

# PAST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY



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

<http://www.prehistoricsociety.org/>

## Dartmoor Tor Enclosures Survey

In October 2019 the first stage of fieldwork began as part of a new research initiative on Dartmoor's tor enclosures. The *Dartmoor Tor Enclosures Survey* (DATES) involves the first application of modern, multi-scalar, surface and sub-surface survey methodologies to the sites of White Tor Camp (known locally as 'Whittor'), Dewerstone, and a newly identified site on private land, Knowle Wood. Methods include unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), terrestrial laser scanning, gradiometry, ground penetrating radar, magnetic susceptibility and PXRF surveys. DATES is led by the University of Leicester in collaboration with Dartmoor National Park Authority and involves specialists from several institutions.

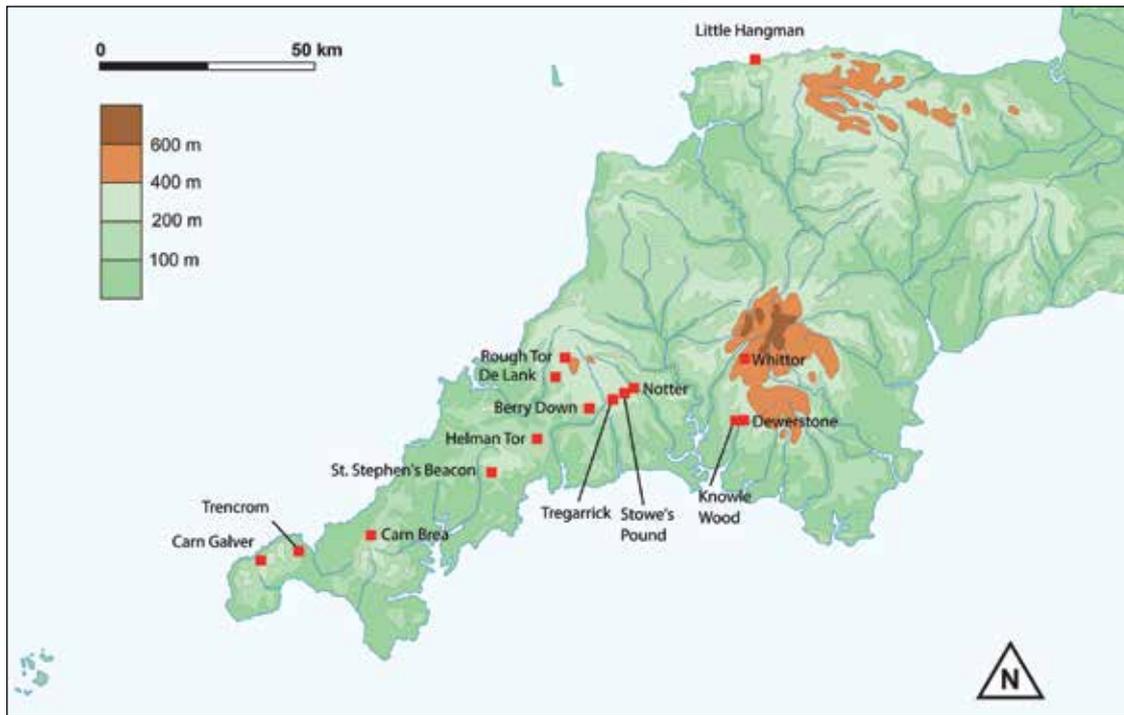
Tor enclosures are a class of monument peculiar to south-west England. Their distribution is concentrated in Cornwall,

where eleven examples have been identified. In Devon, there are two on western Dartmoor at White Tor and Dewerstone and one at Little Hangman on the north coast of Devon. Another recently discovered site, Knowle Wood, has characteristics in common with the known examples, although an initial earthwork survey by Phil Newman, commissioned by DNPA, has suggested elements more typical of Iron Age hillforts.

Although tor enclosures vary in form, the fundamental characteristic is that areas of high moorland are enclosed with stone banks which incorporate one or more rock outcrops. Simon Davies has argued that tor enclosures mark the highland/lowland interface, possibly on transhumance routes, and may also have been perceived as thresholds between



*The survey team sitting on Dewerstone Rocks. The outer enclosure cutting off the promontory is visible as the curved line in the background to which the paths run. Image captured with DJI Inspire 2 UAV by C. Graham and with permission from the National Trust, © DATES Project 2019*

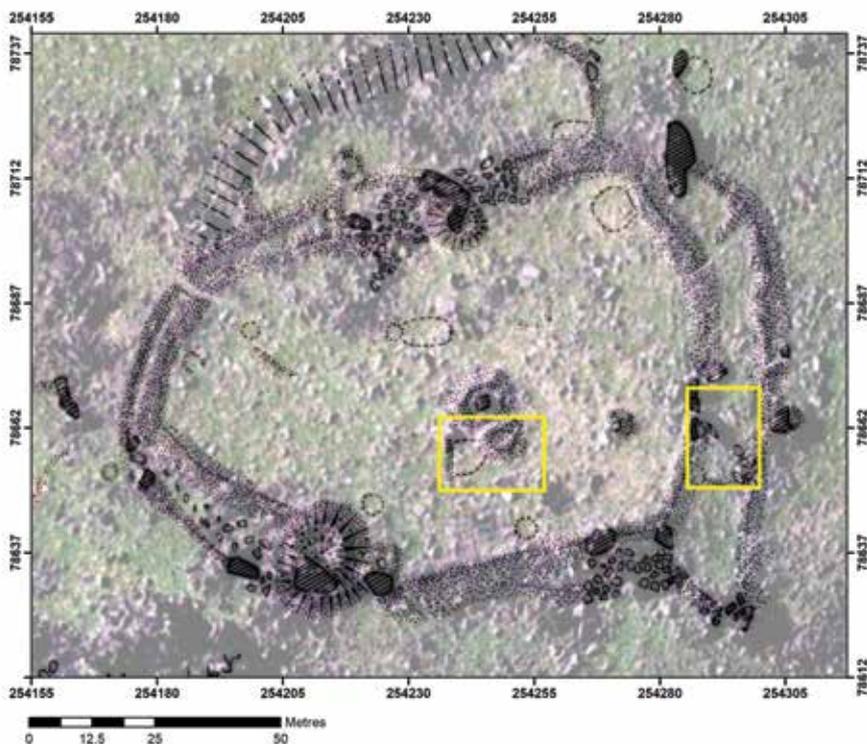


Distribution of probable tor enclosures. Map by L. Bray. Site locations from Davies 2010 (<https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/1141/>) and, for Little Hangman, the Exmoor National Park HER (No: MMO1635)

different worlds. Even with significant tree cover, these sites would have afforded extensive views of the surrounding areas. Like many of the broadly contemporary causewayed enclosures they have a strong connection with waterways. Tor enclosures form part of a broader trend in landscape enclosure and monumentalisation seen across Britain during the fifth and fourth millennia BC along with shifts in landscape use, subsistence strategies, lifeways and material culture. Only two Cornish sites, Carn Brea and Helman Tor, have been radiocarbon dated to the fourth millennium cal BC.

DATES' primary aim is to develop a better understanding of the precise age, function and broader prehistoric landscape context of these fascinating sites. Following a desk-based consideration of their archaeological and palaeoenvironmental landscape context and future potential, survey at all three sites was conducted in October 2019 to avoid disturbance of ground-nesting birds.

Dewerstone enclosure has never been excavated but has been repeatedly discussed since the 1930s. In November 1994, the



Probable DEC excavation areas. Map by L. Basell. Data: 1999 Aerial Photography of White Tor overlain by georeferenced translucent RCHME plan of prehistoric enclosures. Data and ArcGIS 10.5 software are freely available, owned by, or under licence to one or several of the collaborating institutions

Royal Commission for the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) carried out an analytical earthwork survey of the two enclosures on Dewerstone Hill, as part of the project *Enclosure and Industry in the Neolithic Period*. The surveyors concluded that the outer enclosure is potentially Neolithic, while the inner may be Bronze Age. Knowle Wood has not been previously studied, as it was only identified in 2017 from analysis of LIDAR data.

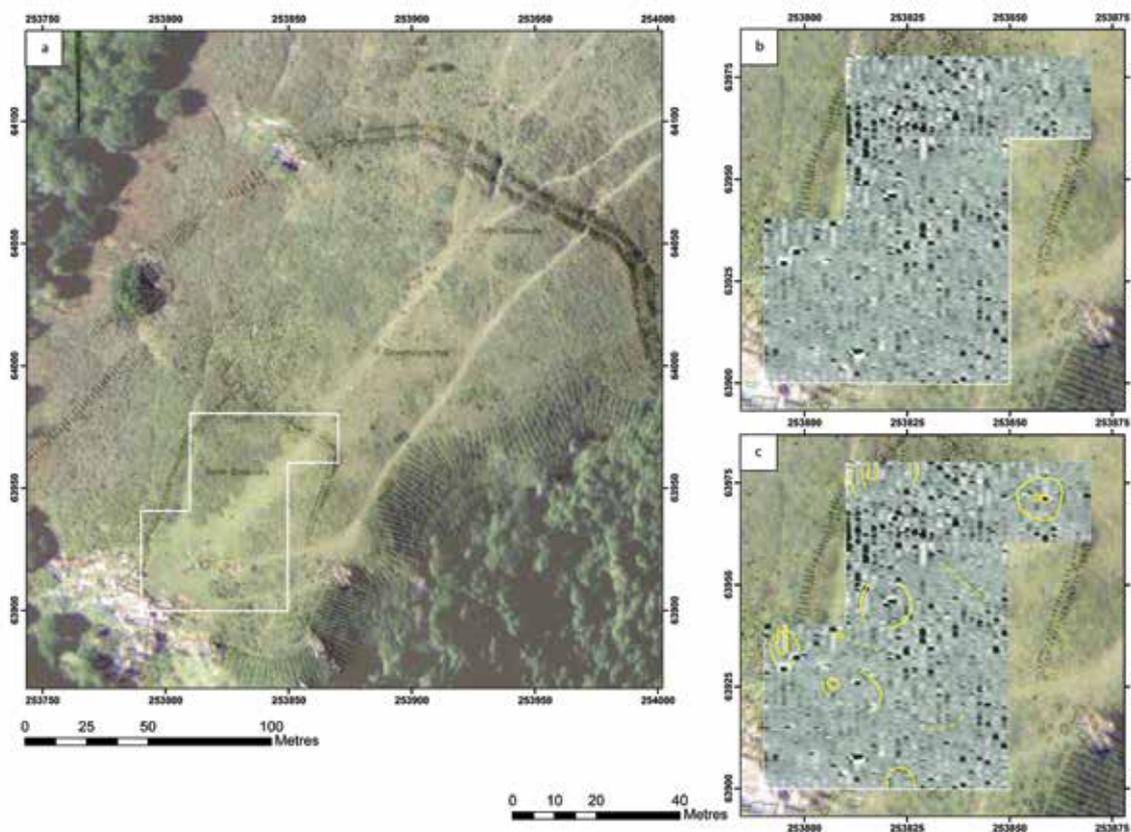
White Tor Camp was first explored with a view to excavation by the Dartmoor Exploration Committee (DEC) for one week in Spring 1898, with the work being extended in 1899. Close reading of the DEC report suggests the primary excavation areas lay within 'hut circles' located within the yellow boundaries on our figure. Finds from the excavations may have been lost but were initially reported as including five pottery fragments, a flint scraper, core and possible arrowhead and 'scores of flakes and chips, some discoloured by fire'. Charcoal and an ash-filled cooking hole were excavated in one of the circles, and two flint flakes were also found during excavation. Since then, no further excavations have been conducted at the site, but an RCHME survey of the enclosure was completed in 1996.

Conditions prevented TLS survey at all three sites, but a single clear day permitted a complete UAV survey at Dewerstone. A second attempt for the UAV survey of Whittor scheduled for 2020 has been postponed due to Covid-19. Geophysical surveys were completed at all sites and based on these results locations were identified for evaluation trenches

to obtain range-finder dates and palaeoenvironmental information. Multiple GPR transects were run across White Tor Camp, Dewerstone and Knowle Wood. These confirmed relatively shallow soil depths in all three locations and several features of interest, including a possible ditch related to the outer enclosure at Dewerstone; possible ditch features and anomalies at the centre of the enclosure at Knowle Wood; and an intriguing potential pit beneath a large slab of rock within the White Tor Camp inner enclosure.

Gradiometry survey was conducted over the inner enclosure at Dewerstone, and a small area selected for excavation on the outer enclosure (total: c. 0.5 ha). At White Tor Camp two areas within the tor enclosure and an area 200 m to the north of inner enclosure were surveyed (total: c. 0.19 ha). At Knowle Wood vegetation inhibited gradiometric survey, but c. 0.08 ha was achieved. Interesting anomalies displaying both positive and negative magnetism were recorded at all three sites, including several linear and sub-circular features at Dewerstone and Whittor which have no visible surface expression. The latter are consistent in size and shape with similar sub-circular structures which are incorporated within the enclosure walls and also found outside the enclosures at both Dewerstone and Whittor. At Knowle Wood there were several magnetically positive sub-circular pit-like features.

A small (2 × 1 m) evaluation trench on the outer enclosure at Dewerstone revealed a podzol and a surprising number of features (>10) within the eluvial horizon. The underlying illuvial horizon was revealed in the base of several features



Maps of Dewerstone gradiometric survey. (a) Survey location (b) Results (c) Interpretation. Maps by L. Basell. Data: 1999 Aerial Photography of Dewerstone overlain by georeferenced translucent RCHME plan. Survey and interpretation, H. Webber, S. Randall. Data and ArcGIS 10.5 software are owned by, or under licence to one or several of the collaborating institutions

once the fills had been removed. Charcoal samples have been submitted for radiocarbon dating. An evaluation trench was excavated at Knowle Wood in January 2020 and yielded charcoal, lithics and pottery which are now under analysis. Torrential rain, high winds and time constraints prevented excavation at White Tor Camp during the October 2019 field season. Analyses of the PXRf and magnetometry survey are ongoing.

We look forward to sharing further results soon. The research completed to date raises a fascinating range of questions and demonstrates the potential for further work at these and other tor enclosure sites. A full publication of results is in preparation for the *Antiquaries Journal*. To follow the project's progress, as well as for outreach information (which includes guided walks and talks on the research) and publications please see: <https://lbasell.wixsite.com/projects/dates>

#### *Acknowledgements*

Funding: Society of Antiquaries. Landowner and land user permissions: James Parry and Peter Davies, National Trust; Crispin d'Apice, Ministry of Defence; Peter Tavy, Commoners' Association; Dartmoor Forest Commoners' Association; Duchy Estates; Peter Challiss. Statutory consents and support: Helen Woodhouse and Hayley McParland, Historic England. Helpful discussions: John Ette and Olaf Bayer, Historic England; Simon Davies. Project advisors: Duncan Garrow, University of Reading; Andy Jones, Cornwall Archaeological Unit. Discovery of the Knowle Wood site through LiDAR interpretation: Caroline Derry, local volunteer.

*Laura Basell, University of Leicester (l.basell@leicester.ac.uk); Lee Bray, Dartmoor National Park Authority; Conor Graham, Queen's University Belfast; Henry Webber, University of Bristol; Sam Randall, Bournemouth University; Andy Crabb, Historic England/Dartmoor National Park Authority.*

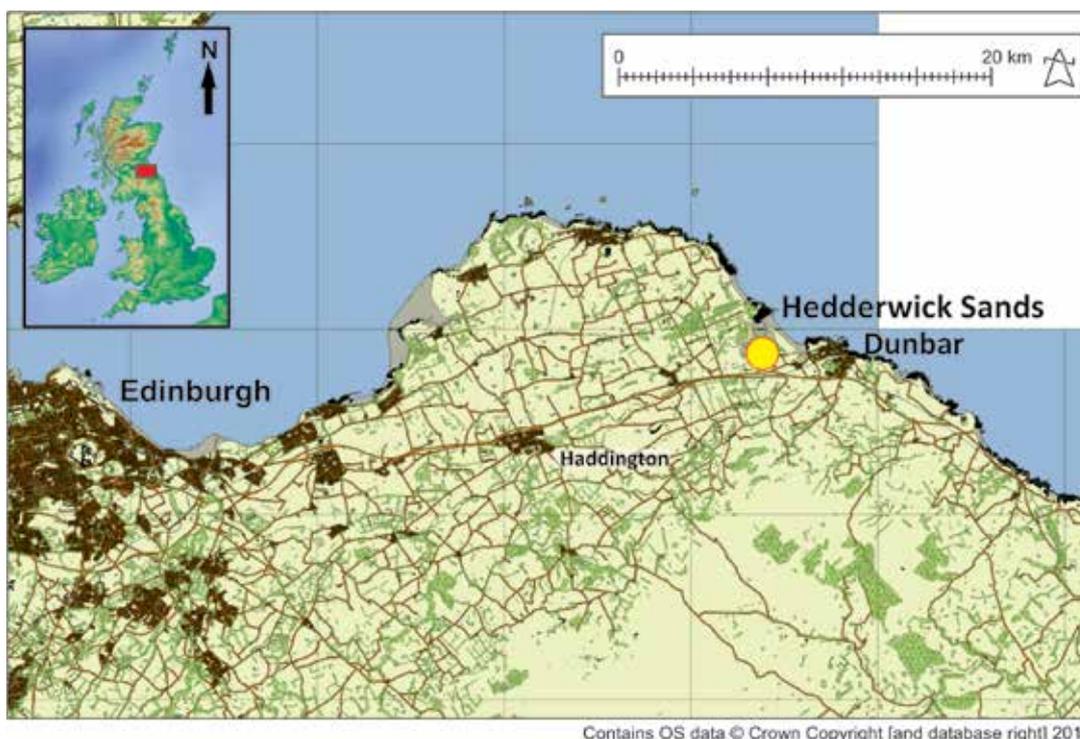
---

## Search for a lost Neolithic site in south-east Scotland

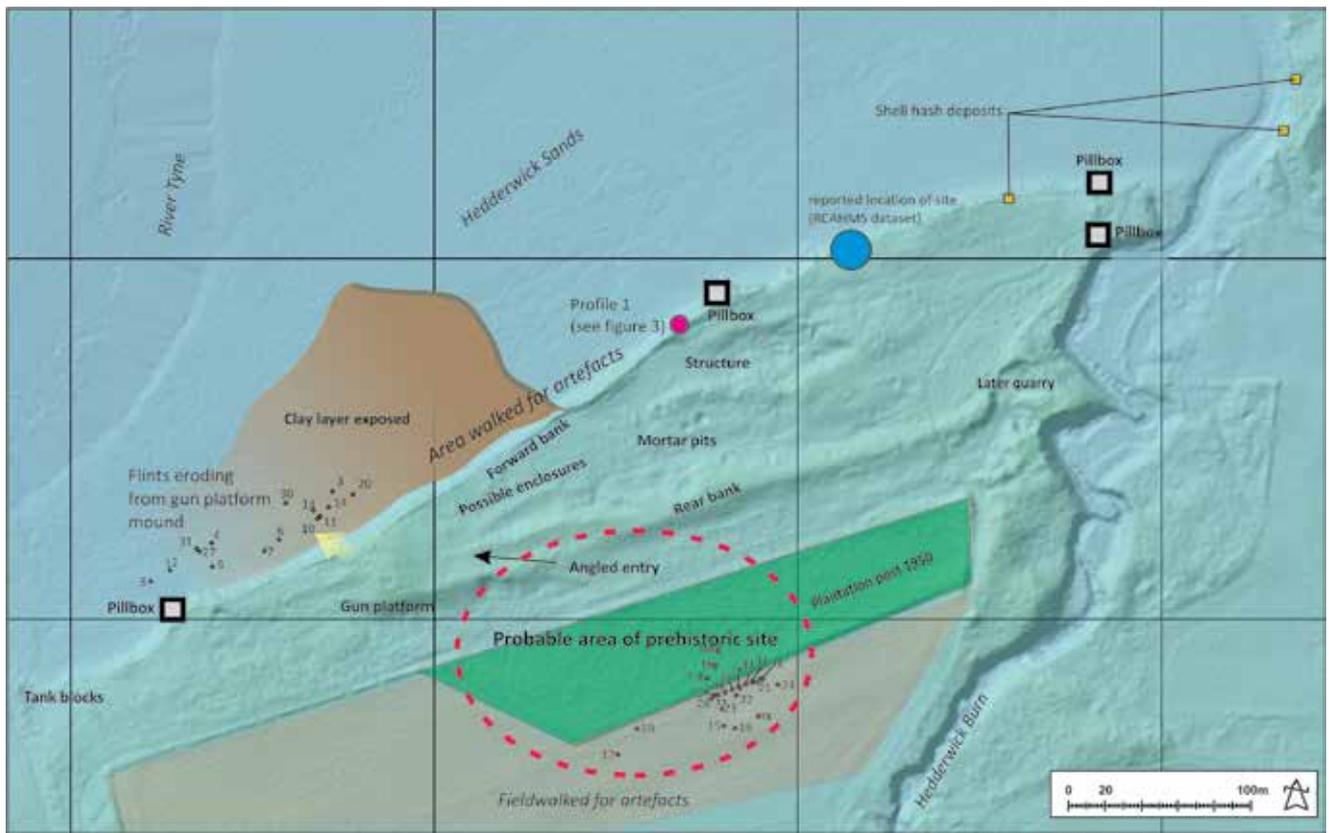
The coastal mudflats and dune cliffs known as Hedderwick Sands are situated to the west of Dunbar and the south of Tynningehame Bay in East Lothian. The locality represents an area of natural beauty and has great archaeological potential, given the discovery of a largely Neolithic to Bronze Age site in the 1920s and a number of cropmarks and upstanding monuments in the vicinity.

The Hedderwick site was described at the time of its discovery as positioned on the south bank of the estuary of the Tyne,

near Hedderwick Sands and west of Hedderwick Burn. It was found after a storm by Mr Richardson, a local teacher, and comprised a sizeable assemblage of Neolithic and Bronze Age material. Numerous sherds of pottery, representing over 47 vessels, were found, including multiple fragments of beakers and two rim fragments of cinerary urn. Further artefacts comprise leaf-shaped and barbed arrowheads and other flint tools (400 in total). A number of stone axes and a short Bronze Age cist with associated human remains were also uncovered.



Site location



based on Lidar data (2018) under Open Government Licence v3.0

Area of investigation showing location of all finds, test pits and the geo-archaeological profile, as well as WW2 defences and associated features, tsunami deposits, and the suggested extent of the prehistoric site

Mr Richardson collected the artefacts from a surface exposed by the storm and recovered further pieces over the following decades, donating these finds to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (NMAS) in 1949. However, the site was never excavated or accurately located and seems to have been completely lost or eroded by 2006.

Mimicking the situation of the initial discovery a century earlier, the accelerated wind and sea erosion of the present coastline, together with the ploughing attrition further inland, led to recent recurrent finds of lithics by local resident Mr Gary Craig. The new finds in the same approximate area of the original site strongly suggested that the most likely candidate for their source was the Hedderwick prehistoric site found in the 1920s.

The Hedderwick Sands project was initiated in 2018 in response to these new discoveries. Our aims are to relocate the original site more securely; to determine the rate of potential threat to the remains caused by the combined effects of wind, sea and anthropogenic erosion; and to provide data for future conservation management plans. The project focused on two areas of recent finds. The first includes a portion of the coast and eroding sand dune near the presumed location of the prehistoric site, which was situated on a large sand and clay cliff, *c.* 6 m high in places, and behind a series of hollows and sandy banks. The second covers part of a forestry plantation and an adjoining ploughed field further inland to the south.

The Hedderwick Sands project employed a suite of destructive and non-invasive methods consisting of the excavation of 12 test pits, a walkover survey over a portion of the study area (6.5 ha), drone imagery and topographic survey. Environmental study carried out as part of the investigations included Kubiena sampling and associated micromorphology analysis of the eroded coastal profile and recording of the surrounding area's geo-archaeological profiles.

The test pitting and walkover survey in both the inland area and beach resulted in the recovery of further lithics, all of which belong to the Late Neolithic. The initial analyses of the 33 lithics indicate that these resulted from manufacturing, handling and discard processes which are suggestive of a discrete episode of tool making and use rather than settlement as such. Of course, this does not preclude the possibility of differential areas of usage associated with the site and the amount of ceramics recovered in the last century certainly suggests a more sedentary as well as long-term community.

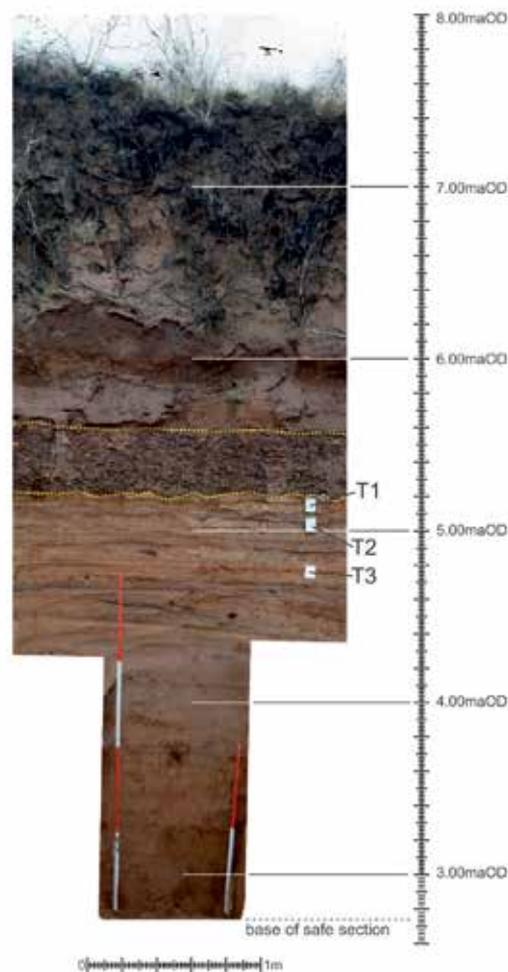
Based on the results of test pits, fieldwalking and accidental finds, the lithics appear in two separate areas. The distribution results from two distinct taphonomic processes, with finds recovered from the field representing agricultural disturbance, while those from the beach signify erosion from a WW2 emplacement, itself created from material likely removed from the original site. Although more fieldwork has to be undertaken to confirm this, it is feasible that the centre of the Neolithic and Bronze Age site was/is most



View to west along sand cliff



Gary Craig examines original collapse



Eroded sand-cliff profile with location of Kubiena samples for micromorphological analysis. Note the discrete muddy clay deposit likely resulting from a single high-energy event

likely situated between these two locations – in the area of post-1950s forestry plantation.

This further implies that the site was substantially affected by construction of the WW2 defences and associated works. These would have led to displacement of much of the material not recovered during the site's initial exposure in the early 20th century. Conceivably, the artillery platform to the west of the newly discovered WW2 defensive zone was mainly created from material bulldozed from the prehistoric site.

Furthermore, comparison of both drone imagery and earlier OS maps, undertaken as part of the project, also revealed striking coastal changes in the area, showing just how dynamic this section of littoral zone is, with further sites potentially under threat from impending coastal erosion. Correspondingly, other prehistoric sites may lie undiscovered, submerged under the present sea level. Future targeted research regarding the preservation and conservation of coastal sites in the region would therefore be of prime benefit.

Moreover, although the soil micromorphology study of the four Kubiena samples produced no indication of the anticipated Neolithic/Bronze Age occupation or any dating material, it has uncovered evidence of a high-energy event,

most likely an ancient tsunami. The muddy clay deposit identified from the samples can also be seen along the coast below the sampled area, while the shell hash layer, another indicator of a high-energy event, was identified at a further three locations to the east of the site profile, around the Hedderwick Burn.

Similar sediment from the area has been previously investigated by Professor David E. Smith (School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford), and potentially linked to the Mesolithic tsunami event known as the Storegga Slide, which has been recognised on other sites on the north-east coast – notably at the nearby Lochhouses Farm or at Low Hauxley, Northumberland.

Despite the lack of success in recovering concrete evidence of preserved in-situ Neolithic or Bronze Age remains, the 2018 fieldwork at Hedderwick Sands nonetheless adds important new data regarding the date and character of the prehistoric site, as well as contributing to the study of prehistoric natural events. Future research should focus on further test pitting, particularly in the area proposed from the combined research as the most likely location for the prehistoric site exposed in the early 20th century. This could uncover any in-situ remains, recover associated radiometric dates and



*Selection of the lithics recovered: knives, knife fragments, scrapers and other tools*

determine the state of preservation of the site to facilitate the conservation and heritage management of the area.

#### *Acknowledgments*

We would like to express our gratitude to The Prehistoric Society for their generous contribution towards the soil micromorphology analysis of the deposits. Further thanks are extended to Mr Gary Craig for bringing the site to our attention by reporting flint finds and for volunteering on the project, together with Mrs Sally Metcalf, who provided enthusiastic support throughout. The authors would also

like to acknowledge support and advice from Prof D.E. Smith regarding the Mesolithic tsunami evidence, and kind permission to investigate, survey and fly the area by the landowner Alec Dale. Finally, East Lothian Council archaeologists also kindly supported the project by advising and helping to disseminate the results to the public.

*Hana Kdolska and David Connolly, BAJR (info@bajr.org), with specialist reporting by Val Dufeu (Scottish Geo-Archaeology Environmental Services; soils) and Ann Clarke (independent lithics specialist)*

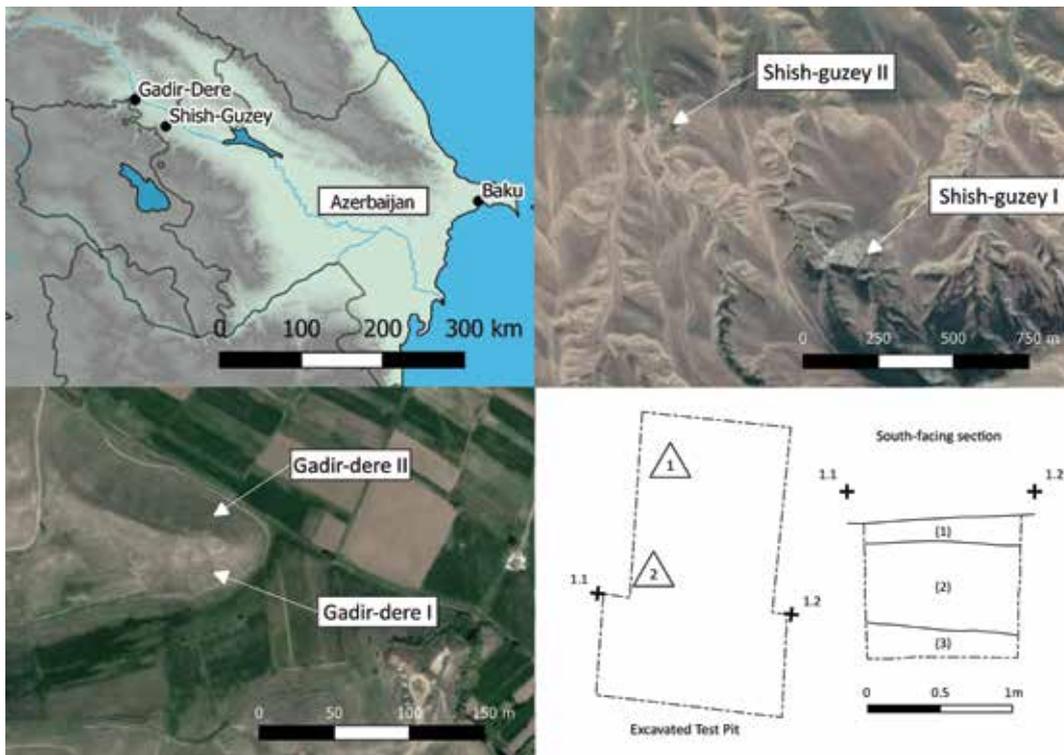
---

## Lower and Middle Palaeolithic technology, typology and chronology in north-west Azerbaijan

The Lower and Middle Palaeolithic record of Azerbaijan is under-researched, and much of the information regarding human behavioural evolution and migration in the Caucasus region is understood from work at sites in neighbouring countries, such as Dmanisi and Kudaro I and III, Georgia, and Nor Geghi and Yerevan cave, Armenia. Azerbaijan possesses around 40 sites attributed to the Palaeolithic, although very few have been stratigraphically excavated. The country's most famous, and possibly also most ancient site, Azykh cave, was excavated before the adoption of modern methods, therefore much of the information nowadays regularly obtained by archaeologists has been lost. Other than Azykh cave, only a handful of cave sites are known, primarily Dashsalakhly, Damjili, Taglar, Gazma and Buzair caves. Most other information comes from surface collections from open environments, where material has been observed eroding out of weathered soils. A large concentration of sites exists in the north-west of Azerbaijan close to the borders with Georgia and Armenia. Most of this material was discovered during extensive survey in the 1960s and 70s along the banks of the north-west to south-east running River Kura. In 2017 fresh research was proposed, aiming to characterise material from a few of these sites to help understand the behavioural choices of hominins spatially and chronologically. This short report presents some initial results.

In 2018, lithic analysis of material from Shish-guzey and Gadirdere was undertaken at the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, Baku. The assessment of these assemblages revealed mixed collections of possible Lower and Middle Palaeolithic implements. The sites are in close proximity and are both located on the south-western banks of the River Kura, north-west Azerbaijan. Due to the mixed nature of material and the lack of intrusive site investigation, a period of fieldwork was scheduled for summer 2019 to excavate test pits at each location in order to understand site formation, assess deposits for dating and for the retrieval of further artefacts.

The site of Shish-guzey is positioned at an elevation of 591 m on a ridge that looks north-west across the vast Kura floodplain. Artefacts are eroding out of the soil and are scattered across the entire top of the ridge. A test pit was excavated, but produced little evidence for deposition. Instead the soil is formed by weathering of the underlying geology. Survey of the surrounding area revealed a number of other possible sites, most notably Shish-guzey II, located across a deep valley c. 900 m away to the north-west. The site was found near a rocky outcrop and produced a Levallois point, large flakes and a large core. Further bifaces, scrapers and flakes were discovered at the base of large hills and across the valley floor and are likely to have derived from the



Top left: map of Azerbaijan showing location of sites; top right: Shish-guzey sites; bottom left: Gadir-dere sites; bottom right: excavated test pit at Gadir-dere I with location of artefacts recovered from layer 3 (numbered triangles). Base maps for aerial shots: Google Satellite



Broken flake with radial dorsal scars recovered from layer 3 at Gadir-dere I

upper slopes and hilltops in the area. Further survey and test pitting is required to help distinguish hominin movement, raw material acquisition and tool curation across these sites.

Following the work at Shish-guzey, attention was turned towards Gadir-dere, where large handaxes, flakes and scrapers had been recovered in the 1960s. Gadir-dere is situated on the northern bank of an old tributary of the Kura at the confluence with the main river. The site was discovered by the retrieval of artefacts on the base of the bank around 20 m from the valley floor to the south. The artefacts extend

along the bank for approximately 80 m and are restricted to a 10 m wide band. The site would have been very attractive to humans and animals seeking resources provided by both rivers. The substantial bank left by this large alluvial system was surveyed on its northern slopes and a second site, Gadir-dere II, was identified through the presence of a number of Levallois implements. A test pit was excavated in the area with the highest concentration of finds at Gadir-dere I.

The results were extremely exciting. Three layers were identified, and two artefacts recovered from the lowermost layer, 3: a broken flake with radial dorsal scars and a small flake. Samples were taken of the sediments to attempt OSL dating, which will be carried out at the University of Leicester. Results are expected in the course of this year. The discovery of artefacts in the third horizon below the surface is tantalising and is of high importance to Palaeolithic studies in the region. This is the only site where in-situ artefacts have been recovered from a stratified open locality in Azerbaijan. The relationship between the artefacts on the surface and those in layer 3 is yet to be determined. The investigations are set to continue and will hopefully reveal further clues for early human occupation in this part of the Caucasus.

*Rupert Birtwistle, University of Leicester (rjb87@leicester.ac.uk)*

## Society accounts for 2019

For various reasons, including the sad and untimely death of Alastair Ainsworth, it has not yet been possible to finalise the Society accounts for 2019. We are in the process of finding a solution and will keep membership updated.

## To all members of the Prehistoric Society – Coronavirus update

The community of prehistorians has never been more important. I am writing this after eight weeks of lockdown in the UK. Members in other countries have experienced even longer restrictions, while some have been more fortunate. The pandemic is affecting all archaeologists, from the loss of revenue at heritage sites, to furloughing and redundancy of staff, the added work-load of devising online solutions to teach students, the cancellation of exhibitions, disruption to research students through closure of museum collections, libraries and laboratories and the cancellation of fieldwork. You will have had personal experience of these, or known someone who has, and many other instances of living through this pandemic. And thank you for sharing them and ways to cope on our social media.

Sadly, I have to let you know about the death from Covid-19 of our former Treasurer, Alastair Ainsworth. All those who knew Alastair remember his gentleness and kindness and his abiding interest in prehistory. He shared his financial skills across several archaeological organisations. Many of us remember the way he brought our accounting systems up to 21st century standards and organised our investments. He was still helping Clare Randall with this year's accounts. He will be much missed.

The lesson from prehistory is 'take the long view'. Consequently, we aim to undertake our full programme of meetings and lectures as soon as we can meet safely. Updates about the autumn events will be provided by Matt Knight, our Meetings Secretary, on our social media pages.

Looking further ahead, Colin Haselgrove's Europa conference is now rescheduled for 11–13 June 2021. All the keynote speakers will be present, and accommodation for delegates will be available in the University's conference centre. Our thanks to our Europa organiser, Annabell Zander, for putting in a great deal of extra work. At the time of going to press

we are still waiting for confirmation about the dates from the University of Leicester. Understandably they are working through the implications of how lockdown is eased. But we are optimistic that a full conference will take place in a year's time.

I am also delighted to announce that the Europa Prize for 2022 will be awarded to Professor Eszter Bánffy and her Europa lecture will be hosted by Bournemouth University over a weekend in June.

We are still planning to hold this year's Sara Champion Lecture at the Society of Antiquaries on October 21st. The lecture this year is by our Secretary Rachel Crellin. Our current plan is to hold the AGM at 4.30pm before the lecture. The AGM is a tradition of the Society but not one that is a requirement of Companies House. We intend to honour that tradition if possible and will keep you updated by e-mail and social media if there is any enforced change of plan.

Finally, I would like to thank our Membership Secretary, Tessa Machling, for keeping us all cheerful and informed through our social media. Traffic on the site has increased greatly and I particularly enjoyed the social distancing observed by megaliths. Another of prehistory's lessons. Do visit our Facebook group (search for 'Prehistoric Society') or follow us on Twitter @PrehistSociety. In addition, you must check out our excellent teaching resources created by Vice President Roy Loveday, Pippa Bradley and Ben Gearey, now available at: <https://theprehistoricsociety.school.blog/> and reported on further in this issue.

Until we can all meet again either in the field, museum or lecture theatre, I would like to wish you all the best and hope that you and your families stay healthy and safe.

*Clive Gamble, President of the Prehistoric Society*

### NEW PREHISTORIC SOCIETY RESEARCH PAPER DUE THIS SUMMER

#### *Social context of technology: non-ferrous metalworking in later prehistoric Britain and Ireland*

by Leo Webley, Sophia Adams and Joanna Brück – Prehistoric Society Research Paper 11

The *Social Context of Technology* explores non-ferrous metalworking in Britain and Ireland during the Bronze and Iron Ages (c. 2500 BC to 1st century AD). It is the first comprehensive assessment of non-ferrous metalworking in later British prehistory. Analysis focuses on metalworking tools and waste, such as crucibles, moulds, casting debris and smithing implements. The find contexts of these objects are examined to identify places where metalworking occurred and investigate the cultural practices behind the deposition of metalworking debris. This is the basis for a comprehensive re-assessment of the social significance of smithing and the role of metalworkers.

The volume (hardback, 278 pages + index, fully illustrated, and detailed review of the data) can be ordered at pre-publication price from Oxbow for only £28. <https://www.oxbowbooks.com/oxbow/the-social-context-of-technology.html> Pre-publication price is valid until one month after publication.

## Programme of meetings 2020–2021

Due to the ongoing situation with Covid-19, our annual programme of meetings is currently reduced. We are looking at alternative ways to deliver some lectures and hope to coordinate more meetings for late 2020 and the first half of 2021, but will have to monitor developments closely.

Any updates will be listed in the autumn edition of *PAST*. Please also check our website for further details and for any additional events we may be able to offer: <http://www.prehistoricsociety.org/events/>.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Venue</i>	<i>Details</i>
<b>2020</b>		
Mon 5 October, 6:00pm	Room LG17, Law Faculty building, Sidgwick Site, West Road, Cambridge	<b><i>Landscape Change at the Heart of Neolithic Orkney</i></b> , by Dr Caroline Wickham-Jones Annual joint Cambridge Antiquarian Society / Prehistoric Society lecture
Wed 21 October, 5:00pm	Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London	<b>The 19th Sara Champion Memorial Lecture</b> <b><i>Title tbc</i></b> , by Dr Rachel Crellin, Leicester University Followed by free wine reception and presentation of the Society Undergraduate Dissertation Prize
Tues 27 October, 7:00pm	Fusion Building, Talbot Campus, Bournemouth University	<b>4th Annual Pitt Rivers Lecture</b> <b><i>The origins of our species</i></b> , by Professor Chris Stringer, Natural History Museum For further details and booking please visit: <a href="https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/fourth-annual-pitt-rivers-lecture-2020-tickets-99340801010">https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/fourth-annual-pitt-rivers-lecture-2020-tickets-99340801010</a> .
Fri 30 October, 5.30pm	United Reform Church, Church Road, Welwyn Garden City	<b><i>The Havering board – a Late Bronze Age find baffling experts or bolstering opinions?</i></b> By Dr Sophia Adams, University of Glasgow Annual joint Welwyn Archaeological Society / Prehistoric Society lecture
Monday 2 November, 7:30pm	Scarborough Library, Vernon Road, Scarborough	<b><i>The Pocklington chariot burials</i></b> , by Paula Ware, MAP Archaeological Consultancy Annual joint Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society / Prehistoric Society lecture
Saturday 7 November, 2:00pm	Norwich Castle Museum, Castle Meadow, Norwich	<b><i>Title tbc</i></b> , by Professor Nick Ashton, British Museum Annual joint Norwich and Norfolk Archaeological Society / Prehistoric Society lecture.

### Reflections on the dayschool *Landscapes of the Dead: exploring Neolithic monuments and mortuary practice*

Storm Dennis (of which more anon) failed to deter most of the eager participants who thronged to Burlington House on Saturday 15 February to hear a top-flight line-up of speakers. Curated and expertly chaired by Vicki Cummings, this excellent dayschool presented much fresh information and many insights into funerary practices in Britain between *c.* 4000 BC and *c.* 2500 BC.

The day started with Rick Peterson considering cave burial (as discussed in his 2019 book). Practised from the early fourth millennium BC in various parts of Britain, to what extent can this be regarded as a continuity from ‘Mesolithic’ funerary traditions and how does it compare with the manipulation of the dead in contemporary chamber tombs? Was this part of a varied set of practices introduced into Britain by Continental farmers? Rick concluded that our regional ‘Neolithics’ are earlier and more ‘unpacked’ than previously thought.

Dawn Cansfield then presented the results of her PhD research into the burial practices of Early Neolithic south-east England, highlighting their diversity and underlining the non-monumental nature of some of the earliest examples, con-

trasting with the Medway chamber tombs. New dates, from the Society-supported *Brighton and Hove Prehistoric Peoples Research Project*, were presented. The vexed use of terminology describing body positions (‘crouched’, ‘flexed’ etc.) was discussed, as was the necessity of understanding natural changes to bone disposition with the decomposition process.

Colin Richards couldn’t make it from Orkney but his paper, presented by Vicki, considered chamber tombs as living, animate entities and as protective skins. Here, in monuments made from cleft rocks that enveloped and wrapped the dead, a reciprocal flow of substances and essences took place between the dead placed in them and the fabric of the monuments. In such a fluid and relational world, these material transactions were necessary for social reproduction.

With concepts of seeping bodily fluids fresh in our minds, lunch was taken. Afterwards, Rick Schulting showcased much new isotopic data from Ireland’s and Britain’s Neolithic dead. Key take-home points were: i) at Knowth, no difference was apparent regarding ‘local’ vs. ‘non-local’ provenience of individuals represented by cremated remains, and those



Cave Ha 3 in the Yorkshire Dales, where Neolithic human remains were found (photo: Rick Peterson)

represented by unburnt fragments; ii) regional, probably environmentally-determined differences in nitrogen isotope values can be seen in Scotland; and iii) in western Scotland, there is a clear contrast in nitrogen isotope values for contemporary individuals buried in caves and in chamber tombs. This requires further investigation.

Chris Fowler then presented the results of his exciting Isle of Man research project. This has produced all-important new radiocarbon dates and revealed hitherto-missing evidence for Middle Neolithic funerary practices, showing that the deposition of cremated remains in Ronaldsway jars began much earlier than usually thought and also demonstrating the use of cists during the second half of the fourth millennium. Cracking stuff!

Duncan Garrow's thoughtful presentation focused on Neolithic grave goods, exploring the difficulties of describing objects found with the commingled dead in monuments

as such. Case studies from Unival (North Uist) and Isbister (Orkney) were used to tease out the complexities of practice regarding artefactual (and other non-human) deposition in chamber tombs.

Seren Griffiths then sparkled and fizzed with a fantastic presentation of the numinous, mica-glittery landscape of Bryn Celli Ddu and an impassioned exposition of the theoretical underpinnings of her new AHRC project on late third and early fourth millennium Britain and Ireland. She argued that we need to change our approach to time, to redefine sequence and structure and to transcend narratives that are locked within limiting culture-historical categories such as 'the Neolithic': let's get away from our comfy images and talk about what happened, decade by decade, untrammelled by preconceptions. This is going to be a project to watch.

The day was admirably rounded off by Mike Parker Pearson and Christie Willis' review of cremation in Middle and Late Neolithic Britain, setting the Stonehenge evidence in its wider context. The change from an Earlier Neolithic tendency to communal burial to a Middle and Later Neolithic practice of generally individual interment (albeit often in cemeteries) – with Orcadian chamber tombs as the notable exception – was discussed in the light of a possible change in inheritance systems.

All in all, this was a fantastic event, and even the 7½ hour West Coast train journey from hell that followed it for this commentator (thanks Storm Dennis!) could not dampen my enthusiasm for such a splendid day. Well done – another barnstormer!

*Alison Sheridan, clo National Museums Scotland  
(a.sheridan@nms.ac.uk)*

---

## A new website from the Prehistoric Society – for primary schools and others

When the government added 'Prehistoric Britain' to the Key Stage 2 (Primary) National Curriculum it became immediately obvious that there was a distinct lack of appropriate resources. The very few available were targeted at final year primary and secondary pupils whereas the expectation – driven by advised chronological ordering of study – was that Prehistoric Britain would be a module for 7–8 year-olds. The fact that teachers had very little time available to research the subject (being focussed on achieving set levels in the 3Rs), coupled with a real dearth of introductory books to which they might turn, seemed likely to condemn 'Prehistoric Britain' to cursory coverage at best.

It was therefore decided that the Prehistoric Society should use its website and members' expertise to assist teachers. Stuart Needham oversaw this new education initiative, including the production, by members of the Council and external academics, of a series of information pages (*Signposts to*

*Prehistory*) providing concise details of publicly accessible sites for field trips. These not only demonstrate the wealth of sites to be found across the country but valuably make available information otherwise largely locked up in archaeological journals. Meanwhile, as new education resources began to appear, it became obvious that they were all too often dully descriptive, sadly lacking the interpretive dynamism that we know is central to the subject. Opportunities offered by the 'concrete' nature of archaeology to introduce reasoning from evidence at an early age were being missed. It was decided therefore that the Society should produce a set of ready-made, age-appropriate lesson plans (with accompanying PowerPoints and background information for teachers) intended to both simulate the discovery aspect of the subject and generate class discussion.

Acknowledging the enormous appeal of discovery in the Time Team TV series, and the advantage for younger children of



What do you think these things are?

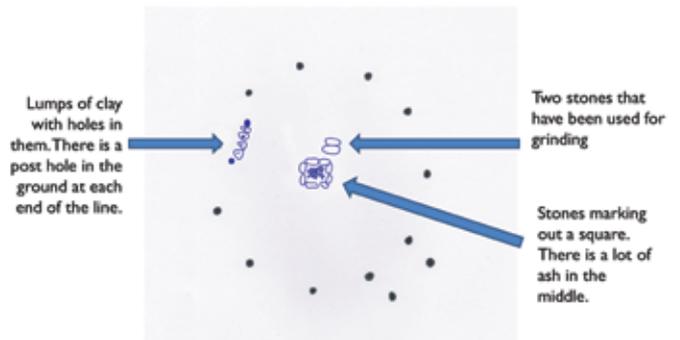
*Pupils are asked to offer first interpretations of key features at Skara Brae, before being shown finds associated with the buildings*

focussing on particular locations rather than generalising, eleven prehistoric sites have been selected as the focus for individual lessons. The intention is not, however, to tell the pupils what these sites are at the outset. Instead, through progressive frames of a PowerPoint, they 'excavate' or explore the site and are challenged, as the evidence unfolds, to explain what they think it is, how it was used and how old it is (by matching drawings of broken artefacts with complete examples on a time chart). In this way, through discussion, drawing and hands-on activities, pupils follow the archaeological route of excavation → interpretation → reconstruction, enjoying the excitement of discovery and reasoning, while gaining knowledge of prehistory.

To widen the scope of the topics, cross-curricular links have been built into the lesson plans, concerning for example art (cave paintings and Iron Age chariots), science (friction and the transport of stones to Stonehenge), creative English (discovering Lascaux), and report writing (a dig diary and a newspaper report). Opportunities are also included for outdoor education/Forest Schools activities. In order to ensure the appropriateness of the material it has been produced by a member of the Society with direct experience of teaching the target age group, and independently trialled and commented on by teachers. Comments received have all been very positive (e.g. 'I found the lessons easy to pick up and deliver. The lesson plans were realistic to teaching in the real world but also conducive to teaching high quality lessons').

### EXCAVATION DAYS 4 – 7.

Things have now been uncovered inside the circle of postholes. They are marked in blue.



What do you think these three things were?  
Talk about your ideas.

*In the lesson on Iron Age roundhouses, pupils take the role of field archaeologists, with new evidence revealed every day/slide*

The production of accompanying 'further reading' lists for teachers who wished to find out more proved problematic, however – few introductory-level texts were still in print and, of those that were, most were out of date. This has recently also been exposed as an issue of public concern by the Council for British Archaeology's Public Communication survey. To remedy the situation, it was decided to produce a series of entries to add to the new website under the title *Introductions to British Prehistory*. Written by members, these pages furnish authoritative, up to date information on a range of site types and topics in accessible language for teachers, 6th formers, 1st year undergraduates and all those curious to find out more. Additional entries will be added over time and existing ones reviewed every four years (with each change of president) to ensure that they, unlike printed sources, remain accurate and up-to-date.

All these elements (the Key Stage 2 teaching programme, Signposts to Prehistory and Introductions to British Prehistory) are freely available to schools and other interested members of the public on our new website at <https://theprehistoricsociety.school.blog>

It is hoped it will aid both the teaching of prehistory in schools and the accessing of current archaeological thinking by the public at large.

*Roy Loveday, University of Leicester (r.e.loveday@btinternet.com)*

## The prehistoric landscape of Tenants Hill, West Dorset

In 2018, Past Participate began a community archaeology project on Tenants Hill, Kingston Russell, West Dorset. Tenants Hill forms the western end of a ridge adjoining the South Dorset Ridgeway to the west of Black Down and Bronkham Hill. It overlooks the valley of the River Bride to the north and has views of the coastline between Bridport and Lyme Regis to the west. Abbotsbury Castle

hillfort is visible on the skyline; the Grey Mare and Her Colts chambered long barrow lies further along the ridge, and Black Down is visible to the east. Tenants Hill is a microcosm of the wider Dorset Ridgeway, as the hilltop is the setting for prehistoric monuments representing a potentially unbroken sequence of landscape utilisation from the Neolithic to the Iron Age.



*Location map for Tenants Hill, West Dorset and areas under investigation*  
(© Rebecca Pullen)

Our study area is focussed within two large fields extending to *c.* 21 ha. The eastern field contains the Kingston Russell stone circle, a denuded round barrow (catalogued as KR15 by Leslie Grinsell) and another possible barrow identified by Peter Woodward in 1983, while the western field contains a well-preserved bowl barrow, KR14. The hedgerows surrounding these fields appear to fossilise part of a later prehistoric field system extending across the plateau and upper slopes of Tenants Hill. This field system is likely to have been contemporaneous with a D-shaped enclosure on a spur in the field to the north.

The primary focus of the initial season of fieldwork was a test pit survey of the area to the east of bowl barrow KR14. None of the test pits located archaeological features, but relatively high densities of struck flint were recovered from the topsoil and subsoil. A few pieces were products of narrow blade industries indicating a Later Mesolithic presence, but most of the lithics related to significant Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age activity on the plateau and highlighted the potential for further investigations.

In 2019, student volunteers from Bournemouth University conducted a gradiometer survey over areas between barrow KR14 and the Kingston Russell stone circle. The results were

ambiguous and dominated by numerous large amorphous anomalies. Augering has indicated these anomalies probably represent shallow dolines filled with iron-rich clays.

We focussed our attention upon five large sub-circular anomalies, which formed an arc *c.* 20 m in diameter and exhibited a degree of regularity and structure not evident elsewhere in the survey. These anomalies were located roughly midway between barrow KR14 and the stone circle, which lay *c.* 260 m to the east-south-east. Our 24 x 22 m trench rapidly demonstrated that the anomalies were geological in origin. However, the magnetic signatures of these geological structures masked numerous prehistoric features. We cleaned 40 % of the trench and identified eight postholes, ten pits and a gully. Post-excavation analysis is ongoing, but probably the earliest features were a series of four intercutting pits. Their gleyed basal fills suggested they had contained water and had been left open for some time, but the fills did not contain artefacts, which were abundant in all the other pits and postholes.

A group of six postholes were investigated toward the north-west corner of the trench. ‘Pot boilers’ had been reused as post packing, but there were indications that all posts had been deliberately extracted. In some instances, the resulting



One of the postholes under excavation

depressions had been partially filled with deposits of daub and pottery, likely fragments of several plain collared urns. A curvilinear gully situated to the east of these postholes may have been the foundation for a plank-in-trench built structure. Further east were another two postholes and a pit containing cremated bone, carbonised organics, daub and possible mould fragments.

In 2021, we hope to complete another season of targeted excavation that will seek to establish whether we have discovered a Collared Urn settlement, or some form of ritual activity associated with the nearby barrows and stone circle.

#### *Acknowledgements*

We would like to thank the landowners, Christine, Richard and Dan Smith, as without their interest, encouragement and assistance the project could not take place. We are also grateful to Peter Emery, who first drew our attention to Tenants Hill, our local volunteers for all their hard work and our professional volunteers – Heidi Archer, who supervised for a busy week, and Jon Baczkowski. Thanks to Jodie Pinnell and Sam Randall of Bournemouth University for volunteering their time for geophysics. Our thanks also to Ann Woodward, who kindly identified the pottery and daub. The project has been generously supported by the Prehistoric Society (Leslie Grinsell Award), National Lottery players and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, as well as the Davison bequest to the University of Manchester.

*Anne Teather, Past Participate (anne@pastparticipate.co.uk), Jim Rylatt, Past Participate, Hayley Roberts, University of Bournemouth, Andrew Chamberlain, University of Manchester and Rebecca Pullen, Historic England*

---

## Excavations at Nesscliffe Hill Camp, Shropshire

Nesscliffe lies a few miles west of Shrewsbury in an area rich with hillforts (see the Atlas of Hillforts at <https://hillforts.arch.ox.ac.uk>). It is unusual in being an inland promontory fort with two conjoined enclosures. While the eastern one is still covered by woodland, the western enclosure, recently cleared of trees, has an impressive inturned entrance to the north. The site now lies within a countryside park.

Prior to 2019, Nesscliffe Hill Camp had only seen some small-scale excavations at the western enclosure in the 1950s with minimal records and minimal results (published by Hume and Jones in the *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society* in 1960). Small trenches in the interior uncovered Romano-British pottery (now lost), while nothing was reported from an unfinished trench across one of the northern entrance inturns. These early excavations were carried out by teachers and pupils from a Shrewsbury school, and through media coverage we were able to make contact with some of the ex-pupils involved and with locals who remembered the work.

The 2019 excavations at Nesscliffe Hill are part of a wider project involving Shropshire Council (SC) and Historic England (HE), aimed at conserving the site and presenting it to the public. A new earthwork survey was carried out by HE, and geophysics, augering and test pitting across the interior were commissioned by SC. For our first exploratory season of excavation we decided to concentrate on the 1950s entrance trench and to open a new section through the main rampart.

The main objective of trench 1 was to locate, re-open and cut back the sections dug in 1956, record them to modern standards, and establish the character, dating and phasing of the inturned entrance. Substantial archaeological deposits and standing structures are still evident, although the full extent of the surviving inturned entrance remains to be determined. To date, at least two construction phases are apparent in the southern inturn. An earlier phase has well-made front and back stone-revetted walls with a rubble core, made from local sandstone. Several courses of massive dressed sandstone blocks and wedges form a curved recess (guard chamber) in the entrance passageway. It is at least 3 m long and 1.5 m deep to a height of more than 0.7 m. The trench was extended on the other side of the footpath on the northern inturn, where an arc of at least nine courses of sandstone blocks was uncovered. It is likely that this northern recess is nearly a metre higher than its southern counterpart, with a suggestion that these stones are part of a corbelled chamber. About 2–3 m behind the entrance recess, we began to expose several courses of sandstone blocks, thought to be the rear wall of the southern inturn. This indicates that the inturn was initially only around 4 m wide and then extended later.

Trench 2 was located at the southern end of a break through the inner rampart. The aims were to establish the structure of the rampart, identify any evidence for phasing and rebuilding, and clarify whether the break could have been an original entrance. The resulting section showed that the rampart was of a single phase and a relatively simple design,



*The entrance recess (© Nesscliffe Project)*



*The rampart section (© Nesscliffe Project)*

and that the break was not an original entrance. The vertical outer face was a drystone wall of large shaped blocks of local red sandstone. The first course of stones was laid on a foundation of boulders, which created a wider base and

were not as well shaped as the wall itself. As in trench 1, the front facing stones were selected for their hardness. Behind the wall was a deposit of large angular pieces of stone, likely prised from the external ditch. The middle of the rampart comprised a mixture of rounded boulders and sand built up on a levelling layer, as the bedrock is uneven.

Historical evidence shows that Nesscliffe Hill was a popular place for Victorians to visit, with music, dancing, archery and merry-making taking place at various points. Probably, the break through the ramparts was created at this time to provide access to the highest point and its spectacular views over the Severn Valley. Our project also generated considerable public interest, mainly through daily updates on social media, as well as local radio and newspapers. This resulted in several hundred people visiting the excavations.

Multi-enclosure hillforts, of which Nesscliffe Hill Camp is a fine example, are relatively rare and are therefore considered of national importance. Hillfort entrance recesses (or 'guard chambers') are even rarer, as only 60 of the over 4000 hillforts in Britain and Ireland have them. Due to Covid-19, it is currently unknown whether excavation will continue in 2020, although hopefully limited work on the entrance can take place. Plans to open a new trench in the interior and involve local people have been postponed until 2021. Other than the small number of Romano-British sherds, presumably showing secondary re-use, there is as yet no dating evidence for the hillfort's construction and use.

*Gary Lock, Emeritus, University of Oxford (gary.lock@arch.ox.ac.uk) and Paul Reilly, University of Southampton (p.reilly@soton.ac.uk)*

## Vrbjanska Čuka – a tell site of the first farming communities in Pelagonia

Vrbjanska Čuka is a tell site in the northern part of Pelagonia, the largest valley in Macedonia. It is an area with an abundance of Neolithic tells, some reoccupied in the later prehistoric, classical and medieval periods. Geological research indicates that wetlands in the vicinity of tell sites could have been one of the motives for establishing the first agricultural villages in this region.

First excavations at Vrbjanska Čuka were performed in the 1980s, when Neolithic buildings were recorded and a stratigraphy determined. Our current fieldwork involves many Macedonian and international institutions and integrates excavation, prospection, digital topography, geoarchaeology, archaeobotany, archaeozoology, AMS, use-wear and lipid analysis, geomagnetic and 3D scanning, as well as the study of material culture and organic remains. This is the first project in Macedonian archaeology to involve all these disciplines and to provide such thorough insight into the life and environment of the first farmers in Pelagonia.

The digital topographic modelling indicates that the tell is 4 m high and occupies an area 145 m in diameter. According to geomagnetic scanning, the tell was surrounded by a large ditch enclosing approximately 25 buildings. Our excavations focused on some of these buildings to understand their establishment, structure and stratigraphy. The settlement was founded in the Early Neolithic on a small natural



*View of the Vrbjanska Čuka tell (photo: Goce Naumov)*



*The excavation trench, showing daub buildings and medieval pits (photo: Hristijan Talevski)*

sandy bulk created by the lake of the Neogene period. After intensive use over several Neolithic building horizons, the settlement was abandoned for approximately five millennia and subsequently reused as a Roman villa rustica and later in the Middle Ages as an area for large pits and a necropolis.

The radiocarbon dating of the Neolithic phases records the earliest occupation of the tell between 6000 and 5700 cal BC. Six architectural levels established in approximately 300 years demonstrate the site's dynamism. The buildings were made of massive daub walls with wooden posts. Numerous clay installations such as ovens, bins, grinding platforms etc. were found in the interiors. Building 2 is one of the largest Neolithic structures in Macedonia, covering an area of 130 m<sup>2</sup>, and including nine internal daub structures as well as a second storey in its western part. Building 1 has a large clay granary and eight lateral bins around 4 m wide and decorated with stair-like applications. Such a density of buildings, quantity of grinding stones and interior daub structures has not been recorded in Macedonia so far and distinguish this settlement as a regional centre for deposition and cereal processing. A cereal-based economy is confirmed by archaeobotanic analyses and use-wear analysis, which shows the use of lithic tools as sickles. The archaeobotanic, archaeozoological and lipid analyses indicate that the variety of foods consumed is typical for the Neolithic Balkans.

The wetlands in the vicinity of the tell were attractive for the first farmers, providing easy access to fertile soil and various resources. Consequently, a number of tells were founded in the area, as confirmed by extensive prospection and geomagnetic scanning in the region. Some of the tells were contemporary with Vrbjanska Čuka, while others were established in the Late Neolithic or Chalcolithic. These latter clearly demarcated the settlement area with ditches, while

the material culture apparently significantly differs from that at Vrbjanska Čuka.

Overall, Vrbjanska Čuka probably functioned as a sort of economic centre that was highlighted by unusually massive buildings with a multitude of internal daub structures, as well as impressive material culture. Our 20 × 20 m trench has yielded an abundance of ceramic, lithic, bone and stone finds that attest to a high level of technological sophistication, as well as to the use of various objects in social and symbolic processes. The pottery was often produced from finely polished clay decorated with black and white painted patterns, but it was also modelled from coarse clay when used for cooking or storing. The figurines and house models indicate the involvement of the human body in concepts of identity, strongly related to miniaturisation and to the identification of humans with architecture. More such finds have been unearthed here than on other sites in the area, and their quality is remarkable. The bone, stone and lithic tools, although employed in everyday actions, also demonstrate a high quality of production that distinguishes the inhabitants of this settlement as a sophisticated community.

Material culture, just as architecture, confirms the dynamic nature of social life in Vrbjanska Čuka. This was a community that invested its skills in the production and symbolic enhancement of items used in everyday activities, public ceremonies and rituals. In general, this farming community occupied the tell for approximately 300 years, but distinguished itself as a leading society with impressive products and houses that made it attractive for others to establish their settlements in its vicinity.

*Goce Naumov, Centre for Prehistoric Research, Macedonia  
(gocenaumov@gmail.com)*

The copy date for PAST 96 is the 7th of September 2020. Contributions to Editor, Daniela Hofmann, Institute of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion, Bergen University, Norway. Email: Daniela.Hofmann@uib.no. Contributions as e-mail attachments are preferred (either Word or rtf files) but submissions on disc are also accepted. Illustrations can be sent as drawings, pdf, tif or jpeg files. The book reviews editor is Pippa Bradley, c/o Wessex Archaeology, Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP4 6EB, email: p.bradley@wessexarch.co.uk. Queries over subscriptions and membership should go to the Society administrator Tessa Machling at the London address on page 1.