'Utturinu, a small hilltop where a Bronze Age Nuragic stone settlement had been previously recorded by Salvatore Merella. The site, located c. 450 meters south-east of S'Adde 'e Asile, provides the best view onto the rock-cut tombs (oriented south-east). Although currently classified as Nuragic, the site might already have been used as a settlement by one of the Late Neolithic communities who created the cemetery. Both settlement and cemetery seemed to have been used continuously from the Late Neolithic until the Middle Bronze Age (c. 4000–1300 BC). The first two years of the project are thus revealing an interesting pattern, with long-lived settlement–cemetery complexes using the

local topography to create a physical separation but also a permanent visual connection between the villages of the living and the villages of the dead.

The second objective of the project is to create a comprehensive multi-scale recording of the cemeteries and associated settlement locations. As in 2017, a georeferenced 3D topographic model was created using drone-borne photographs and photogrammetry. A detailed photogrammetric survey of the interior architecture and decoration of the 12 tombs of S'Adde 'e Asile was carried out. The cemetery includes the architecturally most complex rock-cut tomb in Sardinia, Tomba Maggiore, which has no less than 18 chambers. Most of the tombs were emptied *ab antiquo*, but a few were excavated in the 1990s by the Soprintendenza and the University of Sassari, and some surviving inhumations are currently being studied by Consuelo Rodriguez as part of her PhD at the University of Barcelona.

Plans for the next seasons in Ossi include more fieldwalking and 3D survey at other local cemeteries, and excavations at the Monte Mannu settlement site.



Plan of Tomba Maggiore rock-cut tomb in the Late Neolithic cemetery of S'Adde 'e Asile (Ossi, Sardinia, Italy), based on 3D survey (photogrammetry)

#### *Acknowledgments*

This research was funded by a Leslie Grinsell Prize by the Prehistoric Society. Edinburgh students Kirsty Lilley, Daniel Proven and Matilde Quilici took part in the fieldwork. We are very grateful to the Soprintendenza Archeologica di

Sassari and the Comune di Ossi for the help, support and collaboration.

*Guillaume Robin, Edinburgh University (guillaume.robin@ed.ac.uk), Florian Soula, Aix-Marseille University*

## Forthcoming events

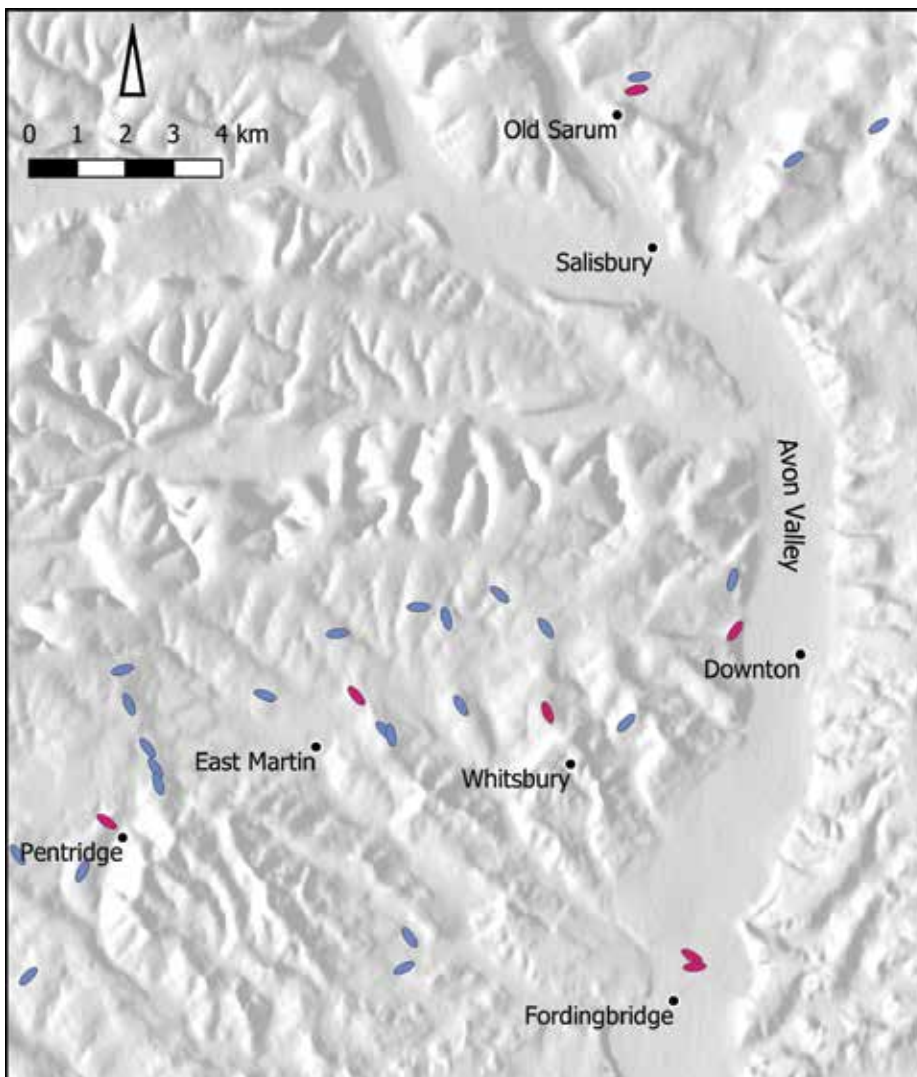
On Saturday 6th April, we are supporting a half-day conference with the Cambrian Antiquarian Association at Bangor University, entitled *New Neolithic evidence from Anglesey*. Speakers include Jane Kenney, Cat Rees and Frances Lynch. There is a £5 fee on the door. For further information, please contact Frances Lynch on [f.m.lynch@axis-connect.com](mailto:f.m.lynch@axis-connect.com).

On Tuesday 14th May, Mark Stevenson (Historic England) will deliver our annual joint lecture with the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, speaking on *The Battersea Channel – a hidden landscape*. This lecture will take place at the Museum of London at 6pm.

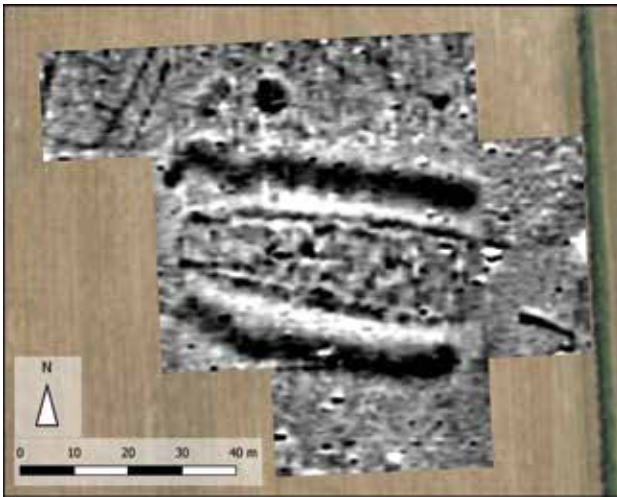
## New long barrow discoveries in the vicinity of the middle Avon valley and Cranborne Chase

While the Wessex chalklands played a prominent role in Neolithic society, the lower ground was long thought to be almost devoid of activity. Yet the work of the National Mapping Programme by English Heritage in particular has demonstrated that prehistoric monuments were present in almost every parish. In addition, large-scale geophysical and Lidar surveys are increasingly filling in the gaps and transforming the archaeological map. A single aerial sortie along the Avon valley by Damian Grady in 2005 revealed eight unrecorded ring ditches and further analysis by Martyn Barber soon led to others. The latter work demonstrated that further long barrows are indeed present in the valley south of Salisbury Plain, with two freshly discovered examples investigated by the Damerham Archaeology project (reported in *PAST* 67). More recently, Avon Valley Archaeological Society (AVAS) has begun an impressive programme of landscape investigation and geophysical survey revealing a number of new long barrows situated along the middle Avon and into its hinterland, which will be briefly described here.

Cropmarks of two parallel ditches depicted on an aerial photograph taken near Fordingbridge led AVAS to suspect the existence of a long barrow, later confirmed by a site visit and a first gradiometer survey undertaken as part of the LoCATE project, a partnership between Bournemouth University and the New Forest National Park designed to provide training in and access to advanced survey equipment for local heritage groups. The two side ditches of the mound are clearly visible. They are almost parallel apart from at the west end, where the south ditch turns slightly towards the mound and the north ditch displays a curious kink. More exciting is the clear outline of a trapezoid feature, about 54 m long, under the mound. The narrow end of this feature appears to be at a slightly different angle, suggesting a possible two-phase construction. The trapezoid feature has clear parallels with the enclosure defined by a palisade bedding trench found under Fussell's Lodge long barrow, excavated by Paul Ashbee in 1957, but perhaps more telling is a comparison with the shorter trapezoid timber 'house' recently uncovered by Jim Leary at Cat's Brain long barrow



*Distribution of long barrows in the study area. Blue = recorded long barrows, red = unrecorded sites discussed in the text. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2018)*

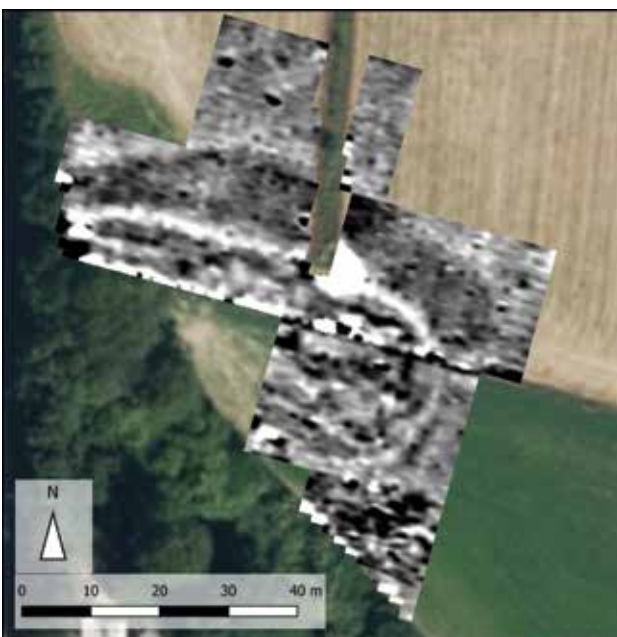


*Gradiometer survey results for Fordingbridge 1*

in the Vale of Pewsey, which had a small annex or extension at the shorter end.

When Lidar data for the area was subsequently released by the New Forest National Park Authority, a similar elongated mound, about 60 m long, was spotted just 220 m to the north. This mound was disguised by a field boundary along its axis and partly destroyed at its west end. A gradiometer survey revealed what appears to be a wide curving ditch to the north of the mound, as well as suggestions of internal features and a possible enclosure.

These long barrows occupy a gravel valley floor location, commanding an area of land enclosed by a large meander of the Avon. They demonstrate that long barrows in Wessex were not exclusively constructed on the higher chalk downland. It is, nevertheless, telling that they are located near the entrance of one of the now dry valleys leading west towards Cranborne Chase, a situation similar to Fussell's Lodge and other sites



*Gradiometer survey results for Fordingbridge 2*

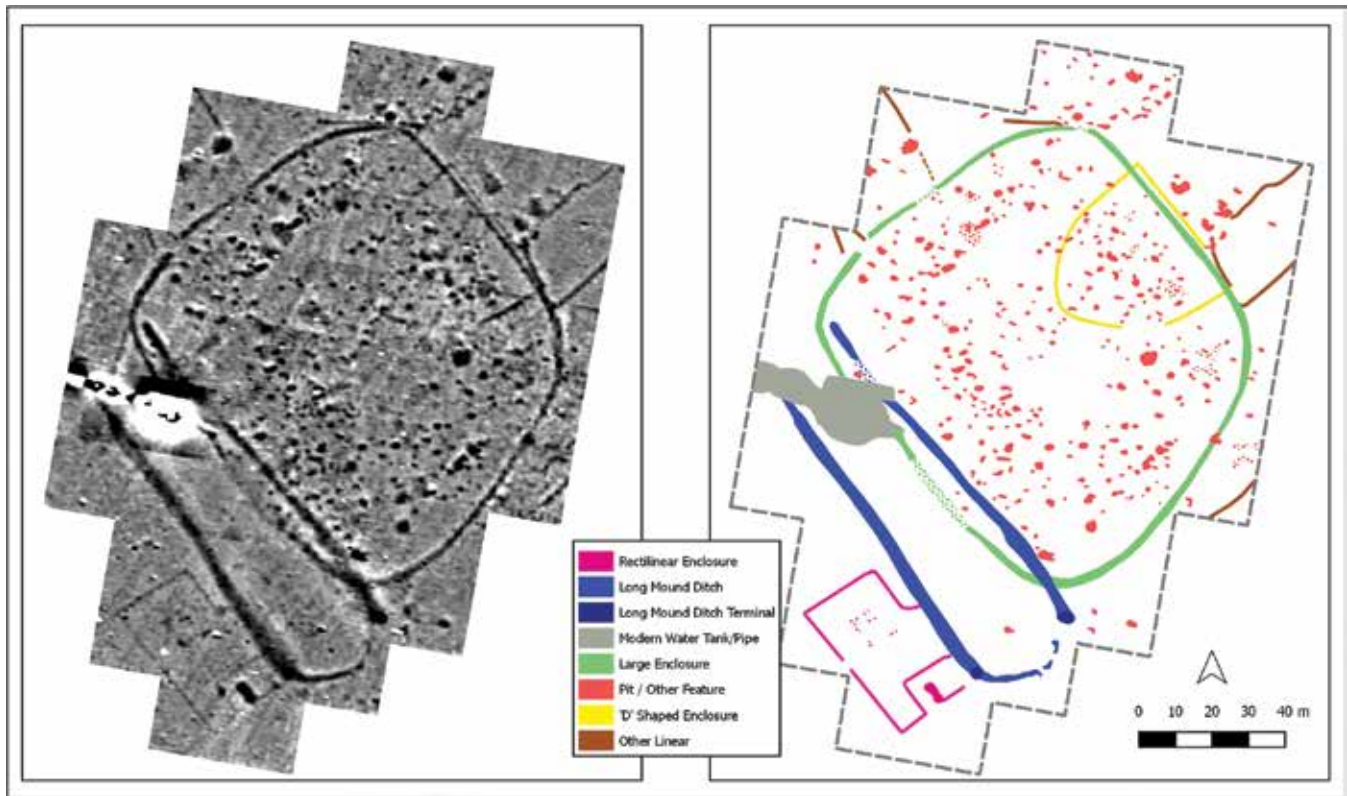
on Salisbury Plain and elsewhere. The close pairing observed at Fordingbridge particularly of long and short examples is also a feature noted at, for example, nearby Damerham, Milston (Wiltshire) and Danebury (Hampshire).

Lidar data has also indicated the presence of a slight elongated mound on the valley side above Downton. Even though the ploughed-out mound is now almost imperceptible, map analysis has shown that field boundaries were diverted around the feature. This probable long barrow commands a wide-ranging view across the Avon valley, and is only 1 km south of a well preserved long barrow in a similar location. Further north along the Avon valley, perfect conditions in 2018 produced clear crop marks of the ploughed-out long barrow just north-east of Old Sarum hillfort, surveyed by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory in 1978. There were also tantalising clues that another, shorter, long barrow may exist in the same field, suggested by two short parallel ditches. Further aerial analysis and survey will be required to test this assertion.

To the south of the area depicted, very clear cropmarks at Brangore suggest the presence of a short long barrow, about 18 m in length, on a gravel terrace. If confirmed, this would be the first example within the New Forest National Park boundary. Just 1.5 km to the west recent work by AVAS has relocated a long gravel mound which was bulldozed to make way for a Second World War airfield.

On Cranborne Chase, an arable field called 'Barrow Field' near East Martin contains an elongated mound, long thought to relate to a Romano-British enclosed settlement. More recent aerial photographs suggested the presence of a regular trapezoidal mound with clear flanking ditches. AVAS therefore carried out a gradiometer survey in September 2017. The results show two slightly tapering ditches flanking the mound, with a discontinuous ditch appearing to curve around the south-east end. Two large circular anomalies at the ditch terminals suggest the presence of large pits, similar to the situation at Cat's Brain. The large Romano-British enclosure appears to cut across the flanking ditch. This mound is indeed a long barrow of substantial size. With an estimated 112 m in length it is in fact one of the longest in Wessex. Elsewhere, for example at Old Ditch, Tilshead and at East and West Kennett, all in Wiltshire, excessively long mounds may be the result of extensions or confluent long barrows placed end to end. There is no hint of that here. However, it has also been noted that barrows in Dorset are often longer than examples in Hampshire and Wiltshire, potentially indicating distinctive cultural traditions.

Analysis of aerial photographs has revealed other possible long barrows that have not yet been tested through geophysical survey. At Whitsbury, on the east edge of Cranborne Chase, Lidar suggests the presence of an elongated mound, perhaps 50 m long, at the site of a destroyed 'Tumulus' noted on the 1870 Ordnance Survey map. Further west in the Chase, long barrows are related to spring-lines and streams that feed south into the river Stour, for instance at 'Pentridge 26'. This is scheduled as a bowl barrow, but an aerial photograph



*Gradiometer survey results and interpretation for the long barrow at East Martin*

taken in the drought of 2018 revealed what appear to be straight side ditches.

Until now the middle and lower reaches of the Avon valley have received relatively little attention, but the presence of a superb jadeitite polished axehead found in marshland at Breamore serves to underscore the importance of this part of the river during the Early Neolithic. Further study of historic aerial photographs especially for the areas of gravel pits around Blashford will no doubt be revealing. The great

number of chance finds of arrowheads and axeheads made by collectors around Bournemouth can, when combined with monument building in the middle and lower reaches of the Avon, be used as an index of the intensity of Neolithic activity and indicate that its focal point lay here rather than further north around Stonehenge.

*Michael Gill, Avon Valley Archaeological Society (m.j.gbr@gmail.com) and David Field, formerly English Heritage (davidjfield1950@gmail.com)*

## Conference announcement: Objects and death: on the trail of grave goods (past, present and future)

Friday 31st May 2019

*The British Museum, BP Lecture Theatre, 10.00–18.00 (Registration 10.00–10.30)*

Death is one of the rare constants of the human condition. This conference investigates how people have explored, explained and come to terms with death through objects across time and around the world. What connections can we find, and what differences exist, when we face death through objects? Our exciting programme of speakers includes artists, anthropologists, Egyptologists and archaeologists and will touch on past, present and future societies. The conference is aimed at all levels of interest, as well as academics and professionals working on all aspects of death, memory and remembrance.

£10 (£7.50 concession); includes two coffee breaks, but lunch is not supplied.

See the Grave Goods project website for details: <https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/grave-goods/events2/>

# The Prehistoric Society 2018

This report covers the period of January to December 2018.

## *Lectures, meetings and study tours*

The Society has continued to fulfil its commitment to reach a wide range of regional audiences and to promote its aims and objectives through varied lectures, conferences and tours throughout Britain. The number of collaborative events organised with other archaeological bodies and societies continues to increase; full details are archived on the Society's events page. This year the Bronze Age featured prominently and several lectures considered Britain in a European context. Joint lectures were given with the Devon Archaeological Society, the Ulster Archaeological Society, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society, and the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society. Dr Alison Sheridan (National Museums Scotland) delivered the second annual Pitt Rivers Lecture (joint with University of Bournemouth), entitled 'Long before Brexit: Reflections on cross-channel connections between the fifth and second millennia BC'.

In October, Claire Copper delivered the 17th Sara Champion memorial lecture at the Society of Antiquaries, 'Though they but little....The Bronze Age funerary cups of Britain'. The Society's springtime one-day conference, moved to October owing to inclement weather, focused on 'Wetlands and drylands'. Also in October, a joint conference was held with the Later Prehistoric Finds Group at the British Museum on 'The matter in hand: new research on later prehistoric finds'. Another impressive range of tours to sites, museums and excavations were offered, including trips to the Dorstone Hill excavations in Herefordshire in July, led by Prof Julian Thomas. Dr Josh Pollard led a tour of excavations at Avebury, also during July.

## *Europa Prize*

Professor Geoff Bailey (University of York) was the 2018 recipient of the Europa Prize. The theme of the Europa conference, held at the University of York on the 22nd and 23rd June 2018, was 'Coastal archaeology in prehistory'. The Society's AGM followed (see below) and the day culminated in the presentation of the Europa award to Prof Bailey who then delivered the Europa lecture, 'Between the devil and the deep blue sea: the archaeology of prehistoric coastlines' (see *PAST* 90).

## *Research Grants*

Research grants were awarded to Richard Bradley (Reading) for excavations in the Great Langdale valley, Cumbria; Hannah Cobb (Manchester) for a networking event focusing on the Mesolithic; David Connolly (BAJR) for soil micromorphology at Hedderwick, East Lothian; Katie Faillace (Cardiff) for analysis of teeth from Iron Age Wessex; Anilkumar Devara (M.S. University of Baroda) for phytolith

analysis connected to human dispersal in South Asia; Thomas Leppard (Cambridge) for the Landscape Archaeology of Southwest Sardinia Project; Lesley McFadyen (Birkbeck) for the Neolithic Jersey Project; Goce Naumov (Goce Delcev) for fieldwork on Anatolian and Balkan Neolithic sites; Sayantani Neogi (Cambridge) for the study of the prehistory of Bankura, West Bengal; Guillaume Robin (Edinburgh) for study of the rock-cut tombs of Sardinia; Mario Federico Rolfo (Rome) for fieldwork in the Apennines, Italy; Emma Tollefson (Manchester) for investigating mummification in Iron Age Britain; and Julia White (Oxford) for studying prehistoric Japanese skeletal trauma. Grants from the conference fund were made to M. Admiraal (Groningen), M. Cubas (York) and S. Harris (Bradford) to attend a range of high-profile conferences in 2018.

The John and Bryony Coles Award was awarded to Lucile Crété (Bournemouth) for museum data collection in Munich and Lauren Sewell (Bournemouth) for travel to Poitiers to obtain microwear results. SUERC Awards went to G. Delbarre, N. Harvey and A. Jordan for samples from sites at Knowle Hill Farm, the Somerset Levels and Porth Cressa respectively. Collections Study Awards went to D. Boughton for funerary urn analysis and repacking at Lancashire Museums and A. Jordan for study of material from Harlyn Bay, Cornwall. The James Dyer Prize was awarded to David Connolly, the Bob Smith Prize to Thomas Leppard, and the Leslie Grinsell Prize to Guillaume Robin.

## *The Annual General Meeting for 2017/18*

The AGM was held on Saturday 23rd June 2018 at 4.00pm at the University of York, after the 27th Europa Conference and immediately before the Europa Lecture. The President reported on a very busy, yet successful year, providing details of the Society's core activities, publications, lectures, conferences and excursions. It was noted that subscription rates may need to increase in coming years with due notice to be given to members. The President then thanked all Council and members who have assisted with events during the year. Warm thanks were offered to retiring officers and Council members: Chris Evans, Jody Joy, Laura Basell and Pippa Bradley. The President, Alex Gibson, stood down having served his full term. He was warmly thanked by Council and the membership and speeches of thanks were made. The new President, Clive Gamble, was elected and warmly welcomed.

The following officers and members of Council were elected and re-elected:

President	Prof Clive Gamble
Vice-Presidents	Dr Joanna Brück Dr Melanie Giles Prof Nicky Milner Dr Roy Loveday
Treasurer	Dr Clare Randall



Secretary	Dr Neil Wilkin
Managing Editor/Editor of PPS	Dr Julie Gardiner
Editor PAST	Dr Daniela Hofmann
Editor, Prehistoric Society Research Papers Series	Dr Mike Allen
Book Reviews Editor	Ms Pippa Bradley
Meetings Secretary	Dr Matthew Knight
Conservation Co-Ordinator	Dr Jane Sidell
Council	Dr Sophia Adams Dr Peter Clark Dr Jodie Lewis

### ***The Baguley Award***

The Baguley Award (for best paper in *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 84) was presented to Dr Neil Carlin (University College Dublin) for: ‘Getting into the groove: exploring the relationship between Grooved Ware and developed passage tombs in Ireland c. 3000–2700 cal BC’.

### ***Undergraduate Dissertation Prize***

As in previous years, each University department was invited to submit one dissertation for the Society’s Undergraduate Dissertation Prize. The winner was Victoria Alexander (Cardiff) for ‘Form versus function: a use-wear and experimental study of microdenticultates from the Welsh Mesolithic’. Three runner-ups were highly commended for their work: Naomi Hudson (Reading), Jayne Burland (Sheffield), and Selina Trout (Cardiff). The awards were made after the Sara Champion memorial lecture on 31st October 2018, at the Society of Antiquaries.

### ***Publications***

During 2018, the Society published Volume 84 of the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, which contained 15 refereed papers covering topics from the Neolithic to the Iron Age in Britain, Ireland and Europe. As usual, three editions of *PAST*, the Society’s newsletter, were published during the year.

### ***Advocacy***

The Society continued its active role in advocacy in relation to the Stonehenge Tunnel plan by Highways England, the fair pay of Irish archaeologists and the University and College Union in light of proposed pension changes. Links were reconfirmed with the European Association of Archaeologists in the wake of Brexit, and Society representatives attended the EAA conference in Barcelona in September 2018. The Society continued to support the inclusion of prehistory in the primary school’s National Curriculum by pursuing the goal of including a range of free and trusted teaching resources on the Society website and providing assistance to teachers.

### ***Membership and administration***

Membership is healthy and continues to rise. The Society’s online and social media presence (on Facebook and Twitter) has also developed considerably in the last year, with 3950 followers on Twitter (up from 3131 last year) and 10,858 members on Facebook (up from 9884 last year).

As ever, the Society would not be able to function without a large number of individuals giving freely of their time and knowledge to organise events and to deliver the results of their fieldwork and research. The Society offers sincere thanks to all those who have helped throughout the year, and especially to its administrator, Tessa Machling.

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## Notice of the 2019 (for 2018) Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held on Saturday 15th June 2019 at 4.00pm at Pomme d’Or Hotel, St Helier, Jersey.

### ***Agenda***

1. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at University of York on 23rd June 2018 (papers available from the website or from the Honorary Secretary)
2. President’s report
3. Secretary’s report
4. Editor’s report and R. M. Baguley Award
5. Treasurer’s report
6. Report on meetings, study tours and research days
7. Awards
  - Collections Study Award
  - John and Bryony Coles Award
  - Research Grants (Bob Smith Award and Leslie Grinsell Award)
  - Conference Fund
8. Election of officers and members of Council

The meeting will be followed at 4.30pm by the 28th Europa Lecture by Dr Alison Sheridan (National Museums Scotland): *Neolithic movements and contacts across the Channel and along the eastern and western seaways of Britain: what we know and what we need to find out*. The lecture will be followed by a wine reception.

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

### ***Notes***

1. A member entitled to vote at the meeting may appoint a proxy to attend and, on a poll, vote in his or her stead. A proxy must be a member, other than an institutional member.
2. To be valid, an instrument of proxy (together with any authority under which it is signed or a copy of the authority certified notarily or in some other way approved by Council) must be deposited with the Secretary, The Prehistoric Society, c/o Department of Britain, Europe & Prehistory, The British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG, by 4.30pm on the 15 May 2019.
3. Forms of proxy may be obtained from the Secretary at the above address.

## Prehistoric Society Undergraduate Dissertation Prize 2018

The awards to the winner and three runners-up for the Society's 2018 Undergraduate Dissertation Prize were presented at the Society of Antiquaries before the Sara Champion lecture. The overall winner of the prize was Victoria Alexander from Cardiff University on 'Form versus function: a use-wear and experimental study of microdenticulates from the Welsh Mesolithic'. Victoria received three years' free membership of the Society, her choice of one of the Society's in-print monographs, a cheque for £100 and the opportunity to submit an abridged version of her dissertation for publication in the *Proceedings*. The three runners-up, each receiving a year's membership of the Society, were Naomi Hudson from the University of Reading on 'By identifying possible groupings of handaxes on Lower Palaeolithic sites, can we determine whether the behaviour is an expression of culture?', Jayne Burland from the University of Sheffield on 'Saffron crocus in Aegean prehistory' and Selina Trout from Cardiff University on 'Approaches to interpreting interpersonal violence towards women and children in prehistoric Europe'. It should be noted that we usually only accept one dissertation entry from each University, but one of the Cardiff entries had not been judged the previous year.



*A winning collection. From left to right: Clare Copper (Sara Champion speaker), Neil Carlin (winner of the Baguley award), Nicky Milner (the Society's VP) and the Dissertation Prize entrants Selina Trout (Cardiff), Victoria Alexander (Cardiff), Jayne Burland (Sheffield) and Naomi Hudson (Reading). Photo: Jane Sidell*

Overall, the judges of the prize were very impressed with the quality of the winning dissertations and with that of all the submitted work this year.

## A view from the north... The Wetlands and Drylands day conference

On Saturday 27 October, I completed the hat trick of day conferences exploring *New Directions in the Landscapes of Prehistory*. Despite adverse weather conditions doing their best to scupper the series, this only delayed the final session from March until October, where, once again, the Prehistoric Society had gathered an impressive line-up of speakers to discuss wetlands and drylands and how these areas may have been connected, exploited and valued by communities in prehistory. We foraged widely across the wetlands and drylands from southern England, taking in Stonehenge and Avebury (Philippe de Smedt) and the Somerset Levels (papers by Richard Brunning and Martin Bell), across the vast watery expanse of the Atlantic Ocean to the monumental landscapes of the Ohio Valley in the USA (Tim Darvill and colleagues), returning to the Low Countries with an intimate discussion of the make-up of field banks (Stijn Arnoldussen), then back once more to southern England with papers on Must Farm (Rachel Ballantyne) and Flag Fen (Charly French). Drawing on new and innovative techniques providing vast datasets of archaeological, topographical and environmental information, we saw how these can be applied at landscape and site-based scales (Ben Gearey), but were also reminded of our past failures to capitalise on opportunities to record more traditionally with the loss of the Belle Tout Shaft to the sea (Mike Allen). The day would not have been complete without a visit to the must-find-out-more-about Must Farm, Cambridgeshire, where exceptional preservation offers a unique window on Late Bronze Age life, though not



*Philippe de Smedt presenting on geoarchaeological studies in the Stonehenge and Avebury areas (photo: Jane Sidell)*

apparently without its own issues of interpretation. Despite the promise of reaching Scotland in the initial programme, rescheduling meant we never quite made it north of The Wash. For me at least, this was a great pity given the startling complexity and preservation of material from Black Loch of Myrton, Dumfries and Galloway (Scotland's equivalent of Must Farm!). A presentation on Iron Age crannogs, or indeed the nature of the island sites from the Western Isles, many of which have an earlier Neolithic ancestry, would also have offered different understandings of the interaction between the wetlands and drylands. So rather than a view from the north, a view *to* the north might have been helpful. All told, however, this was a day packed with thought-provoking research, and a very fitting finale to this day conference series.

*Angela R Gannon, Historic Environment Scotland (angela.gannon@hes.scot)*

## The Sara Champion Memorial Lecture 2018 – Dr Claire Copper: *Though they but little – The Bronze Age funerary cups of the British Isles*

This year's Sara Champion lecture was given by the Margaret Stewart Bequest Scholar from the University of Edinburgh on the fascinating but overlooked phenomenon of Early Bronze Age 'pygmy' cups. Most have been found associated with cremations, fewer with inhumations, and a small number were deposited in intriguing contexts, such as being crammed into rocky crevices. Claire evoked how these vessels attracted the attention and envy of antiquarians, who eagerly 'swapped' these aesthetically pleasing, delicate ceramics.

Unpicking the terms used to describe them, she challenged the notion that they were mere miniatures. Whilst a few echoed the form of larger Beakers, Collared Urns and Food Vessels (Group 1), others had a distinctive biconical profile with perforations (Group 2). In contrast, Group 3 were simple, expedient thumb pot forms which could have been made for the funeral itself. Yet it was the elegance and complexity of Claire's Group 4 pots which occupied most of the talk. Creative moulding of rims, plastic ornament applied to or pinched out of the wall's fabric, pierced or incised designs, twisted cord impressions and ground bone inlay set these vessels apart in style and finish.

The cups are found across the British Isles, with notable concentrations, and Claire convincingly argued for micro-

regional traditions in design, such as the bobbed 'grape' cups from Wessex (with nodules of clay applied to the exterior), and the 'fenestrated' cut-out vessels from Sussex and Kent. As with last year's lecture, the combination of antiquarian and archival research, coupled with modern X-ray and petrographic analysis but also experimental crafting, enriched both the archaeological understanding of these pots and the liveliness of the talk. Replica versions of the vessels provided the chance to handle and appreciate the enchanting qualities of these miniature masterpieces. Yet Claire also flagged up the flaws, imperfections and clumsy finish of other pieces, challenging us to consider whether this was prehistoric hastiness or a deeper cosmological attempt not to achieve 'perfection' in one's crafting.

As to their purpose, Claire outlined a number of possibilities, ranging from incense or chaffing cups (carrying lit embers to the pyre) to containers for special foodstuffs. Claire left us in the darkened room of the Society of Antiquaries with a final image of one of the fenestrated cups: light spilling out of its excised panels in a wheel of flickering radiance. Whatever the range of their uses, as a 'light for the dead' they captivated our attention, as they must have done for people in the past.

*Dr Melanie Giles, University of Manchester (melanie.giles@manchester.ac.uk)*

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## Conference Review

### *The Matter in Hand: New Research on Later Prehistoric Finds. The Later Prehistoric Finds Group and Prehistoric Society Conference, 29th October 2018*

On the 29th of October last year, a large group of academics, professional archaeologists and students met at the British Museum to discuss *New Research on Later Prehistoric Finds*. After introductions from Matthew Knight, Sophie Adams (Glasgow) began proceedings with a discussion of novel ways to interact with archaeology. She highlighted qualities such as texture and weight as integral to the way that objects are experienced in the present and the past. Turning to the experience of making objects, Marta Innes (Glasgow) explored the creative process involved in building Bronze Age food vessels – experimental archaeology revealed that differences in their shapes and forms are likely the result of ancient makers 'playing' with a broad creative tradition. Meredith Laing (Leicester), in discussing making of another kind, questioned who was making the briquetage 'legs' that supported evaporation troughs at Iron Age salt-working sites. Meredith explained how analysis of the epidermal ridges on fingerprints can provide rough age and sex estimates, with all 72 fingerprints analysed to date belonging to adult men.

The conference continued with Brendan O'Connor (independent researcher) and Neil Wilkin (British Museum) discussing the decoration on the bracelet from the Hurstbourne Priors hoard. As great care was taken to lay out the decoration, it was probably not made using the lost wax method, and unlike similar decorated bracelets may have originated in Britain. Matthew Hitchcock (Manchester) turned to a discussion of British Iron Age shields, exploring their effectiveness in combat and considering the potential impact of their design. While large bronze facings were impressive from a distance, the intricate decoration of the shields could be appreciated only at close quarters. Helen Chittock highlighted the juxtaposition of the Grimthorpe shield's worn backplate with its pristine boss and noted that while some repairs appear decorative and others seem haphazard and improvised (e.g. the Grotesque torc), they nonetheless formed an important part of the objects' histories.

The next two papers dealt with gold – perhaps one of the most enigmatic substances to be exploited by humans. In his

address on 'demystifying' gold, Matthew Knight (National Museums Scotland) highlighted how techniques such as high-power microscopy improved our understanding of gold objects, for example by revealing possible mistakes in the making of the Moray lunula. Discussion returned to the Iron Age with Tess Machling (independent researcher) and Rolland Williamson (independent researcher) considering production techniques of gold torcs. They revealed that cast torcs are affected by structural issues, while the best torcs were made using highly-skilled sheet working technologies, enabling craftspeople to create bigger, more impressive-looking objects with less gold.

Attention then turned to ancient wood and textiles. Mark Griffiths (independent researcher) discussed the Pallasboy Project, a collaborative approach to reconstructing wooden objects that gives alternative insights into decisions taken by ancient makers, and Mark highlighted that the linear marks on the Pallasboy 'vessel' would have tripled the production time. Jennifer Beamer (Leicester) pointed out that loom weights and spindle whorls form the majority of archaeological evidence for textile production in Britain, with heavier loom weights indicating the use of flax in the Iron Age. Dawn McLaren (AOC Archaeology Group) and colleagues

summarised recent discoveries at the lochside settlement at Black Loch of Myrton, where the wetland environment has preserved the floors and beams of five timber roundhouses and two palisades. Finds from the site include a unique wooden bowl and an unusual chair leg, made from yew.

The day was rounded off with keynote speaker Melanie Giles (Manchester) speaking on the Grave Goods Project. The project aims to understand why people buried objects with the dead, using large datasets from the Neolithic to the Late Iron Age. Numerous objects can be considered grave goods – including clothing and fastenings, containers, funerary architecture and secondary burials – which can be interpreted in multiple ways, from gifts for the deceased to objects to protect the living. Melanie highlighted the complex ways in which humans understand death, with grave goods being much more than a direct reflection of the identity of the dead. All of the presentations were followed by lively and thought-provoking discussion that continued into the evening (over a few drinks). Warm thanks are due to the conference organisers, who delivered an excellent and very interesting day, and to the British Museum for hosting a wonderful event.

*Eleanor de Spretter, University of Liverpool  
(E.L.De-Spretter@liverpool.ac.uk)*

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## Prehistoric Society Undergraduate Dissertation Prize 2019

The Prehistoric Society invites submissions for the 2019 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 2018/19 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 final decision is at the discretion of the Society.

The winner will receive three years' free membership of the Society, the choice of one of the Society's in-print monographs and £100. An abridged version of the successful dissertation will be considered for publication in the *Proceedings*. Three

runners-up will be awarded a year's free membership and will be invited to the award ceremony, where they will be presented with a certificate. Highly commended entries will also receive a year's free membership. The Prize will be presented prior to the Sara Champion lecture on the 30th of October 2019.

This prestigious award represents an excellent opportunity for outstanding young scholars to have their work publicly recognised, in the magnificent setting of the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House in Piccadilly. Entries for the current academic year are to be sent as a single PDF document by the host department to Dr Melanie Giles at [melanie.giles@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:melanie.giles@manchester.ac.uk) by **Friday 19th July**. It is advised that the file name comprise the student's name and institution. Entries can only be accepted if accompanied by the email address, postal address and contact phone number **both** for the candidates **and** for their supervisors.

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## Pitt Rivers Lecture

In October 2018 Dr Alison Sheridan, former President of the Society, delivered the Pitt Rivers Lecture entitled '*Long before Brexit: Reflections on cross-channel connections between the fifth and second millennia BC*' at Bournemouth University. This annual event, arranged in association with the Prehistoric Society, showcases new research and is supported by current members of the Pitt Rivers family. Our picture shows



Alison flanked by Professor Tim McIntyre Batty (right), Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Bournemouth University, and Professor Tim Darvill. Next year's lecture will be given by Professor Ruth Tringham (University of California, Berkeley) on Tuesday 29 October 2019 – an evening not to be missed, so pop the date in your diary now and watch the Society's website for further details nearer the time!

## A radiocarbon date for a Llyn Fawr phase hoard from Scotland

In 1877 a hoard of nine copper alloy objects was recovered from a peat bog at Poolewe, Highland. It contained five socketed axeheads, three annular rings (of which one was retained by the finder, a local labourer; its current whereabouts are unknown) and a cup-ended ornament. Three of the socketed axeheads are variants of the Sompting type, allowing us to date the deposition of the hoard to the Llyn Fawr metalworking phase (800–600 BC; otherwise known as the Earliest Iron Age). Having been on extended loan to National Museums Scotland for over sixty years, later this year the Poolewe hoard will return to its place of origin and be displayed at Gairloch Heritage Centre, Highland. This has sparked renewed research, on which this note draws.

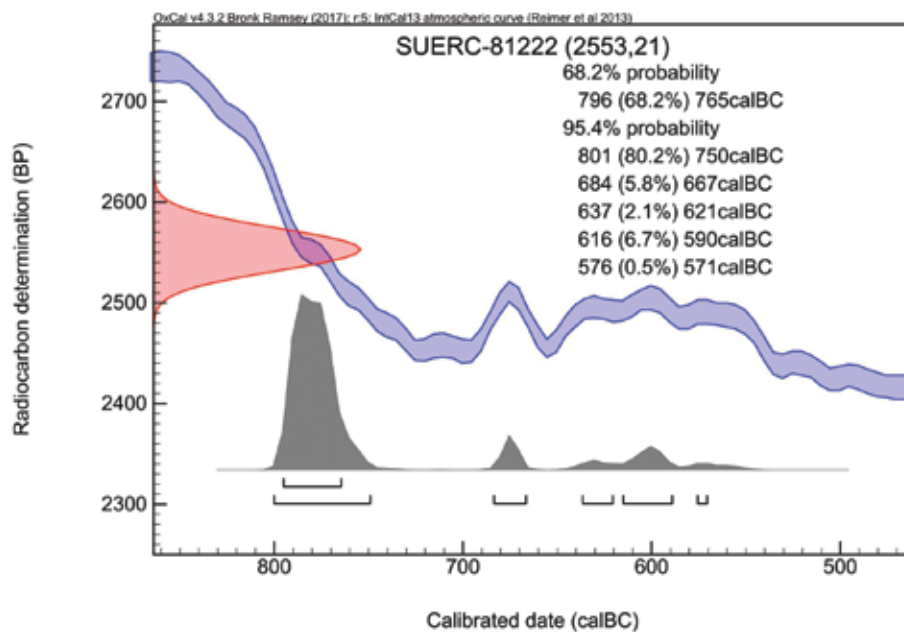
Study of the hoard revealed that one of the Sompting axeheads contains a small fragment of a haft (*Quercus* or *Fraxinus* sp., not heartwood), presenting a unique opportunity for dating a hoard of metalwork from the Llyn Fawr phase. National Museums Scotland submitted the fragment to the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (SUERC), which produced a conventional radiocarbon age of  $2553 \pm 21$  BP (SUERC-81222 (GU48530): 796–765 cal BC (68.2% probability) or 801–571 cal BC (95.4% probability)). This places the deposition of the Poolewe hoard firmly within the expected Llyn Fawr phase, probably within the earlier eighth century BC. Absolute dates for Llyn Fawr metalwork are rare and this result represents the first date ever acquired for a hoard of this period in Britain. Other results include axe hafts of a copper alloy Sompting axehead and an iron socketed axehead from Middlesex and Oxfordshire respectively, as well as from charcoal from a pyre context in Warwickshire in which cauldron fragments were found.

At present, the Poolewe hoard is one of only three metalwork hoards from Scotland dating to this period – the other two being from Tillicoultry, Stirling, and Lamancha, Scottish Borders. However, there are uncertainties about the findspot association of the axeheads from Lamancha, as they are Armorican types, far outside the traditional distribution area of such finds, and may therefore represent the activities of a local collector (Dot Boughton, pers. comm.). Meanwhile, as O'Connor pointed out in 2007 in the *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal*, the two axeheads recovered from Tillicoultry may have been deposited close to each other, but not directly associated. The account of discovery of the Poolewe hoard by William Jolly in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* in 1880 confirms that all objects were found together while peat digging. The Poolewe hoard is thus unique in Scotland as the only certain mixed-character hoard from the Earliest Iron Age. Its late date means it could represent one of the last acts of hoarding metalwork in Scotland, ending the long-standing hoarding traditions of the Late Bronze Age.

The fact that we can confirm the integrity of the hoard becomes yet more important when analysing the individual objects. The cup-ended ornament, for instance, is typologically more in keeping with the Ewart Park phase of the Late Bronze Age (920–800 cal BC) and thus may have been in circulation for some time when deposited. Similarly, one of the axeheads is deliberately broken and survives only as a fragment of a cutting edge – this practice is more common in the Ewart Park phase and is rare in Llyn Fawr hoards. Therefore, this hoard seems to represent a mixture of objects and ideas in the transitional period from the Late Bronze Age into the Earliest



The Poolewe hoard, Highland  
(© National Museums  
Scotland)



The calibrated date on the haft fragment (provided by SUERC)

Findspot	Material dated	Associated metalwork	BP	Cal BC (2σ)	Lab code	Reference
Poolewe, Highland	Axe haft	Hoard	2553±21	801–571	SUERC-81222	
Broom, Warwickshire	Charcoal ( <i>Fraxinus</i> sp., heartwood)	Class B2 cauldron fragments	2570±55	833–521	OxA-6282	Gale in Palmer 1999, <i>Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society Transactions</i> 103, 53
	Charcoal ( <i>Fraxinus</i> sp., heartwood)		2475±55	773–416	OxA-6283	
Buscott Lock, Oxfordshire	Axe haft	Iron axehead	2480±50	776–416	OxA-6216	Needham <i>et al.</i> 1997, <i>Archaeological Journal</i> 154, 98
River Thames, Kew Deer Park, Middlesex	Axe haft ( <i>Salix/Populus</i> )	Sompting axehead	2545±55	830–510	OxA-4658	Needham <i>et al.</i> 1997, <i>Archaeological Journal</i> 154, 72

Table of existing dates for Llyn Fawr metalwork

Iron Age, further strengthening the likely depositional date in the early eighth century.

The new radiocarbon date offers the opportunity to think about how we might interpret the perceived temporal span of the objects in this particular hoard, as well as reflecting on changing practices. A forthcoming article will further explore these themes alongside additional artefact research, shedding new light on this hoard and its position within Earliest Iron Age Scotland.

#### Acknowledgements

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Matthew G. Knight, National Museums Scotland  
([m.knight@nms.ac.uk](mailto:m.knight@nms.ac.uk))

## Three New Prehistoric Society Research Papers (PSRP) and 25% discount for all Society members

A bumper summer ahead with three new Prehistoric Society volumes being published: the whopping 616-page *The Beaker People; isotopes, mobility and diet in British Prehistory* (ed. Mike Parker Pearson *et al.*), the complementary *Bell Beaker Settlement of Europe* (ed. Alex Gibson), and *The First Farmers of the Carpathian Basin* by Eszter Bánffy. All will be available this summer and are currently at pre-publication prices from Oxbow (£28 – £37.50).

More good news for members: all members are eligible for our Society discount of 25% of the full published price, applicable 1 month after publication. The discount code 'PSOXB83' should be applied to the basket when shopping online at [www.oxbowbooks.com](http://www.oxbowbooks.com), or quoted when ordering over the phone. This code will change from time to time and members will be notified via PAST and by the Society. You can keep track of our publications through our website or through Oxbow Books.

## Of smoke and dung: two experimental pot firings in Orkney, August 2018

During the course of his 1880 Rhind lectures, published in 1881 under the title *The past in the present: what is civilization?*, Sir Arthur Mitchell described the firing of a hand-built globular pot, or *craggan*, by a potter living in Barvas on the Isle of Lewis:

*Having shaped the craggan she let it stand for a day or two to dry, then took it to the fire in the centre of the floor of her hut, filled it with burning peats, and built burning peats all round it. When sufficiently baked, she withdrew it from the fire, emptied the ashes out, and poured slowly into it about a pint of milk in order to make it less porous. The craggan was then ready for sale. (Mitchell 1881, 45–46)*

Descriptions such as this of the open-firing of a pot on a hearth set on the floor of a small building raise a number of questions, not least how the smoke was dealt with in such a confined space. Peat fires in particular can be very smoky when catching light. The alternative—firing outdoors—comes with its own set of problems, including wind and rain, both of which greatly increase the risk of pots breaking. This raises the question of whether pots were fired on domestic hearths during prehistory. Indeed, some prehistoric hearths, including many excavated at the Ness of Brodgar in Orkney, are of considerable proportions and substantial construction and may have served this purpose, alongside others. In order to test the practicalities of firing a pot indoors on a peat fire, the authors undertook an experimental firing at the Kirbuster Farm Museum in Orkney on 11th August 2018.

The hearth at Kirbuster comprises a simple flat stone set in the centre of the stone-flagged floor, behind which stands a stone-built fireback that protects the fire from draughts. Ventilation is via a lumb, or smoke hole, situated about two thirds of the way along the flagged roof to the rear of the

hearth. As the lumb is not directly above the hearth there is almost no risk of raindrops falling onto the fire. The lumb is fitted with an adjustable board that helps to create a vortex drawing air up from below, a process that works most efficiently on breezy days.

The pots to be fired were small, hand-built replica Neolithic Grooved Ware vessels made by Mike Copper from ‘wild’ clay dug in Orkney. These were dried indoors for two weeks before the experiment. On the day itself, a small peat fire was lit on the hearthstone and the pots set to warm while the fire developed. Although it can be smoky, peat is an excellent fuel for pot firings as it facilitates gentle rises and falls in temperature. Once a bed of hot embers was established a further layer of fuel was added and the now fairly hot pots set on top of this before more peats were piled over them. To conserve fuel the fire was contained within a low wall of stones provided with sufficient gaps to allow oxygen to enter. Once the extra fuel was added the fire did indeed produce a great deal of smoke. However, when the doors of the house were left open the lumb easily vented this despite the lack of wind. While smoke collected beneath the roof it presented no problems for people seated around the fire. Indeed, this area became remarkably sociable as visitors gathered to discuss the experiment. Unfortunately, due to technical issues temperatures could not be recorded during the firing. Nonetheless, the pots glowed red in the fire before it was eventually allowed to die down. On removal all of the pots were seen to be very well fired and no cracking or other damage was noted.

An interesting observation made after the firing concerned the colour of the inner face of the retaining wall. While some areas were sooty, others were reddened or had retained their original hue. The interfaces between these different



Left: The peat fire after the initial smoking had abated. The lumb (smoke hole) is situated in the roof around two metres behind the hearth.

Middle: Smoke rising towards the roof and lumb

Right: Pots cooling in the ashes of the fire



Striking coloured patterns were produced on several of the hearthstones



Experimental sheep-dung firing at the Ness of Brodgar. Left: The early stages, as the dung fuel began to catch light from a small kindling fire of wood. Right: The pots are revealed as the thick layer of ash is cleared

colours were often very sharp, resembling the patterns on stones found at sites such as the Ness of Brodgar, which it has been suggested were deliberately coloured. While our observation does not necessarily negate this idea it nonetheless draws attention to additional explanations. In addition, the usefulness of stones to contain – and thereby conserve – fuel may account for the presence of some of the fire-cracked or discoloured stones found in association with hearths at sites such as the Ness.

A second experimental firing was undertaken during an open day at the Ness of Brodgar excavations on the 19th August using sheep dung as a fuel. Sheep dung is still used to fire pots in several places around the world but has received relatively little attention from experimental archaeologists. The dung had been collected the previous year by Mike Copper and allowed to dry in a cellar (Claire Copper inexplicably having refused permission for it to dry by the living room fire!). Over this period the dung reduced considerably in weight but not in bulk. Although the dung fire at the Ness was much smaller than the peat fire at Kirbuster, all of the small, hand-built pots were very well fired and survived without damage. Interestingly, the firing resulted in a thick layer of ash that entirely covered the pots, thereby greatly reducing the danger of cracking ('dunting') by allowing them to cool slowly before removal.

Although both firings described here were informal they were nonetheless informative. The ease with which smoke could be vented through a simple roof hole at Kirbuster, combined with the absence of wind and rain that can dog outdoor

firings, raises the question of why anyone would have wanted to fire pots outside in an environment such as Orkney and draws attention to the diverse potential uses of hearths. At the Ness of Brodgar there is ample evidence that the large stone 'halls' were roofed with stone flags not dissimilar to those at Kirbuster. As smoke cannot pass through such a roof it may have been vented through a smokehole instead. Our experiment shows just how efficient such an arrangement can be even when fairly large quantities of peat are being burned. No breakage occurred during the Kirbuster or Ness of Brodgar firings, reinforcing the idea that the absence of firing wasters from excavated hearths is no indication that they were *not* used to fire pots. Furthermore, heat-affected or unusually coloured stones could be indicative of a temporary wall such as that built at Kirbuster to retain and thereby conserve fuel. Finally, and to our great relief, it was noted that well-dried sheep dung does not produce a particularly unpleasant smell when burned.

On the back of these experiments, we now plan more structured work over the autumn and winter, particularly regarding the use of dung fuels in pottery production.

#### *Acknowledgements*

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*Mike Copper, Bradford University (M.Copper1@bradford.ac.uk) and Claire Copper, University of Edinburgh*

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