

2024 **TAG** 2 EVOLUTION?

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Abstracts

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S01: Materiality, metaphor, phenomenology: reconstructing Chris Tilley's thought and contemporary archaeological theory

Organisers:

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Session Abstract

Chris Tilley (1955-2024) was one of the most dynamic archaeological theorists our discipline has produced. From his co-authored works in the 1980s that defined the first wave of post-processual thought, via his transformative engagement with phenomenology to his later work with materiality, his impact on archaeological theory is unquantifiable. In memory of this, we seek to explore in this session how Tilley's work from different eras reads in the light of contemporary concerns, whether political or theoretical. How does the work continue to inform our contemporary arguments? What more might we glean from returning to the questions he posed? How might our current interests in ontology connect to his analysis of metaphor? In this session we welcome papers from people interested in exploring the impact of Tilley's work, and its intersection with the ongoing challenges we face today.

Keywords: Chris Tilley, phenomenology, materiality, metaphor, interpretation

Introduction: reflections on the world changing theory of Chris Tilley

Rachel Crellin and Ollie Harris, Leicester University

“A conceptual dreamwork”; post-humanism, autoethnography and the experience of stone

Amber Sofia Roy (Stockholm University, amber.roy@arklab.su.se)

Finely polished stone artefacts, such as Neolithic and Bronze Age stone axes, battle-axes, daggers and maces, are traditionally viewed as non-functional, purely ceremonial and are emblematic of a male elite, leaders in ritual ceremonies, or symbols of a warrior class. Indeed, these interpretations are associated with themes of power, violence, and social hierarchy and are rooted in fixed dichotomies—symbolic:functional; male:female—which severely limit their interpretation by avoiding their multiplicity, and by using generalised ideas which separate them from the context of their emergence.

This paper presents the results of an autoethnographic axe manufacturing experiment which aimed to use posthumanist approaches and autoethnography to track the affect of material and understand the experience of making. Building on Chris Tilley's work in phenomenology and materiality, it incorporates more current frameworks of posthumanism and new materialism, including the shift away from representation. The aim is to tackle understandings of experience in the past and present and thus attempt to reveal nuances of multiplicity and complexity that evade interpretations rooted in cartesian dualisms and androcentrism.

Furthermore, the application of autoethnography allows the researcher to reflect on how their modern experiences and contemporary thought may unconsciously influence interpretations of the past. This introspective approach intends to identify and mitigate these biases, fostering a more nuanced analysis.

Ultimately, this paper offers what Tilley described as “a creative act, a conceptual dreamwork” (Tilley, 2004, 225), applying his ideas within contemporary frameworks to explore the affective dimensions of materiality and experience in archaeological research.

Beyond the Human: Chris Tilley’s Phenomenology and a More-than-Human Reading of the Thames Foreshore

Claire Harris (MOLA, charris@mola.org.uk), Lara Band (University of the Highlands and Islands), Helen Chittock (MOLA), Tom Chivers (Queen Mary University of London/MOLA) & Lesley McFadyen (Birkbeck University of London).

This paper explores how Tilley’s *A Phenomenology of Landscape* meshes with more-than-human theory. Adopting the Thames foreshore as our laboratory, we draw on Tilley’s emphasis on embodied experience and materiality to reinterpret the foreshore not just as a static canvas for human activity but as a dynamic environment where the agency of non-human actors – the Thames, tidal cycles, animals, plants, and objects – plays a central role in the creation and transformation of landscape.

In contrast to traditional narratives of London’s longest archaeological site, we argue that the foreshore is not a passive backdrop to human activity but a site of continuous human and non-human entanglement. By investigating the material interactions between riverine processes and other non-human and human actors, this paper challenges anthropocentric readings of the past.

Key themes that will be discussed include the relationality of human and non-human actors on the foreshore, and the role of water as a shaping force. Tilley’s work on the sensory dimensions of landscape interpretation will be expanded to include more-than-human agents, offering a holistic reading of how the Thames, in its ebb and flow, participates in the ongoing creation of archaeological narratives.

In rethinking the foreshore as a site of active collaboration between humans and non-humans, this paper taps into wider discussions about materiality, agency, and environmental archaeology. It builds on Tilley’s influential ideas while reaching out to contemporary more-than-human approaches, offering a holistic view of the past that is alive with both human and non-human presence.

From models and maps to experience

Alejandra Galmés Alba (Institute of Heritage Sciences, Spanish National Research Council (INCIPIT-CSIC), alejandragalmes@gmail.com).

Tilley’s work changed how we think about landscapes in archaeology. His phenomenological approach was pioneering in attempting to assess how people might have felt when moving through past landscapes and the role of monuments within them. His inquiries into the visibility and visual connections between sites laid the foundation for many GIS-based approaches. However, increasingly complex GIS modelling techniques have moved the focus away from Tilley’s proposals, with the goal of generating accurate models but not always considering which landscapes they would have enabled.

Through our own work in the landscapes of the Balearic Islands during the Iron Age, we aim to reflect on how can move from models and maps to experience. Through assemblages and affect, we try to understand how monuments were key agents in creating the landscape, and how GIS can be used to reflect on past experiences, landscapes and communities.

Phenomenology without the fluff: How such a long word can produce more inclusive community engagement with archaeology

Brodhie Molloy (University of Leicester, bmim2@leicester.ac.uk).

The phenomenology of Chris Tilley told archaeology to go to the site, that the answers of the past could be unveiled by ones 'being-in-the-world'. At the time this was groundbreaking and Tilley's introduction of phenomenology into archaeology was pivotal in changing dialogues from the Cartesian rationalism that had haunted the discipline prior. However, as a field it is now widely accepted that we cannot fully comprehend past cultures or societies, and we often hold conversations over how our own societal preconceptions can impact our views of the past. So, what can phenomenology bring to the study of contemporary archaeology and society?

Taking example from my current PhD research, this paper hopes to demonstrate the applicability of phenomenology as a methodology within contemporary and community-based archaeologies. I will highlight how phenomenology can help to remove prerequisite expertise or hierarchies in a community setting. Instead, fostering a flat ontology regarding every individual's experiences of being in the world and promoting the feminist notion of inherent subjectivity. This providing of a platform for members of communities to express their own experiences can make an archaeology project inherently accessible and particularly allow community-based projects to thrive.

Thus, decades on from its introduction to the field, phenomenology holds real potential in its posthuman feminist application. In this sense, I guess we could instead call it phe-no Man*-ology... ba dum tss!

*In the Cartesian dualistic sense

The shock of the old

Anna Collar (University of Southampton, A.Collar@soton.ac.uk) & Stu Eve (Wessex Archaeology, stuarteve@gmail.com)

This paper seeks to offer some responses to Chris Tilley's et al's unorthodox wrapping of standing stones on Bodmin Moor in cling film painted yellow (Stone Worlds 2005). The method of wrapping the Bodmin stones shocks us into seeing the contemporary landscape in new ways, and prompts further questions which are useful to reflect on in light of contemporary concerns.

However, if the landscapes in which phenomenological work is attempted are very similar to how we assume they were in the past (for example, moorland, downland), how useful is the phenomenological methodology when you move into different landscapes?

Today's industrialised agricultural landscapes in the UK are bare and bland, punctuated with plantations, miles of green desert, and 'sheepwrecked' uplands (Monbiot 2013). We want to ask how we shock ourselves as archaeologists to see the true richness of our past landscapes, and how this can shape a different future. We suggest two potentially fruitful avenues—the use of VR and mixed reality as a bridge to possible futures, offering the power to shock the viewer into change, and rewilding as offering a new freedom to the archaeological mind and the radical capacity to imagine a different future for ourselves and the species we live alongside.

Loneliness and Ethical Responsibility: A Levinasian Phenomenological Approach to Archaeology

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One of Chris Tilley's most famous contributions was the development of a phenomenological approach in archaeology, however, in the last ten years, such approaches have been downplayed in favour of different theoretical concerns. In this paper, I suggest that a return to phenomenology will be profitable and that Tilley's approach can be enhanced by the incorporation of insights from Emmanuel Levinas's phenomenological perspective into archaeology, focusing, in this case, on the theme of loneliness in the past. Levinas rethinks phenomenology by placing ethical responsibility toward the Other at its core, proposing that selfhood arises not through self-reflection but through encounters with the irreducible alterity of others. By bringing this framework into archaeology, we investigate how artefacts and sites serve as traces of human presence and absence, revealing the emotional and existential landscapes of solitude and isolation. This phenomenological approach shifts the focus from objectivity and classification to lived experience, allowing us to engage with the past as a realm of human vulnerability and relationality. Artefacts are seen not merely as remnants of material culture but as windows into the inner worlds of past individuals, evoking the tensions between memory, identity, and belonging. Through this lens, the depersonalising tendencies of conventional archaeological interpretations will be challenged, highlighting the ethical responsibility to respond to the lived experiences of historical subjects. This presentation demonstrates how Levinas' phenomenology can deepen archaeological discourse to a more human-centred and ethical understanding of history and contemporary challenges.

“On Wenlock Edge the woods in trouble;” Christopher Tilley, Phenomenology and the ‘Thinging’ of Palaeoecological Interpretation.

Benjamin Gearey (Department of Archaeology, UCC, Ireland, b.gearey@ucc.ie).

The impact of *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (Tilley, 1994) on archaeological approaches and theories, has been well described and debated (see e.g. Brück, 2005). What has been less considered formally at least, is his influence on aspects of archaeological palaeoecology. In this paper, I incompletely and selectively follow this trace, starting with my own meeting with Chris Tilley on Bodmin Moor c. 1994, via reflection concerning the palaeoecology/phenomenology ‘interface’ (e.g. Chapman and Gearey, 2000) on what later became pithily referred to as ‘the tree issue’ (Connolly and Lake 2006). I reflect on the subtle importance of phenomenological thought, for palynology, palaeoecological interpretations and methodological developments, especially but not solely, in the UK. I will suggest that Tilley and collaborators' work (e.g. Bender et al. 2005) had an influence on aspects of the environmental/archaeology interface that has been little recognised or appreciated. Arguably, this can be located within the essential ‘thingyness’ of much palaeoecological thought that continues to resonate throughout the practice. Finally, we might reflect on how horrified some avowedly ‘processual’ environmental archaeologists might be to discover this subtle but important revelation...

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(Extra)Ordinary Worlds: Chris Tilley's landscape thinking from phenomenology to anthropology and beyond

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From his ground-breaking 'A Phenomenology of Landscape' (1994) to the co-authored 'An Anthropology of Landscape' (2017) Chris Tilley's work has engaged in innovative and often transgressive ways with a concept that, as he puts it in the latter work, 'belongs to nobody'. By doing so, paradoxically, in archaeology he managed - to some extent - to make it his own. Yet while Tilley's earlier, higher-profile work represented a radical challenge to traditions of landscape archaeology in prehistory, and accordingly ruffled disciplinary feathers, later publications are more in line with contemporary thinking about the experience of landscape through time, a set of approaches which his own work has helped to facilitate. This paper briefly reviews Tilley's landscape journey as an aid to some reflections on future directions for historic landscape work in England.

Enforcing Viking Age Boundaries: Chris Tilley's Phenomenology and Unravelling the Social Construction of the Danelaw

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The work of Chris Tilley (1994), particularly his phenomenological approach to landscape, builds upon W.G. Hoskins' seminal work, *The Making of the English Landscape* (1954). Tilley's work theoretically underpinned the necessity for archaeologists to engage with landscapes experientially to fully understand and sequence them. Building on this theoretical foundation, this paper will explore the liminal frontier space of the Viking Age Danelaw Boundary. This boundary, established through a treaty between Kings Alfred of Wessex and Guthrum of East Anglia just under a decade after the Battle of Edington in AD878, is increasingly seen in today's scholarship (for example, Prien 2013; Raffield 2020) as marking the beginning of a socially constructed area where Danish law happened to be enforced. This paper will investigate how the legacy of phenomenology, as articulated by Tilley, aids our exploration of this uncertain frontier.

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Chris Tilley and phenomenology

Julian Thomas (*University of Manchester*, Julian.Thomas@manchester.ac.uk)

Throughout his career (independently or with Mike Shanks) Chris Tilley sought to synthesise multiple forms of social theory that might potentially provide a framework for a mature archaeology. He drew in Frankfurt School critical theory, structural Marxism, structuralism, practice theory and hermeneutics. Somehow, his engagement with phenomenology stands apart from all of this, to some extent. The project of a phenomenological archaeology is now

increasingly seen as something that has failed, but in this paper I would like to speculate on what a critical, post-humanist archaeological phenomenology might look like.

S02: “Does Anybody Ever Listen!?” - Outrage as Method, Evolving Activist Archaeology

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Session Abstract

Whilst well-established within Indigenous, disability and trans studies, rage as a methodology of affect has yet to emerge into widespread use within mainstream archaeology. This is to the detriment of our discipline. As archaeology increasingly comprehends its political implications and endeavours to establish itself as a progressive field by challenging the climate crisis, colonialism, discrimination and more, it must adopt a methodology that strives to engender change through anger, activism and action. Seldom has progress been won without fighting for it. Furthermore, we must question if, as a social discipline, we can genuinely produce co-created and meaningful work without feeling the same outrage as the communities we work with and for.

Archaeologists often perceive rage as a last resort; where you end up when all traditional academic approaches to a problem have failed. However, through its ability to make individuals think from the position of disenfranchised or otherwise overlooked communities, rather than simply in sympathy with them, scholars of rage/outrage demonstrate why it must be integrated into praxis from the start (e.g.; Stiker, 1997; Stryker, 1994; Weismantel, 2013). This might, and often does, include making those in positions of power and/or privilege uncomfortable by equalising the epistemological playing field through championing embodied knowledge and challenging entrenched power dynamics.

We are looking for contributions that showcase how outrage functions as an affective method within any and all archaeological frameworks, be these gender, disability, climate, enabled, Indigenous or any other archaeologies. Submissions that look to evolve activist and transformative archaeologies using rage/outrage and those that discuss integrating this methodology “at the trowel’s edge” are especially encouraged.

Keywords: Activism, Impact, Interdisciplinary, Method, Outrage, Transformative

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Disability Activism in an Interdisciplinary Archaeology: Experiences of ableism and methods of counteracting it via Critical Disability Studies

Alexandra F. Morris & Hannah Vogel

Disability is a part of human history. However, diversity within the experience of disability is both understudied and undertheorised in archaeology. In addition to this lack of critical study on disability in the past, the impacts of ableism on archaeologists are underrepresented in academic and public discourse. Engagement with disability studies activism and theory is gradually increasing in archaeology. However, its composite fields have historically been

linked to patrons of eugenics from the 17-20th centuries and their ideals, and exclusionary historical narratives that favour ableist reconstructions of the past. Thus, the very foundations of the discipline have ableist roots. The harm caused by our discipline's past is often disregarded and the experiences of disabled people are poorly valued. This is an outrage.

As such, much activist scholarship needs to be done to transform our fields. Through a discussion of acceptable disability terminology, inclusive publication practises, accessible museums, field and lab spaces we demonstrate methods to challenge ableism. As this paper demonstrates, archaeological disability research has not been unstudied because of an absence of evidence, but rather because of research agendas.

The co-presenters of this paper, with an increasing number of peers, are challenging archaeology to be more inclusive of disability; in both the writing of our histories, but also within disciplinary praxes. We challenge ableist approaches in the field of archaeological disability studies and offer guidance for disability inclusivity in curatorial and pedagogical practises in commercial, museum and university settings. We highlight the value of lived experiences, engagement with activists, disabled scholars, and the disability community, and explore how it produces a more accessible and genuinely better archaeology. This presentation takes outrage from ableist experiences – and conscientiously transforms them to create a constructive space in which collaborative future research in disability studies and archaeology can be discovered.

Outrage, survivors, and politicising archaeologies of carceral sites

Elias Michaut

In 1997, a collective of 'mad' survivors organised a protest against the anniversary celebration of Bedlam psychiatric hospital in London. Despite this direct challenge to official heritage narratives, the voice of survivors was still ignored by archaeologists and heritage specialists for several decades, and their anger did not transpose to the archaeological study of carceral sites (understood here as encompassing youth detention centres, prisons, psychiatric incarceration, and immigration detention centres).

A hundred years before, in 1905, the youth incarcerated at Les Douaires, France, rioted following attempts of the penal administration to put an end to homosexual relationships between detained youth—making this event one of the earliest examples of queer riots in modern Western history. Today, youth detention still exists in France and precarious racialised youth is often overrepresented in these spaces. Throughout the world, the survival strategies of precarious queer people (from sex work to insubordination, drug use, or simply fighting back an aggressor) are also highly criminalised.

The rage from the 1905 queer riot to the 1997 protest resonates into the present and calls for a rethinking of the societal role of these carceral spaces, yet this rage (or any emotion for that matter) does not seem to have a place in traditional academic archaeology. This paper is a call to use this past and present anger to politicise the archaeology of incarceration and detention, and tie it with present struggles and current abolitionist solidarity projects.

Stirring the Pottery: Intentional and Accidental Outrage as a Method of Digital Public Archaeology

Stephanie Black

Outrage is at home on social media. Within the growing space of digital public archaeology, professionals who chose to participate should not assume it is simple to navigate. While creating digital content provides numerous benefits—foremost among them, the opportunity to educate and broaden public understanding of archaeology—navigating social media is complex. It is a realm where traditional markers of authority, such as credentials and professionalism, hold little sway. Instead, they reward content that elicits strong emotions.

Whether those emotions are positive or negative is irrelevant—what matters is that they provoke a reaction, driving interaction and engagement.

Outrage is a particularly effective motivator that digital archaeology communicators can leverage to attract new audiences. From content simply presenting the theory that the first calendar was created by a woman tracking her period – without addressing the nuances of sex and gender identity in archaeology– leading to 100's of furious comments, to a video showing Fayum Mummy Portraits sparking accusations of the content creator being both anti-white and anti-black, to the outrage felt by creators motivating them to highlight the ethical issues around the legal sale of human bones, social media encourages outrage, whether intentionally or accidentally generated.

If utilising outrage as a style of digital public archaeology professionals must be conscious of related ethics ensuring that the focus stays on delivering informative content rather than merely seeking attention. As debates continue regarding the responsibility of archaeologists to combat pseudoarchaeology, outrage—as well as how it is generated—should be recognised as a highly effective method in digital spaces.

Defaultism in Landscape Archaeology

David Stapely

The assumption that an individual – real or hypothetical - conforms to a given set of social categories treated as a “default” pervades much of society. These problematic assumptions create and are created by various social biases, and tacitly inform the construction of a wide array of social systems, that frequently act to marginalise and disadvantage people who sit outside of these imagined defaults.

Archaeology is no different. A “default” perspective pervades many of our retellings of the past, and we often make judgements from this single perspective, which do not account for the differential experiences of people in past societies. This occurs despite a clear ability to investigate varied stories, and a wealth of embodied knowledge and lived experience within the archaeological communities and the communities that we study and represent. Such knowledge and experience have immense power as tools for academic enquiry and community engagement, if only they are recognised.

Although there are many facets of this problem, this presentation will focus on how this problem manifests with regards to disability in landscape archaeology. The body has been long acknowledged as the vehicle for engagement with the landscape, however little attention has been paid to understanding how bodily differences would change engagement with the landscape at a human scale. The advent of computerised landscape scale analysis further complicates this discourse. These analyses perpetuate a singular view on the landscape, and struggle to contain embodied knowledge of differential engagement with the landscape. Acknowledging disability in these conversations would be an important first step towards bridging the gap between big data and grounded experiential knowledge; this will be essential to the creation of a holistic and multivocal approach to disability in the landscape going forward.

F*ck Your Civility, I Want Change! On Subversive Anger as an Asian American Archaeologist

Alex Fitzpatrick

A common lament heard today seems to concern the lack of “civility” in this day and age; a longing for a mythologised time in which people on both ends of the political spectrum could disagree, but in a polite and civil manner without resorting to angry words. Of course, for those of us who exist across marginalised identities, “civility” is something that has rarely been afforded to us, but more often demanded of us. Indeed, critical scholars of rhetoric and politics have long explored the ways in which “civility” has been weaponised against oppressed people to crush dissent and restrict the ways in which one can engage, both physically and emotionally, with their own oppression (e.g., Lozano-Reich and Cloud 2009, Chávez 2018). This paper reflects on the rejection of civility and embracing the use of anger as a catalyst for demanding change within the British archaeology sector, which has both historically and contemporarily lacked a diverse workforce and has been slow to make progress on inclusivity. This is further situated in my own positionality as an Asian American archaeologist, reflecting on the ways in which anger has historically been vital to the political identity of ‘Asian American’ as a means of rejecting the ‘model minority’ stereotype and standing in solidarity with other oppressed communities (Liu 2022). I explore how anger has informed my own interventions in thinking about the future of archaeology and examine the ways in which understanding and acknowledging the anger of marginalised archaeologists can be a far more fruitful approach to change than the policing of emotions through civility politics.

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Turning Alienation into Action: Attempting to build a Disability Archaeology by and for Disabled People

Anna Freed

Archaeology, though a field seeking to expand our understandings of the past, is ultimately, by and for the living. Archaeologies of disability cannot be constructed without contemporary disabled peoples, an understanding of our political struggles, and an awareness of our multiplicity of ways of knowing disability, d/Deafness, neurodivergence, and difference.

As a disabled person studying archaeology, trying to find myself in our collective canon was hard. What was harder was reading these discussions once I found them. We are omitted from subjects where we are incredibly important, like sensory archaeology and phenomenology. Where our existence is undeniable – where it is inscribed in our bones – we become ‘artefacts’, vessels of non-disabled care, framed as costly burdens with hard or even tragic lives. Archaeology’s fraught relationship to the social model, which so many British disabled people orient our lives and activism around, made archaeology feel like an alienating, even antagonistic space to me.

This talk approaches my MA research through the lens of my position as archaeologist and activist, examining my rage and how it led me to my choice to specialise in disability archaeology. It is also about being an ‘insider’ researcher, whilst acknowledging the distinct risk of entrenching (my) white disability perspective in archaeology.

I will present my attempt to begin an archaeology of disability with disabled people at its core, despite the struggle to co-create at this level of study. In focus groups, disabled participants discussed research priorities and interests, and how to make an archaeology that is not only relevant and accessible, but also one that is aware of its impact on current public attitudes and narratives around disabled people. I hope these results will also highlight the wealth of knowledge we lose without disabled people of today co-producing our understanding of disabled people of yesterday.

Benign Ignorance and Unintended Consequences - or why you shouldn't make an activist rage

Ashley Fisher

Activist research is necessarily challenging, both for the researcher and those that read the research. Disability research especially is challenging, as it is far more than attitudes and policies that must be dealt with, but also physical barriers that nondisabled people seem to favour over inclusion in the name of "historical authenticity." Still, these challenges should and must be met in order for change to occur.

Throughout my doctoral research, which examined the barriers people with hidden disabilities encountered in museums and heritage sites, I did my utmost to balance the quite justifiable needs of my disabled participants with the realities of working within the heritage sector. I tried to see both sides to find a happy middle from which both sides could move forward from.

Imagine my surprise when, during my viva, I was essentially told that I was being too harsh on nondisabled people and needed to soften my language so as not to alienate the very people that were excluding disabled people.

This presentation discusses the implications of "softening" activist research and channelling the rage that arises from yet more accommodations for non-disabled people in discussions of removing barriers for disabled people. It also discusses actions that have taken place as a direct result of that rage, actions that likely wouldn't have happened without rage as an impetus.

"No, But My Mates Do": Considering the Necessity of Communities of Care to Actualise Anger-driven Activism

Yvonne O'Dell, Brodhie Molloy & Andy Rogers

For Audre Lorde, producing change requires 'a basic and radical alteration in those assumptions underlining our lives' (2017:111). Archaeologists have a significant role in shaping our understanding of our collective pasts and presents and are thus well positioned to engender progressive alterations regarding our shared preconceptions. However, our ability to act upon our rage is contingent upon our capacity and comfort to act, or, ultimately, how supported we are in our communities. Black activist communities, from the Black Panthers to BLM, have been instrumental in demonstrating the necessity of community care to sustain the activism for enacting impactful change.

Drawing from the example set by Black activist movements, this paper explores the ways in which communities of care enable activism. Specifically, how academic cohorts can strive to create communities that hold space for one another's outrage, and which might offer a foundation from which one can act. We consider caring for oneself as a means to extend care within the spaces we work. Community building and nurturing spaces to learn and grow enables us to exist and be our truest selves, in turn enabling us to produce meaningful and, crucially, impactful work from within academic spaces. Speaking from our own experiences, such spaces platform us to practice the archaeology we truly want to do and be proud of. In

some senses, the labour of love we once had for doing such work has long lost the love side of things.

We argue that creating academic spaces that acknowledge one another's messy and imperfect humanity (from our rage, our trauma, our potential neurodivergence, accessibility needs, and so on) is vital to combat entrenched concepts of isolation, "resilience", and individualism in academia. The current state of academia does not foster these holistic, compassionate, and caring routes of practice, but my mates do.

S03 Towards an Archaeology of Cosiness: exploring the lines between comfort, utility, and beyond

Session organisers

Emma Louise Thompson (University of Leicester, elt21@leicester.ac.uk) & Kate Autumn Evetts (University of Leicester, kae7@leicester.ac.uk).

Session Abstract:

The concept of cosiness has captured our modern attentions. We burrow into blankets and knitted jumpers, enjoy the gentle glow of a lit candle, or soothe ourselves with a warm brew. However, our perceptions of the past are rarely as comfortable or tender. Although there is often reason to paint the past as bleaker than our present, it biases our interpretations of how different peoples experienced these periods. The terminology is relatively new. The etymological roots of cosiness stem from the eighteenth century, and it has recently cemented itself in our current imaginations on a wave of *hygge*, but does this mean that people did not experience “cosiness” before this?

This session interrogates the easily-blurred lines between comfort and utility. For example, a hearth can serve very practical functions, but also provide comfort and more-than-tactile warmth. Furthermore, these spaces offer nexus points for the less tangible: shared stories, whispers, and laughter. When does a blanket become more than a means of negating the cold? How do the tools of our food production contribute beyond just sustenance? Is cosiness accessible to non-human persons?

We invite participants to explore the different ways we can investigate this complicated interplay in the archaeological record, ultimately broadening our appreciation of past experiences. How has our understanding of cosiness evolved? Does this notion transcend temporal boundaries? We welcome a variety of perspectives on this topic, from the usage of space, the affective properties of objects, and the presence of cosiness where we may not typically expect it (and many others). In doing so, this session will nuance our perceptions of the past—not by dismissing its dark spots, but welcoming its warm ones too.

Homecooking?: (re)creating homely foods in diaspora

Ben Davenport (University of York, bkd501@york.ac.uk).

Following renewed interests in affect and emotion in the social sciences and humanities over the last 20 years, heritage scholars have contributed a wealth of evidence for the ways that sensorial and emotional engagements with sites and objects frame our experience of cultural heritage. Less thoroughly explored within heritage studies, although with some noted exceptions, has been the affective experiences involved in performances of intangible heritage practices. This paper draws on fieldwork with European diasporas in the UK to understand how migrant foodways and the cooking of ‘homely recipes’ deliberately seek out and create sensorial environments that are generative of a sense of security and belonging. Rather than reproducing ‘home’ in diaspora, homely cooking practices imbue new surroundings with familiar sensorial and affective qualities. Home being more than mere ‘space’, the paper considers how foodways function as relational geographies that bring together people, places and things, but also forms of disposition and embodied practice. The paper advocates for a greater consideration of affect in domestic contexts in which heritage practices and values are performed and negotiated, and for the role of everyday heritages in the production of ontological security, in studies of both contemporary and past society.

Keywords: food heritage, affect, senses, home, embodied practice.

Miniatures and Emotional Cuteness: An Approach to Comfort in Archaeological Contexts

Tânia M. Casimiro (NOVA University of Lisbon, tmcasimiro@fcsh.unl.pt) & Ricardo C. Silva (University of Coimbra, rcosteiradasilva@gmail.com).

Archaeological discoveries of miniature objects, often classified as toys or decorative items, invite us to reconsider the deeper emotional and psychological dimensions these items may embody. Moving beyond their functional interpretations, this paper explores the concept of emotional cuteness in relation to miniatures found in archaeological contexts, proposing that these objects contribute to the creation of emotional comfort and personal well-being. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives, including psychology and material culture studies, we argue that miniatures evoke a unique sense of cosiness —not merely as objects of utility or symbolic representation, but as items that trigger affective responses in those who engage with them. By investigating the role of miniatures in domestic and religious spaces, particularly in post-medieval contexts, this paper aims to explore how the understanding of material culture can be expanded by integrating concepts of emotional resonance and psychological attachment. In doing so, we suggest that miniatures serve as mediators between utility, ritual, and emotional fulfilment, blurring the lines between functional and affective consumption.

The Temporality of Cosiness

Ben Jervis (University of Leicester, bpj4@leicester.ac.uk).

In her book 'Enduring Time' Lisa Baraitser discusses how care work results in a suspension of time; rather than looking forwards, maintenance work is comprised of repetitive, often arduous and dull, tasks. My aim in this paper is to explore this concept of suspended time for thinking about 'cosiness' as a form of self-care. 'Getting cosy' might be thought of as a form of self-care, as a conscious means of suspending oneself in time and space. As such, it is subtly different to other regimes of care in which time is suspended through a wearing repetition which is required to just persist. Cosiness is a feeling commonly associated with stillness; sitting in a chair or curling up in bed, and is a feeling we might relate to escape, to stepping back from the stimulus of hectic modern life. Here I propose that 'getting cosy' is a process which requires work and is an experiential mode which can be riddled with anxiety about when it might end, when we might be pulled out of suspension. Cosiness I suggest is a temporality of the non-event, what Lauren Berlant refers to as 'impasse', emerging with repeated attempts to achieve an unachievable perfect state of calm and comfort. I explore these ideas through an exploration of how the work of domestic routines was generative of suspended temporalities in the medieval home.

Embracing the Afterlife: Exploring Cosiness in Burial Practices at Deh Dumen Cemetery

Mahsa Najafi (University of Tehran, mahsa.najafi55@yahoo.com) & Reza Naseri (University of Zabol, rezanaseri@uoz.ac.ir).

This study reinterprets the Deh Dumen cemetery through the lens of cosiness, challenging conventional narratives that emphasize the starkness of ancient burial practices. While traditionally viewed as somber sites of loss, the graves at Deh Dumen reveal nuanced dimensions of comfort and care that reflect the lived experiences of its inhabitants. The diverse grave structures, from solid box shaped graves to the more vulnerable jar burials, suggest varying levels of attachment and concern for the deceased, emphasizing a human desire for warmth and remembrance in the face of mortality. The presence of grave goods, including intricate pottery and bronze objects, transcends mere functionality, inviting contemplation of shared stories and familial bonds that may have provided emotional solace in the afterlife. By examining the orientation and location of graves within the cemetery, we uncover spatial arrangements that may foster communal connections, akin to a gathering around a hearth.

This exploration broadens our understanding of ancient practices, highlighting the warmth of human relationships that persist beyond death and fostering a richer narrative of cosiness within archaeological contexts.

A Pillow for Your Head: “Comfortable” Deaths in Viking Age Denmark

Emma Louise Thompson (University of Leicester, elt21@leicester.ac.uk).

This paper explores the concept of a “comfortable” death in Viking Age Denmark by examining instances of pillows, or suggestions thereof, in mortuary contexts. For example, textile pillows at Mammen and Hvilehøj, but also pillows of turf at Sebbesund. These material choices demonstrate complex cultural attitudes towards death and body treatment, as familiar comforts are extended beyond the living world. The paper interrogates the spatiality and materiality of these pillows, in conjunction with the wider grave context. The mourners may have used these objects and structures to create a sense of physical comfort in death or safeguard the body’s passage to the afterlife. However, we cannot remove sentiment and emotion from the burial act. The curation of such pillowed spaces suggests an intimacy between the living and deceased. It highlights the interplay between death and rest, as well as the ongoing relationships between persons after death. This paper, subsequently, argues that practices of this kind could be considered “cosy”.

Cosy Cremation

Howard Williams (howard.williams@chester.ac.uk).

Cremation practices past and present are rarely considered ‘cosy’. Indeed, archaeological and historical interpretations and representations tend to focus on the drama and otherness of the open-air burning of the dead and the subsequent ritualised treatment and disposal of cremains. Meanwhile, the landscapes, architectures and material cultures of contemporary cremation are oftentimes portrayed by commentators as soulless and stark. Both these academic traditions interact with portrayals of cremation in contemporary popular culture: the filmic and televisual historical drama, fantasy, science fiction and horror genres usually show burning the dead as discomfiting and disconcerting, whether prosaic and ceremonial. Yet archaeological perspectives have hitherto untapped potential to challenge these misconceptions by giving attention to the intimacy and communality fostered between the living and the dead through cremation and post-cremation practices. The paper explores the cosy connections between the living and the cremated dead mediated by material culture, monuments and landscapes using examples from early medieval and present-day North-West Europe.

S04 & S18: We've talked the talk, can we walk the walk? Approaches and actions to encouraging diverse language representation in archaeology/ academia & Discomfort in Archaeological Practices: Ethical, social and personal challenges

NB this session is a combination of two previously separately-submitted sessions whose abstracts are both presented below.

Discomfort in Archaeological Practices: Ethical, social and personal challenges
Tânia Manuel Casimiro (NOVA University of Lisbon, João Sequeira, University of Minho) & Joel Santos (University of Leicester)

Session abstract:

Archaeology is often romanticized as a discipline for its discoveries and insights into past civilizations. However, the profession encompasses a variety of uncomfortable situations that practitioners encounter, ranging from fieldwork to academic settings. This session explores the multifaceted nature of discomfort experienced by archaeologists, digging into personal anecdotes, language barriers, systemic issues when trying to publish, feedback from reviewers, or the implications of past scholarly works, to mention a few.

In fieldwork, archaeologists often demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of harassment and hostility, whether due to gender, ethnicity, or other personal attributes. Additionally, working within or alongside communities can present challenges when there is resistance to external researchers or when crossing complex socio-political landscapes. These encounters can strain professional and personal well-being, necessitating strategies for conflict resolution while fighting for safer working conditions.

Within academic institutions, students and professionals alike confront uncomfortable realities. Experiences of overt and subtle discrimination can hinder academic progress and personal growth. Moreover, the academic journey often includes engagement with historical and contemporary scholarship that perpetuates racism, misogyny, and other forms of subalternisation. These moments of discomfort are critical for promoting a reflective practice that questions and challenges the ethical dimensions of our work.

This session aims to encourage archaeologists to share their experiences, promoting an open dialogue about the uncomfortable aspects of our profession. By addressing these issues head-on, we aim to inspire a more inclusive and ethical field of archaeology. The discussion will highlight the potential for creating supportive networks, implementing institutional changes, and promoting a critical examination of the discipline's foundations and methodologies.

Keywords: Discomfort; Fieldwork challenges; Academic discrimination; Equity and Inclusion

We've talked the talk, can we walk the walk? Approaches and actions to encouraging diverse language representation in archaeology/ academia

Session organisers:

Judith López Aceves (University of Leicester, jmla3@leicester.ac.uk), Brodhie Molloy, (University of Leicester, bmim2@leicester.ac.uk) & Alvaro Ortega González (University of Leicester, afog1@leicester.ac.uk).

Session Abstract:

Last year we ran a TAG session that looked at interrogating and disrupting the ways language operates in theory, archaeology, academia and life on a whole. We identified different

experiences, limitations and methodologies that addressed the challenges of English being the *lingua franca* in academia, culminating in an upcoming publication on the topic. But this conversation is not confined to a 10-page special issue nor needs to stay within the four walls of the lecture theatre at UEA. This year we will continue facilitating a conversation around how and what language is doing to our research and communities.

The theme of TAG 45 touches on this topic in an interesting way. Evolution is based on the concept of progress, which is generally perceived as positive. However, this does not align with the message we wish to convey. We instead acknowledge that communication is a never-ending changing and evolving activity. By choosing one language and/or dialect and expecting its full proficiency would mean interrupting this change which would then be perceived as a barrier that all individuals are expected to overcome. Therefore, this session explores: How can we create an evolving academic environment where all voices are heard without imposing one language over another? How can we address a multilingual academia and what might this look like in the classroom? Specifically, how can we decolonize archaeology as a discipline?

We invite all to join us in a workshopping session where we will discuss, disrupt and try to build a praxis on how we can foster more inclusive and accessible language diversity in our daily practices.

Our intention for this session is to open with a small series of brief talks around people's experiences and ideas on the role of language diversity in academia. We then plan to spend the remainder of the session discussing and workshopping amongst attendees in a more informal way. We hope to provide materials for groups of attendees to use to mind map and begin producing solutions together to some of the questions we have highlighted in the abstract.

Keywords: Communication, Language, Dialect, Decolonize, Multilingualism

Discomfort is the key to everlasting comfort: a personal account in field archaeology

Susana Henriques (University of Évora)

This paper examines how discomfort can be a transformative force in field archaeology, influencing professional growth and interpersonal dynamics. Through personal experiences spanning over two decades, I reflect on challenges in archaeological fieldwork, from gender-based marginalization and workplace harassment to community expectations and ethical considerations in human remains excavation. These discomforts highlighted the necessity of fighting for professional respect and searching for success in the face of adversity. Drawing parallels between these experiences and broader social interactions, I demonstrate how discomfort becomes a pathway to a deeper understanding of self and others, pushing archaeologists to engage empathetically with diverse communities and to challenge traditional boundaries within archaeology. Ultimately, this paper argues for recognizing and embracing discomfort as a vital element in personal and professional development

I am an outsider, and I don't know how to deal with it: Reflections on Archaeological Practice, Empathy, and Discomfort.

João Sequeira

We all know that our research or work quite often demands immersion in different and complex social places and landscapes. This presentation exposes my experience working on an archaeological intervention inside an illegal neighbourhood in Almada, Portugal. During my first visits to the place, the sense of discomfort crawled on my skin, feeding on the awareness of my privileged social position. While I am familiar with these communities and these spaces,

I go on being an outsider, and at the end of the day, I will return to my comfortable home, being that comfort a privilege not afforded to those who live there, at least within my perception. Despite my efforts and understanding, the utterly socio-economic disparities between us are ever-present. This discomfort pushes me to challenge the limitations of my own empathy and the complexities of being ethically and correctly in such spaces. My aim is to discuss with the group these delicate reflections and the ethical, social, and emotional challenges they bring to archaeological practice, and my feeling of guilt.

Voices of Discomfort - Silenced Emotions in the Archaeology of Asylums

Elias Michaut (University College of London) & Joel Santos (University of Leicester).

This paper explores the discomfort that archaeologists might experience when investigating mental health institutions. Moving beyond traditional architectural and material analyses, our work centres on the personal narratives and emotional experiences of individuals confined within lunatic asylums. Focusing on two case studies, Cadillac-sur-Garonne in France and Miguel Bombarda in Portugal, we face the difficult task of analysing spaces often characterised by dehumanisation, frequently obscured by official records and institutional histories. For us, this research is deeply personal and challenging. As both of us have our own experiences with mental health challenges, we are aware of the stigma and injustices that continue to shape the way these people are seen. Moreover, both authors carry the history of familiars who were once confined within the walls of psychiatric hospitals. This experience brings an intimate connection to the silenced voices we encounter in the archaeological materiality, and the way we engage with these histories requires confronting our own emotions when meeting those stories of dehumanisation. This discomfort forces us toward an archaeology that acknowledges the full humanity of those affected by these institutions, seeking to restore their voices, stories, and dignity.

Challenging Discomfort: The psychological side of learning theory

Joel Santos (University of Leicester) & Tânia Manuel Casimiro (CFE HTC/IAP NOVA University of Lisbon).

This presentation discusses the role of discomfort in archaeological theory by recognizing the unique perspectives of individual students. Departing from the conventional view of theory as a non-widespread theme, it advocates for shaped approaches that acknowledge personal interests and abilities. Drawing upon insights from educational psychology, particularly the concept of cognitive dissonance, the authors explore how individuality can foster a deeper appreciation for theory. The paper suggests ways to cultivate more engaging and fulfilling theoretical discourse within archaeology. It underscores the transformative potential of embracing discomfort over a comfortable environment to stimulate intellectual curiosity and promote theoretical literacy.

Margins: Journey of A Gay Chinese Archaeology Student in China and the UK

Guo Peng Chen 陈国鹏 (University of Oxford).

In this session, I share my personal experience as a gay Asian student in both China and the UK. I begin with the story behind my name—its meaning in Chinese and how it has been perceived and treated in the UK and my fieldwork in Belize. I then talk about my journey through studying and conducting research in China and the UK, touching on topics like the heteronormative drinking culture in Chinese archaeological fieldwork, subtle discrimination during graduate school applications, and the challenges I face when considering future job opportunities.

The “2000 Words” theatre/archaeology performance in Koutroulou Magoula, Greece: an experiential approach to decolonizing archaeology through language

Jason Goodman & Efthimis Theou

Every summer, students from various universities across the world travel to the Thessalian Plain in Greece to participate in the Koutroulou Magoula Archaeology and Archaeological Ethnography Project, which investigates both a tell site with extensive neolithic occupation and the relationship of the present-day local communities with the material past of their region and the on-going research into said past. Over the course of a month, the students excavate at the trenches, process the finds in the laboratory, and attempt to settle into everyday life in the area. Naturally, communication with the locals is limited by the language barrier and done primarily in English, which is fluently spoken by most of the younger generation and to a far lesser degree by the rest. In our presentation we will discuss the “2000 Words” theatre/archaeology performance, staged at the end of the 2022 excavation season, which attempted to challenge these well-established yet incomplete and extractive means of communication and interaction. In this solo performance piece, one of the American students undertook an ‘impossible’ task: to deliver a thirty-minute talk in Greek, with no prior knowledge of the language, approaching the speech phonetically as a ‘spoken-word song’. This unconventional lecture conveyed archaeological information about Koutroulou Magoula, while simultaneously engaging in playful scenic experimentation with the limits and possibilities of orality. Most importantly, though, it was a clear artistic gesture of kinship, addressed directly to the members of the local community and driven by a deep need for communication with them.

The intricacies of multilingualism in archaeology: Sa Limba Sarda as a decolonial path from publication to outreach

Mauro Puddu (Ca Foscari University of Venice).

Communicating implies interacting in both verbal and non-verbal ways, with the aim of creating the conditions for mutual understanding. When verbal-only communication becomes the privileged way to communicate official discourses, an important amount of communicative possibilities is automatically excluded. The same happens when one language is selected as official, leaving out of the picture infinite possibilities of expression. Today, English has more or less officially become the academic language across all disciplines, and the language of international research grant applications. In the process, more people have gained the chance to meet each other on a common middle ground (e.g. Arabic-speaking and Spanish-speaking students and scholars), something we greatly appreciate, while more and more people, likely the same people, have lost contact with the best ways to express their ideas, something we regret. It seems like a catch 22 situation here. But it is not. Alternatives are possible. No language has ever been designated as an official one because universally accepted: political reasons and power relations underpin the selection of languages in official discourses. English is no exception. The same happened in other national contexts, where French, Italian, Arabic, German, Spanish had become the official national languages, automatically excluding regional languages, dialects, and other forms of communication from the official discourse. If imposing one language can be an act of cultural colonialism, reintroducing regional linguistic or dialectic expressions can acquire a decolonial value. It is the case of Sardinian language. With this paper, I propose to examine the use of Limba Sarda in academic contexts and in outreach activities as a potential case of internationally enriching hybridism. The aim is to visualise possibilities that, without disrupting the common understanding of a diverse international audience, something we do not want, can still preserve the creative and closer-to-the-soul ways to communicate one’s ideas.

Walking towards a wider academic language(s)

Judith M. López Aceves (University of Leicester) & Alvaro Felipe Ortega González (University of Leicester).

When speaking English (the modern lingua franca), one distinguishing feature that highlights non-native speakers is accent. Accents serve as a window into our identity but they can also become a barrier to communication. However, embracing our accents can be a strategy to resist the imposition of a rigid and often unattainable standard of proficiency. In this presentation, we aim to explore potential strategies for decolonizing academic language and engage attendees in a discussion about how they might apply these strategies within their own spheres.

S05: Tales as Old as Time: Archaeological Storytelling for Research Dissemination

Session Organisers:

Kirsty Lilley (University of Edinburgh, kirstylilley@gmail.com) & Lusya Zaleskaya (University of Edinburgh, lzaleska@ed.ac.uk).

Session Abstract:

Archaeology is often described as informed storytelling: as practitioners, we are trained not only to produce data in the field or in the lab, but also how to write about and present on it – often in more formal settings such as conferences, or informally through public outreach and engagement. However, with increasingly specialised fields of study come greater barriers to dissemination; research narratives may end up ‘lost in translation’, whilst facts and data take second place to catchy news headlines or popular media.

Practised across time and space, storytelling provides an alternative method through which to communicate archaeological information, not only to public audiences, but also amongst those working in diverse archaeological fields. Stories develop and evolve, much like our data and interpretations, and can be told and retold by different narrators. Such techniques may therefore help us to convey complex research in an accessible – but by no means overly-simplified – format, in turn permitting cross-disciplinary discussions and understanding. From archaeological theory to stable isotope analysis, it offers the possibility of connecting with varied audiences, widening participation, and challenging *status quo* present in traditional modes of research dissemination.

In this session, we invite anyone interested in the human past to try your hand at alternative communication techniques, broadly through storytelling methods. We also welcome those who have had success with such approaches to come and share your experiences! The session aims to be inclusive and experimental, so whether you bring props, present in verse, try out the method of *kamishibai* (Japanese ‘paper drama’ or picture storytelling – we recommend this method if you are unsure where to start), or simply present your work differently, we would like you to step away from traditional slideshow presentations and to embrace the creative and *evolving* narratives that archaeological research generates.

This session provides a modified take on traditional presentation style session. We encourage the participants to move away from traditional Power Point aided presentations and explore storytelling methods as a way of disseminating their research. One of our suggestions is trying out the *kamishibai* method: more information about *kamishibai* storytelling methods (not only for kids – you could use a series of images): <https://www.japansociety.org.uk/resource?resource=56>

So, what’s your story?

Keywords: storytelling; research narratives; dissemination; engagement; interpretation

Experiences of teaching undergraduate and postgraduate modules in digital storytelling for cultural heritage at UEA.

Lorna Richardson

This presentation will explore the experiences of teaching undergraduate and postgraduate modules in digital storytelling for cultural heritage at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, the City of Stories. This paper explores some best practice around 21st century forms of digital storytelling, and how effective stories can be created and shaped using a range of free and cheap to use platforms. The experience of teaching a critical/creative module is not without its challenges, and this presentation will reflect on these. Potential storytellers must develop a wide variety of technical and imaginative skills to tell digital stories effectively and

appropriately, and produce digital media in a number of common formats. They also need to understand the role of digital storytelling in contemporary society, and how to work collaboratively in environments with different institutional agendas. Storytellers must also be able to create accessible materials, and be aware of the needs and abilities of changing demographics. This paper will reflect on the opportunities for play in pedagogical approaches to digital storytelling, and how to balance these with professional, personal, and creative aims and interests.

Stories are too good to save for the public! Can storifying also make us better researchers?

Fiona Coward

The power of stories is increasingly being recognised, both in terms of how it can help researchers reach audiences beyond academia, as well as the ways in which existing narratives have shaped the perspectives of academics. Within academia, researchers are studying the evolutionary implications of storytelling, for example in terms of its implications and role in the evolution of the hominin and human brain and the role it plays in cultural evolution and individual fitness; what changing narratives can tell us about how ideas about the past have changed over time; and how storytelling can help us communicate better with diverse audiences, especially beyond academia. In this talk, however, I want to think about how storytelling and narrative approaches can be used within research itself. Personally I have found that my efforts to 'narrativise' prehistory – especially the deep past of the Palaeolithic – provoke a re-thinking of my own assumptions and ideas about the data I work with and about the experiences of people in the past. I will discuss two examples of such attempts at research-informed storytelling, one based in the early Upper Palaeolithic of northern Spain and one based on a rock art panel from Bronze Age Sweden, and examine the often surprisingly difficult decision-making processes I went through in each case to produce the draft narratives, which will be circulated in the session to enable discussion and critique. Can storifying be a useful tool for provoking new ways of thinking through our research as well as a subject of that research and a mode of science communication?

The power of ArchaeoStories: UCL Whitechapel Storytelling workshop

Sarah Wolferstan

I will create an 'oral storytelling' performance about an ongoing UCL project on using oral storytelling to both frame and disseminate the findings made through commercial, developer-funded research. During the performance I will use a large flashcard to present and critique a storytelling model (the Hero's journey) and the 'decolonised' storytelling approach, finishing with my Whitechapel storytelling map as recount what happened with our project.

Humour, mystery and tragedy: Heritage storytelling for non-archaeologists

Vera Noon

Radiocarbon dating, photogrammetry, petrography, air lifting, sub-bottom profiling, taphonomy...

Sure, archaeologists are familiar with these terms. But is archaeology merely a confined practice, or does it have a higher purpose? Is it enough to develop technical skills to advance the discipline, or is there a need for a more engaging communication?

To make archaeology - and heritage in general - more accessible to the public or to experts from non-archaeological backgrounds, alternative methods ought to be utilized.

Storytelling likely began as soon as humans developed language. From ancient cave scribbles to oral stories, knowledge and cultural values were preserved and passed down through generations. In the field of Ocean Literacy - *the understanding of the Ocean's influence on us and our influence on the Ocean* –storytelling is increasingly employed to bridge the gap between society, policy makers and scientists.

Today, as the protection of marine natural and cultural heritage becomes more pressing, the world needs to learn from scientists and technical experts more than ever. Submerged heritage in particular poses unique challenges in making its significance clear to planners, policymakers, and students.

Posthuman feminism, ambiguity, and the others: Telling tales of post-medieval marginalised and excluded communities.

Hanna Steyne & Mili Rajic

Archaeological interpretation is inherently creative. We can create hypotheses based on what we term facts based on data, but in reality, many of our facts about the past are creative interpretation dressed in the scientific drag of Processual Archaeology. When Joan Gero called for us to honour the ambiguity in archaeological interpretation as part of a feminist movement to view the past through different lenses, she highlighted the problematic nature of a male dominated version of the past we have all become familiar with, and that many others have worked hard to dismantle.

In this paper we propose that story telling is not just for interpretation, but also methodology. By explicitly embracing the ambiguity and creativity of archaeological interpretation we are free to explore the unknown, the othered, the marginalised and historically excluded communities and begin to dismantle the white male dominated narratives of the past that underpin contemporary bigotry and discrimination. Further, in turning our focus of creative interpretation specifically on the gaps between and beyond the archaeological objects and historical source material we work we can better explore, interrogate, and refine our understanding of the entangled and complex relationships between people, places, things, and ideas in the past.

This presentation explores how storytelling can be used to convey important knowledge, raise awareness and inspire action. Three examples used by the author will demonstrate how different storytelling approaches – humour, mystery and tragedy – can introduce marine cultural heritage to non-archaeologists in a compelling and relatable way.

Hearing Research Narratives for Bronze Age Egyptian-Nubian daggers: Storytelling with the 'Sensory Gain' approach.

Emma Bentley (University of Edinburgh)

As archaeologists, we engage holistically with objects (and sites, features, skeletal evidence, etc) and our hands-on contact with the fragile and unique past is always emotive, whether our aim is scientific evaluation or culturally-embedded discussion. We engage all our senses in our work; from the scents and exposure of excavation, the weight and texture of artefacts, the sterility of laboratory spaces, the grittiness of experimental archaeology, the thought-experiments of reconstructing activity, to the eye-strain of data input. As archaeologists we have the fortune to be in close contact with objects and ways of thinking about and investigating the past. Yet for scientific publication we condense the sensory detail of the research process into the formal structure of a clean, objective, written report. And we assume that fellow researchers, students and the interested public can intuitively relate to our work.

This presentation aims to engage multiple senses in an experimental form of research dissemination about one type of legacy object: Egyptian-Nubian daggers. It adopts the 'Sensory Gain' approach being developed for widening access to museum artefacts by the 'Sensational Museum' project (sensationalmuseum.org), whose work seeks opportunities for broad audience engagement.

As one of the many thousands of artefact types in ancient Egyptian and Nubian collections, records for daggers are often limited to accession details, dimensions, provenance (or lack therefore) and the materials they are made of. Inter-disciplinary investigation includes measurement, composition analysis (i.e. pXRF) and archival research - all of which seek to re-tell deeper stories of funerary ritual, communities of practice in metals technology, identities revealed by scabbard decoration and patterns of exchange encoded in the complexity of materials used for handles.

This presentation tests one way of making research narratives more accessible using trans-sensory storytelling of the research narrative. To heighten senses other than sight, this presentation will be given in a darkened room with a minimum of visual stimuli and a maximum of spoken visual imagery (transcript also available).

Can archaeological research be effectively communicated in a multi-sensory way through online museum collections and what might we learn about the past from this approach?

"I Matilda, Regina Anglorum"

Lizzie Bryant

Thanks to a recent Cranborne Chase National Landscape commission to bring to life a group of historical characters with connections to the Chase, I stepped into the Anglo-Norman leather shoes of Matilda of Flanders, wife of William the Conqueror, who after the battle of Hastings quickly became the richest female magnate in post conquest England, holding vast numbers of estates in her own name, including Cranborne. It has been an illuminating experience to perform in character and present the traditionally male-focused narrative of the Norman Conquest through the prism of this woman's life as we know and can imagine it. Whilst contemporary academia has a wealth of research uncovering female and other 'minority' voices and lives from the past, the reactions and feedback I have received from the general public has more often been one of surprise and curiosity that there could be, as Jamina Ramirez in her book 'Femina' puts it, '...empowered women of agency in the medieval period.' That it appears to be still a novelty to many people outside academia inspires me to continue growing and telling Matilda's story and develop further stories from the female perspective.

In this presentation, I bring you a taste of Queen Matilda and discuss my journey and challenges to building her world as well as other story worlds inspired by mythology, traditional tales, archaeology, history and place. Sharing a story orally, as a Scottish Traveller proverb goes, eye to eye, mind to mind, and heart to heart puts the teller into the role of mediator, between the here and now and the story world, activating the audience's imagination, senses,

feelings and archetypal memories to potentially deliver an experience of intimacy and connection with our ancestors, culture and landscapes.

Combining archaeology and fiction: can writing fiction be a form of experimental archaeology?

David Greig

In this presentation, I will discuss the way in which archaeology and fiction combine for me, with reference to Columba's Bones, Adventures with the Painted People and my adaptation of Charlotte Higgins' nonfiction book Under Another Sky (about Roman Britain). At the heart would be the question: can writing fiction be a form of experimental archaeology?

The Bones in the Scout Hut

Samantha S. Reiter

In 2020, a scout group near to Copenhagen, Denmark discovered a box of human bones while cleaning out their scout hut. How did they get there? Where did they come from? Whose bones were they? And why did they call upon an osteoarchaeologist rather than the police? This bone-chilling and thought-provoking tale features the aforementioned scout troupe, the Danish Royal Academy of Surgeons and an international underground black-market trade in human tissue. The "cold case" is recounted and its ongoing denouement explored through a combination of audience interaction, on-stage drama and an adapted PechaKucha format.

Creating Pwani: rope, nets, fish-traps and the maritime cultural heritage of Pemba

Laura Basell et al.

In this paper we will explore the deeply entangled narratives of people and place via the stories of traditional rope, net and fish-trap production on the east African island of Pemba. Pemba island lies to the north of Unguja (Zanzibar) off the coast of Tanzania. From the 8th century CE twelve traditional towns (miji), with significant populations, came to rely on the maritime environment, rather than long distance monsoon-based trade. Seven of these towns survive, are located on very dry coralline limestone, and until recently had restricted access to fresh water and farmland. For centuries the sea has been at the heart of communities. Development, demographic changes, the availability of piped water and climate change mean there have been rapid societal changes in recent years. Between 2019 and 2022 a series of interviews and material culture studies were conducted with the communities of north east Pemba. Our aim was to explore which aspects of maritime life people considered important in the context of recent changes, to record traditional maritime crafts and to co-create a space that celebrated the communities' unique maritime cultural heritage. A rich tapestry of stories and songs emerged. Here we will focus on selected aspects of the research, embedding the production process in its social context and considering implications for the future.

The Tale of the Toad Stone

Katy Whitaker

The Tale of the Toad Stone

A comical story
in which a TOAD STONE tells its tale from
birth,

its Neolithic disappointment,

its brush with DEATH,

introduces its Family Members and considers
their relatedness,

muses on people's obsession with the toad for
three thousand years

and

begs to leave its home in the
Valley Of Stones,

free at last

from modern human preconceptions about the
fixed and unchanging nature of
stone substrate and rocky matter.

by K. A. Whitaker PhD FSA,
printed at the *Sign of the Sarfen*
--- to be performed ---

MMXVII (MMXXIV)

My life in the “Movies”: Interpreting the archaeological remains of WW1 submarine chaser “Movy” Motor Launch [ML]286 through storytelling

Suzanne Marie Taylor

Motor Launch [ML]286 was a spirited World War One submarine chaser that served as part of the Auxiliary Patrol Areas II & III Orkneys and Shetlands. Nicknamed “Movy”- as motor launches were called due to their animated movement in the water- ML286's shipwrecked archaeology on the Thames foreshore suggests a new type of present-day “movement” for the little ML. Through decay, the motor launch's discarded remains actively reveal hidden and long-forgotten stories of her ghost-like past. This presentation is therefore an invitation to engage with vibrant ex-situ archaeotheatre and experience the abandoned wreck through inspired storytelling, muddied props and a replica motor launch set. My one-woman archaeodrama Still Life “Movy” is thus my dramatised research data which utilises the less-invasive tools of poetry and song as well as the personal accounts of my research participants and the officers of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve [RNVR] as more empathetic means with which to excavate the stratified layers of ML286's significant and compelling narrative.

Enduring Earth: the creative journey of a potter, an artist and an archaeologist [installation only – not attending in person]

Maya Hoole

Enduring Earth is the creation of an archaeologist, an artist and a potter who brought together their enthusiasm and expertise to run a workshop with members of the public to explore the narrative of Bronze Age beaker pottery. Participants explored the Early People's gallery at National Museums Scotland with archaeologist Maya Hoole, before heading to the pottery studio for a hands-on guided experience of creating their own coil pot making and decorating in the Beaker style with purpose made tools, led by potter Stephen Wood. Lastly, the group spent a day on the beach doing an open-air firing which took 12 hours. Here they also participated in creating environmental artworks inspired by their experience, led by artist Kitt Bunney. One of the final pottery pieces was then purposefully lost to the sea, to illustrate how Beaker pots were removed from society when included in prehistoric burials. The entire workshop was filmed and edited by Kitt Bunney. For more information see workshops on wildfired.studio

S06: Archaeology of Awe: Being moved by being in the world

Session Organiser:

Max MacDonald (University of Southampton, mk.macdonald.soton.ac.uk).

Session abstract:

The world is an awesome and wondrous place. Harris and Sørensen (2010) describe emotion as the "act of being moved," and human encounters with places of beauty and magnificence, monumentality and atmosphere, whether natural or anthropogenic, invoke sensorial and emotional responses. Though emotion is often considered to be high on archaeology's "ladder of inference," recent works, especially in the realm of death and burial, have demonstrated the potential to understand emotions in the archaeological record. This session seeks to expand upon that work to explore the human relationship to landscape, place and space through those sensual encounters. Many places are imbued with magic and wonder and draw people together through communal experience. How can we archaeologically interpret the impressions left on the ancient observer? How can we identify the affective fields and atmospheres that stimulate emotional responses to past environments? This session welcomes varied approaches to understanding the emotional resonance of places, whether through theoretical understanding, material culture and iconography, or computational approaches such as viewshed analysis or spatial reconstruction.

Keywords: affective spaces; natural and human landscapes; sensoriality; emotions; phenomenology

Marks of affect, awe, violence and wonder

Rachel Crellin, Oliver Harris, Matt Hitchcock, Dawid Sych and Christina Tsoraki, All University of Leicester

In this paper we will consider the richly affective engagements that characterise two Bronze Age artefacts. Specifically, we explore an awe driven by wonder and encounter on the one hand, and an awe inspired by violence and destruction on the other. First, we will look at one of the most obviously 'awesome' objects of the British Bronze Age: the Bush Barrow Lozenge. This object, deposited in a barrow around 3800 years ago, stands out today as inspiring an overwhelming physical response. We can also explore the making of this object to think through how awe might have emerged from the embodied and relational encounter of making and mapping the minute decoration that covers its surface. Second, we will turn to a sword, destroyed and deposited as part of the Late Bronze Age hoard at Bradley Fen. Wear and microXRF analysis allow us to visualise this object in wonderful ways, but this should not hide the manner in which it both rendered violent actions upon others, and was itself violently destroyed in the past. Drawing on recent microwear analysis of both objects we will interweave the affective and the material to explore awe as an event generated in both the past and the present, and how the capacity of these objects might be realised differently.

The Ruthwell Cross: Early Medieval Emotions, Written in Stone

Ciarán Walsh (Queen's University Belfast, cwalsh42@qub.ac.uk).

The Ruthwell Cross is a five-metre-tall standing cross, located in Dumfriesshire, southern Scotland. Constructed during the Christianisation of Northumbria in the early eighth-century, the cross is carved with scenes from biblical history, inhabited vine-scrolls and explanatory tituli in both Latin letters and runes. The runic inscriptions contain an extract from the Old English alliterative poem, *The Dream of the Rood*, making the cross the earliest known example of Old English poetry. There are a number of reasons why The Ruthwell Cross is an ideal case study for the interrogation of religious awe in early medieval Northumbria.

Firstly, as the cross is inscribed with a poem, literary analysis can be used to inform our understanding of the religious experience inspired by the monument itself; in this poem, the cross itself is the narrator, and describes the emotional agony of Christ's crucifixion from its own perspective. Secondly, the runic inscription on the cross is laid out in an unusual way that encourages the viewer to interact with it by mimicking the bowing motion described in the words of the poem. Finally, the images carved on the cross – corresponding to different periods of the liturgical year – imply that the cross was intended to be considered not only in the context of its immediate landscape, but in a broader cosmological context as well – one in which its meaning was constantly modified by the movement of the sun and the passage of the time.

The Ruthwell Cross resists easy classification, and its interpretation requires an approach which incorporates skills from a diverse set of academic disciplines, ranging from archaeology to art history to English literature. This paper will explore how an analysis of The Ruthwell Cross can be enriched by these different interpretive strategies, and suggest that the study of medieval affect necessarily requires an interdisciplinary approach.

Monument construction in 6th century Scandinavia: bringing people together as the world fell apart

Andreas Ropeid Sæbø (University of Oslo, a.r.sabo@iakh.uio.no).

Several dramatic events occurred in Scandinavia in the mid-6th century AD, including but not restricted to a climatic calamity leading to crop failure, famine, and violent upheaval. These events correlate roughly with the construction of earthen monuments – mounds – of unprecedented magnitude. The mounds are commonly interpreted as symbols of elite dominance. This presentation takes a different approach. The mounds are commonly referred to as *burial* mounds or *grave* mounds, but many contained no gravegoods and no grave. Possibly, instead, they testify to a communal, joint effort of mound-making where expressions of personal wealth, power, and lineage were intentionally subdued. Adopting a Durkheimian perspective on the archaeology of awe, monumentality, and mass congregation, the paper argues that mound construction built solidarity and a sense of belonging in a world that was on the brink of falling apart. The paper focuses on the archaeology of South-Eastern Norway, but draws and comments on recent developments in Anglo-American archaeological theory.

Spectres of the Past: Uncertainty, Awe, and Haunting

Anna Collar (University of Southampton, a.collar@soton.ac.uk).

Everywhere, we live alongside monuments and ruins, and Ruinenlust has a long history as a Western 'gaze': ruins are usually places empty of people, so marginalising communities that live alongside them (Galviz et al 2017). But monuments are lived: used to tell contemporary narratives or support ideologies (e.g., Mussolini's use of the Roman Colosseum as a backdrop to 1930s Italian Fascism or Just Stop Oil's recent protest at Stonehenge). Although the terms 'reuse' and 'afterlife' are commonly-used to describe the life of monuments beyond the time of their primary use, they carry serious conceptual issues: implying both passivity in monuments' roles in later periods, and imposing hierarchies of significance on our interpretation of them. The Avebury landscape as a 'heritage asset' is a case in point: the monument has been 'preserved' as a composite 'mythical moment' of Neolithic and Bronze Age—and the significance of the monuments in later periods is ignored (Hughes 2021: 9).

Landscapes are inhabited—the material remains of the past play an active, agential role in structuring and influencing later societies (Barrett 1999: 258). Ruination and abandonment may lead to memories and meanings associated with monuments being forgotten, but this does not remove agency. Instead, ruination makes monuments sites for haunting: that is,

places that may be poorly understood and which may affect the present in unexpected ways (Derrida 1994). Such places of uncertainty are places where 'spirits thrive [...] in conditions of doubt rather than belief.' (Bubandt 2017: 125). Haunting radically alters our conception of how earlier monuments impact later peoples' lives, experiences, and cosmologies by acknowledging the agency of monuments as loci of uncertainty, and as places that produce awe through the atmosphere of uncertainty. I suggest that the monuments at Avebury became such places of doubt in the Iron Age-Roman period: spiritually dangerous, and in need of continuing boundary-work.

Seeing the Sea: an awesome and emotional experience

Max MacDonald (University of Oxford, max.macdonald@arch.ox.ac.uk).

The experience of the sea is an emotional one. Studies of ancient maritime culture often focus on two aspects of interaction with the sea: trade and subsistence. This, however, overlooks the awesomeness of the natural world and the overwhelming size and scope of the sea. Drawing on my own experiences living by the sea, but never relying on it for economic gain or sustenance, this paper will explore the potential emotional relationship with the sea. Harris and Sørensen (2010) describe emotion as the "act of being moved," and human encounters with the sea certainly are moving experiences. In Late Bronze Age Messenia (Greece) nearly 80% of the known Mycenaean sites had a view of the sea: some had panoramic vistas while others present only glimpses. Having the sea as a constant presence in the landscape provided a sense of place and stirred emotions. By combining contemporary ideas about maritime archaeology such as maritimity and the maritime hyper-object and the use of GIS visibility analysis, this paper will explore the ways in which seeing the sea could be an emotional and atmospheric experience, providing a way of thinking about ancient interaction with the sea beyond physical necessity.

“It may be awesome ...but you’d better not believe it!” Overcoming the denial of belief and emotional affectivity in archaeological thought.

Farès K Moussa (University of Southampton, F.K.Moussa@soton.ac.uk).

For understandings of emotional responses to beauty, magnificence and monumentality to be integrated into archaeological thought in ways which are internally consistent, we must interrogate still persistent assumptions within the archaeological discipline concerning the nature of human *being*. A significant proportion of current archaeological thought remains steeped (both implicitly and explicitly) in neo-Kantian rational idealism and representationalism, which inherently denies the immediacy and co-affectivity of the embodied human in a real world. Even where the emotional affectivity of phenomena has been incorporated into some approaches, representational thought continues to be assumed as pre-imminent; and 'belief' is bracketed as some kind of construction, rather than as an authentic response to a real world. If we are to better understand human relationships to the material realm and re-align our own attitudes in a way which pertain to a more respectful relationship with Earth, then we will need to give up our attachment to enlightenment ideas of a spontaneous internal "mind".

Becoming affective through rock art: a material & sensorial case study in Guanajuato, Mexico

José Chessil Dohvehnain Martínez-Moreno (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, jochdo4j@gmail.com).

In Mexico, the archaeological study of perception and experience has been a trend for some decades, which can be paired with the development of sensory, affect and emotion archaeologies. Such a trend can also be seen in the Mexican archaeology of rock art. However, the emergence of such a trend is discrete or subtle, and generally appears in

studies that consider important to understand the socio-cultural construction of perception and experience through notions of sacred and ritual landscape, gender and personhood, and even from relational archaeologies, supported by the use of GIS. This paper will present a brief review of this trend in Mexican archaeology of rock art, and then discuss a case study that seeks to explore the construction of the sensory/affective hunter-gatherer landscape of the north-eastern semi-desert of the Mexican state of Guanajuato, through the interdisciplinary study of its rock art, created between 1,000 and 1,800 CE. To achieve the above, I start from a Deleuzian-posthuman archaeology, and through a methodology that considers affects as activities, actions or perceptible forces that produce marks

Being moved, on the move: a case for 'persistent routeways' and 'natural avenues' in Neolithic Britain

Jack Rowe (University of Bradford, j.rowe2@bradford.ac.uk).

Avenues, whether of earth, timber, or stone, are a relatively rare monument type in the British Isles, yet serve among the most evocative features of some of our most well-known and loved Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age ceremonial landscapes, conjuring images of procession, anticipation, colour, costume, celebration, and more.

But as a monument type, occupying the most extreme end of a 'spectrum of movement' for this period, how did they come about at all? Why prescribe people's movements to such a degree, and go to such monumental lengths to do so?

This paper proposes that avenues may have developed from prescribed modes of movement in natural settings; from routeways where dramatic topographies afforded almost theatrical natural settings for movement to, from, past, and between meaningful places; from routeways that held long (though not necessarily continuous) histories of use and persisted in ever-changing landscapes, accruing meaning with time. As these movements became more choreographed, more rehearsed, perhaps the need to recreate or reinvent these motions elsewhere took hold, and became monumentalised. Constructed avenues cannot have been the only places where special modes of movement took place – can natural others be found elsewhere?

A Groovy Kind of Love with the Tangible World.

Sarah Botfield (University of Manchester, sarah.botfield@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk).

Associations have been recently identified between Late Neolithic Grooved Ware pottery motifs and the different environments in which they were found. The Orcadian coastline, characterised by extensive swathes of exposed laminated flagstones along its beaches and cliffs, presents a distinctive stonescape throughout the archipelago. The readily available and easily accessible resource may have been a catalyst from which Grooved Ware motifs formed their efficacy and identity, merging out of the shadow of passage grave art. A comparable phenomenon is apparent in Grooved Ware from Wessex, where they appear to incorporate arboreal features within a landscape distinguished by its mosaic of habitats. This brings to mind the stone versus wood dichotomy that has been suggested for the Durrington Walls/Stonehenge landscape, where there appears to be a direct contrast between the timber circles of Durrington Walls and the stone circles of Stonehenge (Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina, 1988).

The presence of lozenge and chevron patterns on Orcadian Grooved Ware pottery is evocative of the naturally fractured flagstones found within the intertidal zones of Orkney, suggesting a symbolic representation of the local stonescape in ceramic form and suggests an interconnectedness between Neolithic peoples and their environment. Conversely, the pinnate venation motifs observed on Grooved Ware from the Wessex region are reminiscent of leaf venation patterns, indicating connections to the arborealscape. Integrating aspects of

the tangible environment also plays a significant role in influencing the creations of contemporary potters, as discovered during an ethnographic study of a group of potters from the Craft Potters Association. A desire to reflect those influences in their work and connection to the tangible world was identified in the pursuit of fluidity within one potter's work, where his previous career as a hydrographic surveyor influenced the use of slip to create fluid responses within his ceramics while a childhood relationship with the ruins of an ancient world in a developing country prompted another potter to recreate the vertical upright remains of the ancient desert building, "*pillars*", in later life and to describe them as metaphors for human individuality.

The forest is an awesome place, a place of compassion and interconnectedness. The desire to incorporate elements of the forest through decorative motifs may have been an attempt to connect with it. This notion is underscored by the belief that societies aimed to coexist and interact harmoniously with the non-human world during the Neolithic period. Boyd (2004, pp.131-132) posits that this period was characterised by a profound engagement with the natural surroundings. Similarly, trees are perceived ontologically as entities living within a symbiotic community. The "Mother Tree", situated at the heart of forest dynamics, plays a crucial role in nurturing the ecosystem by producing essential nutrients which not only nourish the natural world but even influence the sustenance of oceanic life (Beresford-Kroeger, 2019, pp. 167-168). It is conceivable that Neolithic humans possessed a heightened awareness of the interconnectedness within forest ecosystems, an understanding that perhaps influenced their perception of forests and trees. This awareness of nature's interconnectedness is mirrored in contemporary practices, as seen in the significant impact of the physical environment on the works of modern-day potters. Their creations are a testament to the ongoing influence of integrating tangible environmental elements into human artistic expression

Triple Bronze and Oak: Emotion in Ancient Mediterranean Seafaring

Madison Scrobeck (University of Southampton m.scrobeck@soton.ac.uk).

It is difficult to imagine a world where emotion does not exist, yet archaeological narratives are often devoid of any attempt to discuss emotion. Emotion is inseparable from the human experience and if the goal is to understand humanity in the how and why people and things materialize themselves throughout time, emotion cannot be ignored and must be engaged with. When research has undertaken the difficult task of examining emotion, it has primarily stayed within the domain of death, dying, and mourning due to its status as an "emotionally heightened space" (Fleisher & Norman 2016: 8); however, humans experience heightened emotions during different events in different spaces throughout their lives, particularly concerning events like birth, coming of age, travel and movement between places, and enduring natural disasters. These spheres of the lived experience are equally rich for archaeological examination.

This study aims to center the discussion of emotions within ancient Mediterranean seafaring, as it is uniquely positioned to answer not only questions about emotion but also about notions of travel and movement itself in connection to identity, perception, and 'being' in the world simultaneously. The approach is a three-pronged examination of the ancient world during the Roman period (310 BC – 200 AD), focusing on an examination of archaeological objects found within shipwreck contexts associated with ritual behaviors, such as apotropaic objects, in addition to an examination of textual evidence of people from the past experiencing maritime space and activities, giving worthwhile testimony to their perceived world and emotional realm of living and being at sea. Lastly, in order to augment the understanding of the material culture and textual evidence, experimental archaeology has been identified as a fruitful avenue into examining how we as researchers think about the archaeological and textual material associated with these 'heightened emotional spaces'. There is no way to know truly how people felt in the past, however this study makes use of different avenues of methodological approaches that can elucidate certain aspects of existence that are pertinent to all humans, past, present, or future.

Theoretical frameworks such as 'evocative space', atmosphere, embodiment, and other phenomenological approaches can be applied to the perception of maritime space and the experience of seafaring.

S07: Re-Peopling Submerged Prehistory: The Human Dimension in Palaeolandscape Evolution

Session organisers:

Samuele Ongaro (University of Southampton, so2g19@soton.ac.uk) & (Celia Prescott University of Southampton, cpd1g22@soton.ac.uk).

Session Abstract:

This session will explore the evolution of palaeolandscapes by focusing on the human dimension. In fact, the archaeology of submerged landscapes has made significant progress in addressing many decisive issues in human evolution, yet what can be achieved is often limited by the data available and/or the approaches we use – especially for areas that have only received limited attention. This inevitably leads to the risk of conceiving palaeolandscapes as empty boxes in which humans are conveniently placed, without much consideration of the dynamic nature of submerged landscapes and how this intertwines with the complexity of many aspects of human societies. Therefore, in this session we aim to address different perspectives and approaches that can help us move towards a more ‘humanly-conscious’ study of palaeolandscapes, which envisions these as vivid places rather than empty spaces. Firstly, by assuming that submerged landscapes are intrinsically dynamic, we would like to discuss new ways to picture palaeolandscapes in their ever-changing nature. Secondly, we want to explore the theme of life on submerged landscapes, focusing in particular on how certain aspects of human life – including, but not limited to, ecologies, settlement patterns, subsistence strategies, mobility, connectivity, and cosmologies – are affected by the dynamic nature of palaeolandscapes. Finally, we would like to bring particular attention to an issue which we believe will allow us to summarise the themes mentioned above, namely responses to sea level change: how can a ‘man in nature’ approach – rather than ‘man vs nature’ – help us improve our understanding of the issue? How can we explore resilience to and perception of changes? Can we, for example, identify ‘ritual’ responses to sea level change?

Keywords: Palaeolandscape Evolution; Submerged Prehistory; Dynamic landscapes; Human Ecologies; Responses to Sea Level Changes; Coastal Resilience

Place vs. Space? Re-living the emptyscapes of the early Holocene

Vince Gaffney, James Walker, Michea'l Butler, Simon Fitch, Andy Fraser, Jess Cook Hale, Rachel Harding & Ben Urmston

For more than a century, archaeologists have written global prehistories largely on the basis of what was not known about those previously inhabited landscapes, now lost to the sea. Supranational in scale and by nature inaccessible; archaeologists have generally sidestepped the issues and challenges of understanding and contextualising these areas. When not ignored, the area of Doggerland in the North Sea was frequently relegated to the neutral status of a “land bridge” for much of this period. To an extent, this is unsurprising. Archaeologists rarely possess a complete picture of human activity across entire regions - an issue raised explicitly by Stefano Campano through the use of the term “emptyscapes”. Marine palaeolandscapes are amongst the most extreme examples of such areas. However, these landscapes are today a hive of activity. Globally, vast areas of previously inhabited coastal shelf are now subject to development; to achieve net zero goals, or as geopolitical requirements for secure energy provision. While we know an increasing amount about the environmental history of these areas, our knowledge of their inhabitants remains scant in most areas, and practically near zero beyond the near shore. This paper considers the current situation and the dwindling opportunities we have to rediscover these areas and to fully appreciate their significance as lived landscapes.

Submerged Landscapes of the Northern Adriatic: Rediscovering the Geography of the Last Foragers and First Farmers

Samuele Ongaro

Among the major submerged landscapes of Europe, the Adriatic Sea has often attracted the attention of many prehistorians. In fact, the so-called Great Adriatic Plain has been recognized as a refugium during the LGM, as a land-bridge between the Balkans and the Italian Peninsula, and – right before its final drowning – as the coastal route for the spread of farming in the region. Nevertheless, without a proper understanding of how this landmass would have appeared in space and time, there is always a risk of reducing the palaeolandscape to an empty box in which humans are conveniently placed to fit simplistic archaeological interpretations. Besides, this situation is only worsened by the fact that, among the numerous geological surveys in the region, only a few have been carried out with archaeological objectives in mind. Yet, in areas where changes in the palaeogeography have been more drastic, studies of the palaeolandscape become fundamental to approach archaeological questions. This is the case of the Northern Adriatic, where the complex interaction of rivers and changes in relative sea level has been shaping the coastal landscape through the establishment of ever-changing lagoon systems. Moreover, the area is of particular interest to understand many archaeological issues, in particular regarding the incomplete picture we have of the last foragers and first farmers living in the region. Given the lack of Late Mesolithic sites, the problematic evidence for acculturation of local foragers, and the sudden early appearance of a fully-developed Neolithic lifestyle, it is clear there is still a lot left to understand about the Neolithization of the Northern Adriatic. Therefore, this paper will explore how palaeolandscape reconstructions can improve our understanding of the Neolithic Transition in the area. In fact, new models of Neolithization – which have been developed based on a review of available radiocarbon dates – will be compared to the current data available for the Northern Adriatic palaeolandscape, as well as to initial results produced by the analysis of unpublished sub-bottom profiles in the region.

An introduction to the paleolandscapes of northern Japan

Robyn Pelling

The Upper Palaeolithic in Japan has been accepted to begin around 38ka, although there were some variations in chronologies of the technical onset between the three island regions, Hokkaido, Palaeo-Honshu, and Palaeo-Ryukyu.

Japan is located within the Ring of Fire, a colloquial term for the highly active volcanic region surrounding the Pacific Ocean. At the end of the Last Glacial Maximum, whilst also undergoing sea-level rise, this region was subject to a number of active volcanoes and natural disasters. The area now known as Aomori Prefecture, situated at the northern point of Palaeo-Honshu, had at least one volcanic group devastatingly active during the transitional period between the peoples of the Upper Palaeolithic and the expansion of the Jomon culture.

My research explores the significant natural challenges of the period, and considers how these may have affected cultural change.

Changing seascapes: the impact of coastal change on Lebanese maritime archaeology

Celia Prescott

Coastal change presents a clear threat to cultural heritage. Maritime archaeological sites at the boundaries between land and sea are at risk of coastal flooding and erosion exacerbated by sea-level change. As it has been widely acknowledged that not all heritage can be saved from destruction, it is important to study the resilience of endangered maritime archaeology, or their ability to withstand and adjust to the adverse effects of coastal change. The Levant is an area both rich in maritime archaeology and subject to the adverse impacts of coastal change. In Lebanon, assessments of coastal resilience considering these adverse impacts are important to informing effective management strategies for its valued coastal heritage and places.

The overarching aim of this research is to assess the impacts of coastal change on the maritime archaeology of the Lebanese coast, through a geophysical and hydrodynamic characterisation of its nearshore environment and sediment dynamics. This paper will present the results of a characterisation of the hydrodynamic regime of the Lebanese coast – specifically storm surge and wave patterns – using high-resolution reanalysis data, towards an assessment of the risks of coastal flooding and erosion. The paper will also expand on the relevance of research on coastal sediment dynamics and coastal resilience in setting a baseline for regional studies of submerged landscapes.

Lithics Out of Context: Using the Chaîne Opératoire to better understand what Post-Depositional Surface Abrasion and Patination mean for Early Occupation of Britain

Carley Divish

Lithics in secondary context contain a wealth of information that needs to be understood and studied on a deeper level. Paleolandscape research is key to understanding the pathways of early human colonization; any hint at uncovering that is valuable. In secondary context, lithics no longer have their site of origin and sedimentary record to inform investigation, yet there is patination, abrasion, and surface markings that may showcase the past movements from the site of origin to the depositional site. Often paleolandscape sites are left undiscovered; although these lithics can show that a site exists, researchers are unable to identify the site without intensive studies that do not guarantee results. By understanding patination and abrasion, broad periods of movement and exposure of lithics can be outlined, giving more context to the timeline of the lithic's movements from erosion to collection. However, lithics are often spread across the landscapes of human occupation rather than in one specific site. This gives credence to early human culture across Britain, showcasing pathways of occupation rather than a static nature. By understanding these lithics better, we can understand the complexity of human societies better. Hypotheses for each site of inquiry were found based upon the data gathered from analyzing abrasion, patination, origin, depth of abrasion, and marine growth, but it is the further information about culture, choice, settlement patterns, and how those interact with the ever-changing environment that will bring the results of this study into focus.

Tracks through La Manche: exploring the “Goldilocks Zone”

Beccy Scott, Martin Bates, Richard Bates, Ed Blinkhorn, Chantal Conneller, Sarah Duffy, Josie Mills, Andrew Shaw

To understand past hunter-gatherer people, it remains necessary to reconstruct past landscapes. Such landscapes are more than simply a backdrop but the medium through which practical, social, emotional and spiritual life was enacted. Critically, the traces of Palaeolithic people moving through offshore landscapes allow us to examine exploration of, and engagement with, such landscapes during times of landscape change – regression and transgression – and the changes in how humans experienced and encultured such landscapes. For Palaeolithic archaeologists “repeopling” is a process of characterising the places that people made within a landscape. This is as much the case whether investigating

landscapes that are now submerged, or a current terrestrial landscape that is rendered only partially visible through taphonomic processes of landscape preservation and release (Pope et al. 2016). In geoarchaeological terms, impacts upon the structure of the record are similar to those we reconstruct onshore – erosion and redeposition, but also quasi-essential sedimentation preserving the specific ways in which people interacted with, and created particular places through their actions. Such catchment points in the offshore landscape reflect human occupation of this “Goldilocks zone” (Bates et al. 2023): places where the impacts of these processes, and how people responded to change, co-occur. We here explore examples from our work in coastal, offshore and vast intertidal landscapes around the Channel island of Jersey, to show how critically linking offshore landscapes to onshore assemblages can allow us to examine times, environments and places that were favoured by early human groups, and the routes that they followed through these landscapes. Relating transgression / regression to the potential availability of prized raw material (Mills 2020), and the different ways that people sought out, worked with, and transported such material, allows us to follow paths through these landscapes to significant and persistent places (Conneller et al. 2016; Pope 2023).

Lost landscapes and the Middle Paleolithic occupation in the southern North Sea: new finds from the submerged Paleo-Yare

Andrew Shaw, Daniel Young, and Hayley Hawkins

The Palaeolithic archaeological record from current dryland contexts informs on activity and occupation across only a fraction of occupied Pleistocene landscapes. Now-submerged contexts, such as those preserved beneath the Southern North Sea, allow past human activity to be considered at a more representative scale.

Previous investigations have recovered internationally significant Middle Palaeolithic archaeology associated with submerged Pleistocene landscapes in the southern North Sea (Tizzard et al. 2014; 2015). Discovered through aggregate dredging in marine aggregate licence Area 240, the archaeology is associated with Pleistocene deposits of the Paleo-Yare river system.

Since then, new studies (e.g. Shaw et al. 2023) have been carried out which have recovered further Middle Palaeolithic Middle Archaeology from spatially delimited areas of Area 240, and which are beginning to refine our understanding of associated geological sequences and palaeolandscapes. This paper reports on this ongoing work, which has demonstrated multiple phases of Middle Palaeolithic occupation associated with different favoured technological repertoires, within different locations in the lost, submerged Pleistocene landscapes of the Palaeo-Yare.

People, ancestral beings, and offshore windfarm infrastructure in the submerged paleolandscapes and Sea Country of Australia

Hanna Steyne

Palaeolandscapes research is in its infancy in Australia, with the first Aboriginal artefacts discovered underwater in 2020 off north-western Australia. The discovery was followed in 2022 by the first area of seabed being Declared for offshore wind development off Gippsland, Victoria. This has been followed by a further 4 declared areas, and with one area still under consultation, the total area of seabed now identified for offshore wind development is around 30,000km². With most offshore wind projects located in water depths less than 130m, there is clear potential impact on submerged palaeolandscapes and archaeology relating to the first Australians.

Importantly though, for the First Nations people of Australia, we should not only be re-peopling the submerged palaeolandscape, but considering the full range of intangible

cultural values, where important relationships exist between people, vegetation, animals, water bodies, landscape features, and ancestral beings. First Nations songlines and dreamtime stories describe the movements and activities of ancestral beings that brought life to the world, and who created features such as hills, rivers, escarpments, caves, etc. Where traditional, western scientific approaches can quantify the geomorphological and palaeoenvironmental remains of submerged palaeolandscapes, it is only the Traditional knowledge holders who can identify these more complex, and sometimes intangible cultural values within landscapes, whether they are now on land or underwater.

Whilst discussing the people of Australian submerged palaeolandscapes, this paper explores some of these tangible and intangible cultural values, how they might manifest, and how we can manage them within the context of offshore development work.

Searching for Doggerland: Cultural Engagements with Submerged Prehistory and Regional North Sea Futures

Ren'ee Hoogland

This paper puts the panel's motivation to address "the risk of conceiving palaeolandscapes as empty boxes in which humans are conveniently placed" in dialogue with Doggerland's submerged prehistory. Approaching Doggerland from a literary and narrative perspective, the purpose of this presentation is not so much to contribute to a burgeoning body of archaeological work that investigates the environmental and human specificities of the submerged landscape, but rather to explore the recent cultural momentum around Doggerland. As writers, artists, politicians, energy companies, and concerned citizens turn their heads to contemporary coastal changes and start to speculate about future sea level changes, a shift in attention to Doggerland's prehistory seems to "re-animate" the submerged landscape. Doggerland appears in literary fiction and memoir, energy discourse, and both left- and right-wing political discourse. Inspired by this momentum, this paper explores Doggerland as a space of overlapping temporalities, cultural engagements, and political contexts. How has Doggerland's submerged landscape been used in recent times to forward particular narratives about human resilience, shared national memories of the North Sea, British isolationism, and energy protectionism? Reflecting on these narratives, this paper posits, will open up new reflections and understandings of how submerged prehistory intertwines with contemporary human practices of world-making. By comparing the underlying agendas and purposes of these narratives, this paper considers how "searching for Doggerland" charts the way humans invest – culturally, politically, economically – in questions of climate, energy, and national identity in the twenty-first century North Sea region.

S08: (Re) conceptualising the Past? Evolution of the imagined/invented/(re)created Past

Session organisers:

Aldo Accinelli Obando (accinelli.a@pucp.pe) & Jesús Martín Alonso (j.martinalonso@uva.nl)

Session abstract:

The concept of the past has evolved significantly since the inception of archaeology as a discipline. Traditionally conceived as something that is gone and needs to be put together by the archaeologist to understand it, in this session, we use the idea that the past never ends as our starting point. Along this line of reasoning, science continues to shape and reinterpret the past. We will discuss the biases of known pasts and how these influence the very idea of the past. In other words, which constructs of time do we prioritise, how are they reevaluated, and why are some erased? Furthermore, archaeology, with its hegemonic position based on its expertise and scientific methods, does not have absolute control over the representation and construction of earlier times. The narratives about the past are fluid, reflecting diverse perspectives and ways of being, questioning whether the past we relate to is real or recreated. In this session, we explore how these forces interact and challenge traditional perceptions of time. Therefore, we welcome presentations that question its linearity, its coloniality, and/or examine how historical events are always ongoing, highlighting specific material examples. The session promises to offer a rich discussion on the evolution of past narratives and their material representation, challenging long-established perceptions and fostering archaeological study

Keywords: Contested Past; pastness; ontologies; simulacrum

Massive Weapons: The BNP and the Weaponization of Heritage

Lorna-Jane Richardson

This paper will discuss the emphasis of far-right rhetoric about heritage and mythology in the extreme right British National Party during the 1990s and 2000s, particularly within the context of the performance of expertise by scholarly-adjacent extremist writers and activists. This will draw on archival sources, including media publications and far-right propaganda. I will argue that, by the mid-1990s, the appropriation of archaeology and heritage became a central strategy for advancing an exclusionary, racist vision of British national identity.

I will explore how the far-right's invocation of specific archaeological motifs intersects with its broader efforts to construct a mythologized linear narrative of British history. By selectively emphasising specific elements of culture and history, the far-right seeks to position the past as a location for resistance against perceived threats to the contemporary nation's cultural and demographic composition.

This analysis will emphasize the need for a critical understanding of the far-right's appropriation of heritage throughout its engagement with the past, and its implications for scholarly knowledge and efforts at public engagement with the past. By exposing the distorted narratives underpinning these efforts, this paper aims to contribute to an informed and nuanced dialogue surrounding the intersections of archaeological expertise, heritage values, and nuanced understandings of national identity in contemporary British society.

Re-conceptualizing the nature of power in late protohistory, France.

Béatrice Fleury

The debate on the origins of violence, relaunched by anthropologists and archaeologists may be approached via the nature of power in ancient societies in an appraisal triggered by new archaeological discoveries and a contemporary climate of insecurity. The discourse on violence and its relationship with political systems, initiated in an anarchist approach by Clastres in the late 70's, was taken up by archaeologists in the mid 2000's. Triggered by the views of post 1968's French historians, by war in the Middle East, the growth of a Continental archaeological school follows. Interpretation and ideological construct were induced by a growing climate of world instability. In a mirror effect, ideological context influences recovery of facts, and the interpretation of those newly revealed, in turn impacts archaeological discourse. The study of political systems and relations of power is under new challenge with recent discoveries on the ground, and the progress of DNA techniques. Visual representations of Ancient man through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries mostly in the role of predator, summary how Ancestors are apprehended. Celtic groups were romanticized as peaceful by certain Druidic imagery, but also as rebellious. This imagery with its appealing romanticism, plays to our European imaginary. The philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment depict Prehistoric Man as the Noble Savage, «good», non-violent, living in a society of abundance. This moral portrait, issued from the Myth of El Dorado, and in the works of Rousseau, Diderot and Voltaire, taken up by Jean-Paul Demoule in «L' archéologie de la violence», here, reflects the pacifist outlook developed in the 1960's which marked—with set-backs—trends in interpretation, reminder of neo-anarchist swings. This paper's aim is re-conceptualization of power in the late protohistory of France.

Monuments and the Past-Present-Future Nexus

Heather Ford

Rather than representing historical realities, monuments provide centres of meaning through which we interpret the past. This meaning is not inherent but invested. Its significance and value, positive or negative, depends on the renewal or transformation of what a given monument represents and its emotional resonance. Any engagement with these monuments is therefore mediated by the historical and social context in which it takes place. As such, they are rendered contemporary to any period. Faulkner's (1951) dictum still stands: 'the past is never dead. It's not even past'.

Using Insular prehistoric standing stones, this paper will explore how engagement with and understandings of monuments diverge from Western models of linear history. Instead, they reflect the model of anthropological historicity, i.e. the 'ongoing social production of pasts and futures' (Hirsch & Stewart 2005: 262) as they relate to the present. Through this model, the role of monuments in articulating, negotiating, and reinventing temporal relationships – both real and fictive – can be unpacked. To exemplify this process, this paper will draw on Edderton I, a prehistoric standing stone re-used as a Pictish symbol stone and later recontextualised as the grave of a Danish prince before assuming its modern status as a tourist attraction and scheduled monument. By investigating the palimpsest narratives of this monument which varyingly co-exist and eclipse each other, this paper will demonstrate how monuments have been used to understand respective pasts, contextualise presents, and implicate futures across millennia.

Ways of Living in the Upper Thames Valley: The changing nature of domestic life in the Upper Thames Valley

Olivia Britter

The Long First Millennium BC (c. 1500BC-AD43) in Britain was a period of social, ritual, technological, environmental, and economic change, but how much do we understand about the impact of these changes on the everyday lives of the people who lived through them?

There has been a perpetuation of a particular image of what later prehistoric life was, what it looked like and where we should find it. The persistent image of later prehistoric houses and their households, typically depicted as roundhouses with thatched roofs and central hearths, may not accurately reflect the variety of ways of living throughout the Long First Millennium BC. The nature of settlement during the Long First Millennium BC is one that changed throughout the period, and should we not, therefore, expect the household and their spaces to do the same? There is, however, a lack of high-resolution insight into the long-term developments in households and their wider contexts to understand whether the perpetuated image of later prehistoric households is indeed an accurate one.

This paper will present the results of my PhD research which utilised the changing nature of this period to understand how people reacted and adapted to change throughout the Long First Millennium BC, through the lens of household dynamics. In bringing together and analysing the evidence for households and their practices throughout the entirety of the Long First Millennium BC in the Upper Thames Valley, a distinct and extensively excavated region, this thesis allowed for a more nuanced understanding of later prehistoric households, and the changing role they played in the way in which people lived.

The past is never-ending: the destruction and reconstruction of a Moche statue

Aldo Accinelli Obando

This presentation explores the destruction and subsequent reconstruction of a statue in northern Peru, portraying an ancient Moche culture sex pot. Investigating the statue's symbolic significance, the study emphasizes the impact of coloniality on racialized expressions of sexuality. The research contends that the reconstruction and creation of similar sculptures signify a communal act of defiance and a reclamation of past indigenous identity. Therefore, within the broader theoretical framework of racialization and materiality in the colonial system, this statue serves as an example of how a neglected past can become a symbol for the construction of present identities. The discussion extends to the role of museums in recontextualizing objects under a white gaze, contrasting it with the material plasticity of the Moche sex pot statue as a contemporary manifestation challenging colonial ideas. The violence against the original statue is part of a historical pattern that suppresses local concepts. The conclusion underscores the statues' capacity to challenge ontological divides of sex and race, offering a tangible form of resistance reconnecting with a pre-colonial reality. In this sense, the past comes back to the present to illustrate how a different way of thinking about sex is possible, while also contributing to the approximation that people have of that past. This is a cycle that never ends. Furthermore, this study contributes insights into the dynamic relationships between material culture and communal identity in the face of hegemonic norms.

Archaeology of the imagination. Simulating the reality to satisfy the archaeological narrative about the past.

Jesús Martín Alonso

It is nothing new to maintain that archaeology is a narrative with its own language (drawings, photographs, notes) that constructs a peculiar relation with the persistent traces of the past that exclude and hide the archaeologist's body (Shanks, 1992, p.73). All the people within the discipline widely accept this altered reality, which they regard as an established truth. Nevertheless, many scholars have argued that archaeology is just one way to create a relationship with the past, but others are possible, as plausible and valid as the archaeological (Lucas, 2004, p.118).

Golden City is a corporeal film set (built in three dimensions) erected in 1962 to produce (spaghetti) Western movies, some of them as famous as *A Fistful of Dollars* (Leone, 1964). Ten years later, and after producing at least 68 movies, the film set was abandoned and demolished. However, it remains in the memory of many neighbours who participated in the movies as extras and Western movie fans. In 2023, I conducted an archaeological excavation in this film set as a perfect example of a place of imagination in the context of my PhD research.

This paper adds a very straightforward example to demonstrate the construction of the archaeological reality by presenting an autoethnographic study regarding how I produced the most technical photographs (the representation of the archaeological reality) during the archaeological excavation of Golden City. Archaeology, then, as a narrative, is necessarily a world of imagination.

S09: Archaeology & the Media in the Twenty-First Century

Session Organiser:

Lorna Richardson (School of Media, Language & Communication, University of East Anglia, lorna.richardson@uea.ac.uk).

Session Abstract:

This session will explore creative and academic approaches to archaeology as it is presented through new and old media for the purposes of research, leisure and entertainment, and/or for public engagement. This session aims to showcase more nuanced and complex understandings of the potential of the subject field, and in turn the significance of archaeology and 'pastness' in digital media, film, television, and popular entertainment, and its relevance to broader social and cultural histories. This session also invites the submission of media objects, creative responses, and other critical practice-based engagements with the session theme, as well as papers presented in the traditional conference format. Scholarly perspectives are invited that explore newspaper media, radio, podcasting, film, television, contemporary art, photography, video games, mobile technology, 3D image capture, digitization, social media and other media forms. Discussions are especially welcome on archaeology on TV or in film, archaeology and social media, digital/multi-media storytelling, documentary, archaeogaming, popular understandings of archaeology, and archaeology/media futures.

Keywords: Media; film studies; public archaeology; digital media

Getting to the Bottom of Things: Representation of Archaeologists in Carry On Behind

Lorna-Jane Richardson (University of East Anglia).

Over the past two centuries, archaeology and archaeologists have endured as inspiration for art, literature, cartoons, newspaper articles, radio, film, TV, social media and video games. The economic value of archaeology in the production of popular broadcast, film and print media has remained high and the 'archaeo-appeal' (Holtorf & Green, 2005) is undiminished. Popular representations and public perception of what archaeology is and what an archaeologist does have long intrigued public archaeologists (Moshenska 2017). Gentle comedy and drama such as *The Detectorists* have captured the imagination of the contemporary TV consumer and the Indiana Jones franchise staggers on. These now-ancient stereotypes of archaeologists as explorer, adventurer, tomb raider or treasure seeker are well-represented in media across the globe. Academic literature from the archaeological sector has made valiant attempts to challenge these depictions, although the exploration of archaeology in comedy needs attention. This paper will examine the characters and activities depicted in *Carry on Behind* (1975), within the context of broader literature on the public reception of archaeology and archaeologists on film. This paper will examine the depictions of archaeologists and archaeology through the lens of comedy, how *Carry On Behind* can contribute to the discussion of archaeological tropes, in media studies, and why archaeology as a source for amusement might be challenging for present-day archaeological practitioners.

Barriers to Digital Heritage Engagement

Catriona Cooper (Canterbury Christ Church University) & Katie McGown (Canterbury Christ Church University)

Through the development of a series of digital heritage projects (Arcade Britannia, Digital Prospect Cottage, Nayland Rock Shelter) we have observed a range of audiences interacting with interfaces for digital storytelling. Digital games have been described as providing "deeper, richer and more engaging learning" (Betts, 2013, Schoech 2013, Hamari 2014 cited in Champion 2015) and also celebrated for providing an access to historical learning for those who have previously been unengaged in learning about the past (Boom et al 2020). However, through this and wider conversations with project partners and potential audiences for our

projects, we have observed patterns in the audience segments who will engage with different mediums in public and professional spaces. Focusing on two types of interface: gaming controllers and headsets, this paper will outline the barriers we have perceived. While we acknowledge that there are opportunities in deploying these technologies, our aim is to highlight that they are not a perfect solution for widening engagement, and a degree of criticality is needed to assess which audiences they will reach. We will also discuss how we have grappled with this problem and found solutions that help different groups engage.

Romancing the Ruins: Science Communication through popular depictions and perceptions of archaeology

Matilda Siebrecht & Raven Todd DaSilva

Public perception of archaeology is heavily influenced by the way in which archaeology and archaeological periods are depicted in popular media. While non-fiction educational content displayed through popular platforms such as television programs, magazines, podcasts, and social media can help to provide accurate and engaging information, fictionally-focused content such as feature films and novels still has a strong influence on public understanding. The depiction of archaeologists and archaeological research is often sensationalised or associated with the classic tropes of treasure-hunting, government conspiracies, or supernatural elements, which in turn leads to a warped misunderstanding of archaeological stereotypes in the general public. In this paper, we consider the trends in how archaeology is depicted in film and novels, and how we as archaeologists can actively engage with this media through popular communication platforms such as social media, YouTube, and podcasts to improve public understanding of the field of archaeology.

'The Site has been Spotted!': Role of Newspapers in Recovering Vulnerable Archaeological Heritage Sites in India

Simran Kaur (University of Exeter).

Archaeology is public and, thus, informs the way everyone perceives the past and their identity. A fundamental way through which the connection between archaeological findings and the public occurs is through the print media, such as newspaper reports. In India alone, there were more than 400 million news publications during 2021-2022, which suggests the large size of the audience. The aim of the paper is to understand how information about heritage sites is conveyed through news reports and the impact that the public consumption of archaeology and heritage news has on the public. By taking the case of Gurgaon, a city in the state of Haryana, India, the paper attempts to look at how in some instances, news reports have aided in identification of vulnerable, poorly recorded heritage sites and even facilitated calls for conservation for these sites. Such a study becomes crucial in the context of developing urban areas in India such as Gurgaon where the rise of multinational corporations and development needs have led to the forgetting and erasure of heritage sites. The paper, through its investigation of the different local and national newspapers, therefore, attempts to seek how such news articles influence the remembering of heritage sites. For the purpose of this paper, several national and local newspapers were analyzed, which included both the print and digital versions of their reports. This was accompanied by insights from the public in the form of questionnaires and site visits as well.

The Price of a Good Story: TV Production and Emotive Storytelling from Bonekickers

Mia Coe (University of Bradford).

'Archaeology and the media have always had a fascinating relationship with one another. Presenting to the wider public in an informative and entertaining way who archaeologists are, what they do, and how they do it often can lead to mixed reactions. However, arguably no other media piece has led to more controversy (or often vitriol) than the BBC series, *Bonekickers*. Airing for six episodes in July 2008, *Bonekickers* centred around four archaeologists in the fictional Wessex University, tailing along in their miscellaneous excavations that would often lead to much higher stakes than first thought. Due to creative choices to centre around fanatical story arcs rather than the archaeology it claimed to represent, the show was quickly chastised by critics and archaeologists alike, leading to the cancellation shortly after the first series concluded. The show has largely been left forgotten, no more than a bad footnote in the history of archaeology on the 'big screen'. However, what if *Bonekickers* left a legacy unintended by the writers, and unrealised by the audience? What if, instead, *Bonekickers* was the first attempt of emotive storytelling using archaeology in TV production? This presentation attempts to retell the dramatic story of *Bonekickers*, discussing the environment that led up to its' production and elaborating why it failed as an archaeological show. Additionally, this will also explore the legacy left behind *Bonekickers*, and how emotional storytelling using archaeology has continued to be used to tell stories of the past for audiences today.

This paper was originally a video essay created for a final year assignment, which has been adapted into a presentation.'

Bioarchaeology in the news media: before and during the dual pandemics

Ellie Chambers (University of Chester).

The online news is used for disseminating archaeological and bioarchaeological research and narratives, bringing our work to audience sizes far surpassing other means of public archaeology. The study of research in the news can allow analysis of the process of heritage in helping to understand the present, as audiences forge connections between present news-stories and the archaeology they are reading about. In turn, the stories can highlight the influence of current political and social debates on research aims and allows us to identify common trends and tropes in modern archaeological research through their manifestation in the news. This paper will focus on the role of the dual pandemics (covid-19 and systemic racism), specifically exploring the presence of bioarchaeological studies in the online news and how the narratives around research and heritage changed during this time (here using 2020-2021, with the understanding that neither pandemic is restricted to this timeframe). Building on my doctoral research I will share data about the presence of bioarchaeology in the news before and during the dual pandemics, and discuss the research into the crew of the *Mary Rose* (Scorrer, et al. 2021) that was publicised in both 2019 and 2021, allowing a unique opportunity to compare the presentation of one piece of research at two distinct times.

Human Evolution and the 'History of Humankind' YouTube channel

Carys Phillips (University of Liverpool).

Human evolution has long intrigued both academics and the general public, but effectively communicating the complex nuances of human origins to diverse, non-expert audiences remains a significant challenge. Traditional academic research often stays within expert circles, while mass media tends to present human evolution with sensationalism, overgeneralisation, or inaccuracies. This can lead to widespread misconceptions amongst non-experts.

To bridge this gap between experts and the public, this study analyses quantitative and qualitative data from the 'History of Humankind' YouTube channel to critically examine how different topics in human evolution are presented and received. Key issues addressed by this study include optimising YouTube for public engagement and using engagement data to gain insights into public understanding.

This study seeks to make a significant contribution to science communication within the context of human evolution. It aims to leverage digital platforms like YouTube, not just as channels for disseminating information but as interactive spaces that foster a broader and more nuanced public understanding of key evolutionary and archaeological concepts.

S12: Skyscapes in Prehistory: evolution, convolution or involution?

Session Organisers:

Amanda Chadburn (Kellogg College, University of Oxford/Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, Bournemouth University, amanda.chadburn@hotmail.com) &

Fabio Silva (Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, Bournemouth University, fsilva@bournemouth.ac.uk).

Session Abstract:

Astronomical speculation has been part of megalithic studies since antiquarian times. With the turn of the 20th century, archaeology and archaeoastronomy evolved separately, coming together and splitting apart at different moments. Right now, in the UK at least, the two appear to be converging again. But archaeoastronomy is still rife with controversy and speculation, with the quality of work done by academics varying greatly, with no set standards and giving off the impression that anything goes. Perhaps because of this, the field also attracts non-academic speculation that ranges from the quasi-academic to the ancient aliens crowd.

In this session we want to reflect on the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the relationship between archaeoastronomy and prehistoric archaeology. Has archaeoastronomy provided the missing key to understand prehistoric societies, as is often claimed by amateurs? Are the often-convoluted mathematical expositions and arcane explanations by archaeoastronomers a barrier to dialogue between the fields? Have archaeoastronomers been revolving around the same theoretical and methodological circles instead of evolving with wider archaeological and anthropological approaches? In other words, has archaeoastronomy provided an “evolution”, “convolution” or “involution” of prehistoric studies?

This session will explicitly focus on the broader issue of why there is an apparent lack of interest in archaeoastronomy by some archaeologists, and what is required to fully bridge the gap. We welcome papers that discuss the barriers to collaboration and dialogue, and how to overcome them, as well as papers proposing novel theoretical and methodological developments that may bring the fields together. Case studies will also be welcome but only in so far as they provide examples of broader theoretical and/or methodological considerations.

Keywords: skyscape; astronomy; prehistory; conceptual and methodological barriers; megaliths

Skyscapes and Archaeology: a reflection on the last decade

Fabio Silva (Bournemouth University).

The relationship between archaeology and archaeoastronomy over the past century has been one of peaks and troughs. Speculations involving astronomical objects and symbolism ran rampant within antiquarian circles and, to varying degrees, continue to grasp the imagination and attention of the general public today. However, as an academic field, archaeoastronomy has not managed to develop past the stage of an emerging field (Henty 2015). In the process, this field did not establish lasting links with archaeology, instead preferring the safety of its own conferences and proceedings volumes.

In the last decade or so, the skyscape archaeology movement was started at TAG to attempt to relocate the archaeoastronomical debate within the fold of modern archaeological theory and methods. Many of its objectives were met, leading to a much more open and bilateral relationship between archaeologists, academic archaeoastronomers and heritage professionals. Many other objectives were not met.

In addition, popular interest on the topic continues to rise, with thousands of people gathering at archaeological sites to witness key skyscape events such as the solstice sunrise/set or the northern lights. And yet, academic archaeoastronomers in general have done very little to engage with the public themselves, thereby leaving the door open for others to occupy that space. Perhaps because of this, there is a growing number of non-academics, as well as academics in other fields not formally trained in archaeology, who have been doing astronomical research on key sites and whose ideas, shared online and on social media, have gained some traction among the public.

This paper will reflect on the last decade of skyscape archaeology, especially focused on the situation in the UK and Europe, although also referencing events elsewhere in the world. By doing this, it will also set a manifesto for the next decade and set the scene for this session and the panel discussion at the end.

Bridging the Gap Between Archaeology and Archaeoastronomy: Overcoming Barriers Through Education and Outreach

Carolyn Kennett (Independent Researcher).

Collaboration between archaeology and archaeoastronomy is often hindered by a lack of dialogue, mutual understanding, and interdisciplinary exchange. Many archaeologists remain reluctant to engage with skyscapes due to limited exposure to archaeoastronomy's methodologies and a perception of the field as speculative or peripheral. The absence of outreach and educational efforts that emphasise the importance of skyscapes in over-arching archaeological interpretations does nothing to stem the disconnect between the two disciplines.

This paper explores how archaeoastronomy outreach and education can play a crucial role in overcoming barriers to collaboration with archaeology. Despite its potential, archaeoastronomy education has been largely sidelined within British higher education (Henty, 2015). However, knowledge exchange opportunities—both formal and informal—stimulated through outreach efforts can help bridge this gap. By simplifying complex ideas and raising awareness of methodological approaches, such outreach can effectively integrate skyscapes into archaeological discourse, making a significant impact on both fields.

Cross-disciplinary collaborative projects provide key opportunities for integrating archaeoastronomy into archaeological practice. Several successful archaeological projects in Cornwall—The Hurlers (2013-2016), Tregeseal Holed Stones (2022), King Arthur's Hall (2022), and Goodaver Circle (2024/25)—have incorporated elements of archaeoastronomy. Initially driven by archaeological curiosity, these collaborations revealed the potential for skyscape research to enhance archaeological interpretations while also fostering meaningful knowledge exchange between the disciplines.

One catalyst has been the introduction of archaeoastronomy as a public outreach tool. Within projects, this provides the archaeoastronomy community with the opportunity to showcase its methodological approaches to the archaeological community in a soft, less formalised manner, while simultaneously demonstrating its value as a powerful tool to broaden public interest, diversify audiences, and enhance cultural relevance. In turn, this has created opportunities for interdisciplinary knowledge exchange, offering mutual educational benefits and encouraging archaeological teams to more fully embrace skyscape studies (Brown, Kennett 2024).

By identifying education opportunities and the wider benefits to project design the inclusion of the archaeoastronomy community in archaeological investigations can further promote interdisciplinary knowledge exchange, bridging the gap between these two complementary fields.

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Assembling Land and Sky

Ingrid O'Donnell (Bournemouth University).

Whilst traditionally, archaeological assemblages refer to groups of different objects found in association with each other, Deleuze's Theory of Assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) applies to wide-ranging collections (assemblages) of heterogeneous components: concrete and abstract, animate and inanimate, human and non-human (DeLanda, 2006: 8). The theory holds that properties of assemblages amount to more than the mere sum of their parts, since it is not just the parts themselves, but also the relationships between them which are important (Fowler, 2013: 22). All the various components, together with their inter-relationships, may give rise to (unexpected) emergent properties of the assemblage as a whole (Fowler, 2013: 22). Such emergent properties have the potential to enable new and alternative ways of looking at the world. Assemblage Theory offers a thought-provoking playground to experiment with researching relationships between the land and the sky; to investigate where unexpected linkages between terrestrial and celestial realms may take us; and to provide opportunities to explore new ontological worlds (Silva, 2021: 19-20, Alberti, 2016).

This paper presents initial findings of my PhD research on assemblages associated with directionality of prehistoric single standing stones of Meirionnydd, Wales. Typically, as simple, solitary features in remote upland locations, these standing stones do not attract the academic interest associated with prehistoric lowland monuments or monuments comprising multiple stones. They are a quiet enigma. The Assemblage Theory approach devised examines relationships afforded by different directions around each subject standing stone. The methodology involves investigating a 360° range around each stone and evaluating which directions are associated with the most robust assemblages: the most robust assemblages are defined as those with the strongest inter-relations. Potential components of these assemblages include other archaeological, topographical, geological or environmental features, celestial events, toponymy and folklore. Shared associations, or inter-relationships, between these entities are identified as 'operators', codified, quantified and subjected to a simple quantitative evaluation.

Results identify the most robust assemblages associated with direction for each standing stone. They can also identify the importance of celestial influences at each stone and highlight which (if any) celestial events are most likely to be important for that stone. By comparing results across different stones, patterns can be sought and evaluated. Furthermore, in line with Deleuzian theory, the assemblages identified are not fixed but merge and proliferate into further assemblages, where unexpected perspectives emerge, potentially elucidating ontologies of those responsible for raising the stones.

Single standing stones are hard to make sense of because they stand on their own and rarely have any obvious associations with other entities. Where local distinctive features may be apparent (eg, a distinctive mountain or horizon notch) such associations tend to be dismissed due to lack of supporting evidence. This is particularly the case with astronomical alignments: a single standing stone aligns with anything! Tandem consideration of both landscape and skyline features strengthens the assemblage theory approach presented here, and suggests a proto-systematic methodology for determining the feature(s), terrestrial and celestial, with which a single standing stone may most likely be associated.

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Excavating the sky

Matt Leivers (Wessex Archaeology).

At few places have archaeology and archaeoastronomy grown up alongside each other to the degree that they have at Stonehenge. That iconic relationship doesn't need rehearsing, but neither is it simply now a matter for romantic postcards and periodic gatherings. The sky, ground and stones remain implicated in a set of relationships that we still don't fully understand, and those relationships are older than the henge, operate at the landscape rather than the site scale, and are important in the modern world.

This paper will discuss how landscapes, skyscapes, sites and excavation can come together to illuminate aspects of even the most intensively-studied prehistoric places. Using the example of the Greater Cursus, it will be suggested that the siting, morphology and purpose of that enigmatic structure can be properly understood only by considering its place in a cosmological scheme that covers several square miles of ground, the whole sky, and several millennia. The implications of this for the development of the landscape are profound, emphasise how meaning can persist, and also suggest something about what some cursuses - themselves perhaps the least-well understood examples of all Neolithic ceremonial architecture - might have been intended to be.

Archaeoastronomy and its evolutionary approach to archaeology

Tore Lomsdalen (Independent scholar).

Ruggles (2011: 1) maintains that archaeoastronomy has moved away from astronomical interpretations of monumental structures in the landscape to a wider approach (author's note: similar to archaeology) with 'artefacts, iconography, inscriptions, historical documentation' to furnish comprehension of historical societies' relationship to astronomical phenomena. Today both archaeoastronomers and archaeologists apply scientific approaches for inquiring social questions in investigating material remains based on historical societies endeavour, where the two methods apply social and cultural theories to supply feasible interpretations (Ruggles 2011: 1).

Methods and tools are different; archaeoastronomy relies on astronomical data, as archaeology confides more on excavations, analysing retrieved artefacts and stratigraphy. However, both disciplines are dependent on material remains from earlier cultures, and both conduct examinations of bygone civilisations. According to this author, for a complete unification, both fields have still a long way to go. International conferences like TAG, have in the last decade opened up for combined presentation narrowing the gap between them. To unify the two disciplines even further, they should be included in academic study programmes like some very few universities do today.

This presentation is based on my Ph.D. research (Lomsdalen 2022) emphasising the concepts of *viewscape* and *cosmology* relating to the Maltese prehistoric temple society. Burcher (2005: 2) defines viewscape as 'A *viewscape* is a visual connection that occurs between a person and the spatial arrangement of urban and landscape features'. Darvill (2008: 111) defines cosmology as 'The world view and belief system of a community based upon their understanding of order in the universe'. My overall methodology was inspired by Hawkes (1954) publication on 'Ladder of Inference' applying the following ladder steps: 1. Archaeological record, 2. Material culture, 3. Cosmology (...most archaeologists and Hawkes stop here), then 4. Celestial Bodies, and finally 5. → Skyscape Archaeology. In order to bridge the gap between archaeoastronomy and archaeology with new perspectives, my Ph.D. (Lomsdalen 2022) applied an evolutionary approach based on how the Maltese prehistoric temple society interrelated their material culture (archaeology), viewscape and cosmology with the sky (archaeoastronomy).

The methodology of the Ph.D. thesis starts with traditional landscape archaeology investigating intervisibility between Maltese prehistoric temples in their cultural landscape (Tilley 1994), applying GIS (Wheatley and Gillings 2002). The next bridging step is also allied to the Maltese cultural landscape (Grima 2002), however, incorporated with horizon astronomy applying astronomical software and data (Smith 2020, Stellarium 2019, Ventura 2004). The last part bridges it all together as an integration of archaeology and archaeoastronomy, applying skyscape archaeology (Silva and Campion 2015). The findings and results from all these three sections were separately based on statistical analysis subject to representative null-hypothesis, which shall be presented at the TAG 2024 conference.

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Livestreaming the winter solstice phenomenon from Newgrange—commissioning of work, audience impact and analytics.

Frank Prendergast (Technological University Dublin).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland, the Government quickly introduced widespread public health and economic measures to mitigate the effects of the virus. Restrictions included closing the visitor centre in Brú na Bóinne to the public, located within the UNESCO World Heritage Site. As a consequence, Newgrange burial chamber would be vacant for the winter solstices in 2020 and 2021. This opportunity to commission new research was presented by experts from the partner organisations - the National Monuments Service, the Office of Public Works and Technological University Dublin. Consensus was quickly reached that the phenomenon could and should be recorded photographically - to create a priceless archive and asset for posterity, and broadcast live to a global audience. Such a plan was immediately recognised as providing an unprecedented opportunity for open access to Newgrange at this special time of year when it would normally be restricted to 15 visitors each solstice morning. The broadcast elements spanned three consecutive mornings in December 2020 and again in 2021. Separately, the high-resolution images and video of the solar phenomenon captured for research purposes are now analysed and published by the National Monuments Service.

This presentation will focus on the unpublished component of that research – the impact and reach across various media platforms of the livestreams, and how such innovation enabled a global audience to experience, respond and share in such an important part of Ireland's cultural heritage.

How wonder theory can help to understand skyscape archaeological phenomena

Anna Estaroth (University of Highlands and Islands).

This presentation considers the interaction between sunlight, shade, and Orcadian neolithic buildings from the perspective of wonder theory. The research explored sixty structures in Orkney and Shetland, including tombs, ritual structures and domestic buildings. Bradley (1989: 253) found that neolithic people moved deceased bodies from lighter entrance areas to darker sections of the tomb. In due course Bradley (2016: 56, 59) concluded that sunrise became associated with the domestic world, while darkness was reserved for places of the dead. This research found many variations on the theme. Most of the structures at the Ness of Brodgar have east-facing doorways. Sunrise briefly lights the interiors of very dark buildings and may have woken inhabitants. Yet many tombs also faced eastern sunrise. Because domestic structures have been inadequately researched this presentation focuses on three neolithic buildings: Knap of Howar, plus structures five and ten at the Ness of Brodgar. Ten is a ritual building, with the others being habitations. It explores shafts of sunlight alighting on sections of the space. The philosophy of wonder was discussed by Plato (1997) who asked how we understand the nature of knowledge. Wondering is central to all enquiries. This was developed by Husserl (1971) and Heidegger (1972) in their exploration of data input and subjective experiences which inform all current theories of wonder. This theoretical perspective acts as a bridge between archaeology and archaeoastronomy. Scott (2017) defined wonder practices as activities enabling people to experience a disconnect with the everyday, encouraging new perspectives. Extraordinary experiences generate new ideas. Changes in western philosophy and scientific thinking led Sideris' (2017: 27) to conclude that science needs to tackle mysteries because they involve us, whereas formulae do not. The

willingness to confront mysteries suggests that theories of awe and wonder are appropriate for exploring sol-lunar events and neolithic buildings. Examples are given from fieldwork at Orcadian sites, where sunlight and shadow emphasised specific parts of the structures. Bringing the celestial into the mundane highlights the imaginative and wondrous practices which could have taken place.

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Symbols and Theory in Skyscape Archaeology

Nicholas Campion (University of Wales Trinity Saint David).

This paper will address the criticism that the disciplines archaeoastronomy and skyscape archaeology have not been taken seriously by archaeologists on the grounds that they fail to address theoretical perspectives. The paper will consider the role of theory in skyscape archaeology focussing on the use of the term 'symbol'. This word is often used but not defined. For example, Clive Ruggles (1999, 155) argued that, if we could only understand the astronomical symbolism at Neolithic monuments we would understand the cosmology of the period on its own terms, free from modern preconceptions. Lionel Sims and David Fisher (2017: 23) talk about the Moon's complex cycles, including its reappearance following a period of invisibility at dark Moon, which they interpret as a 'resurrection' which, in turn, comprises part of a 'symbolic repertoire (which) is more suitable for a cosmology that requires contradiction and complexity rather than the one-dimensional Sun'. Altogether Sims and Fisher speak of symbolic loading, symbolic structure and symbolic repertoire, but they do not define 'symbol'. The Greek verb *ballo* means 'throw'. The Greek preposition 'sun' (sometimes Romanised as 'syn') means with, or together with, so literally 'throw together', but also to 'collect' and 'compare' (Ladner 1979, 223). As Peter Struck (2004, 78) writes, in its earliest meaning 'a symbol is one half of an object – usually a piece of cloth, wood, or pottery – that is deliberately split into and then allocated to the parties to an agreement. It is reassembled at a later time to verify the deal'. Behind the symbol, he continues, is therefore the notion of agreement and therefore a symbol was originally social. A symbol is, for Deleuze and Guattari, (1988: 130), actually a kind of sign, in a chain of signification, of the endless connections between multiple signs: 'every sign', they write 'refers to another sign, and only to another sign, ad infinitum' and 'all signs are signs of signs' while a symbol exists 'in a constant movement of referral from sign to sign'. Symbols can therefore be dynamic: as Bell (1997) argued rituals can therefore be symbols.

The use of symbols as a means of understanding neolithic culture was pioneered in post-processual archaeology by Hodder (2009). The theoretical fault line that is opened between different uses of the word symbol is therefore either, first as arbitrary (Johnson 2010, 119), a socially constructed metaphor as understood by archaeologists (Renfrew and Bahn 2008, 414), or second, as an indication of real, essential connections between the symbol and the thing symbolised, as Tilley suggests when he refers to a symbol's 'occult' qualities (Tilley 1999, 32).

The paper will conclude with reference to symbolic anthropology and Clifford Geertz' statement that the analysis of culture should be 'an interpretive one in search of meaning' (Geertz 1973, 5). The question for skyscape archaeology then becomes how the meaning of neolithic sites is framed and understood. A precedent was set by Malville (2014, 2016) who argued that Inca huacas should be seen as alive. If we apply Malville, Tilley's recognition that symbols may have occult qualities in the minds of the users, and the interpretation of the word as meaning that there are real, essential connections between the symbol and the thing symbolised, then the logic is that, for example, the stones at a megalithic site such as Stonehenge may have real, essential connections with the solstice Sun. Further, if we are to adopt a phenomenological approach (Tilley 1994), we, as researchers, have to genuinely experience such a phenomenon (Krupp 1995).

The paper will therefore raise questions for both archaeologists and skyscape archaeologists use of the word symbol, together with shared questions over the use of theory.

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Excavating Neolithic cosmologies: The Cotswold Severn long barrows and their skies – how to combine archaeology and archaeoastronomy within a single model

Pamela Armstrong (Bournemouth University).

The aim of this session is to consider how the separate disciplines of archaeology and archaeoastronomy can be combined in a way that broadens the interpretative process. The question at the heart of this exercise asks whether it is possible to arrive at a coherent conclusion when drawing on data streams from two apparently different disciplines.

This dilemma arose during my PhD research into the early Neolithic cosmologies that underly the construction and use of the Cotswold Severn long barrows. On the one hand, the archaeological record reveals a treasure trove of useful material and environmental information, whilst on the other my archaeoastronomic research created a second set of apparently disconnected findings relating to celestial objects and their motion. The first provided data that mainly dealt with people and their things, whilst the second provided data that mainly dealt with people and their skies.

This paper will detail how I combined these two different sets of findings. My solution was to apply an overarching theoretical framework which accommodated both data sets. It was a theoretical framework based on Ingold's notion of 'taskscape'. His is a theory that puts people and what they do, back in the picture. Given my research I was particularly interested in people who were farmers and I was also interested in early Neolithic skyscapes. It became clear that seasonality was a feature common to both. Farmers are generally interested in seasonal tasks. Ingold's notion of taskscape provided a broad template within which both the material record that related to early Neolithic farming, and archaeoastronomic data detailing stellar seasonality were able to co-exist. By using Ingold's theory I was able to locate that point where the two activities intersected. It was only then that I was able to suggest a unified interpretation, one that drew on findings from both the archaeological record and skyscape analysis. My paper will look at the strengths and weaknesses inherent within this process.

Towards a new "total archaeology"? How to manage sky-associated monuments in their landscape and skyscape contexts.

Amanda Chadburn (University of Oxford and Bournemouth University).

In the UK today, most archaeologists excavating a site would automatically research its landscape setting and context in order to try and understand it better. Most British universities teach landscape archaeology to their undergraduates, but prior to the 1970s, archaeologists often took a more monument-centric approach, concentrating on a site itself without understanding its full context and place within the landscape. In 1974, Christopher Taylor, the archaeologist and landscape historian, used the term "total archaeology" to describe a methodological approach to understand a site which used a number of disciplines – map regression analysis, geology, folklore, history and so on – in addition to archaeological excavation. Archaeologist David Clarke used the same term in 1975 to describe his approach to investigating the causewayed enclosure at Great Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire, where he

pulled together a multi-disciplinary team of specialists and used a variety of scientific approaches to help analyse the site. "Total archaeology" therefore tried to understand the full context of a monument or site, studying its landscape surroundings and using a variety of methods traditionally used by other disciplines. "Landscape archaeology" was first used as an alternative term to "total archaeology" by archaeologists Mick Aston and Trevor Rowley in their 1974 book *Landscape Archaeology: An Introduction to Fieldwork Techniques on Post-Roman Landscapes*. The term stuck and the term "total archaeology" fell out of fashion. It is noteworthy, however, that neither approach appeared to consider skyscapes at that stage.

The term skyscape was defined by Silva in 2015: "the sky is a natural phenomenon that is turned into a cultural skyscape through human agency", adding that we should not *de facto* consider the skyscape and landscape together, as they are very distinct. In 2022 he wrote: "There is a materiality to the landscape that is of a different nature to that of the skyscape: landscapes are accessible, can be tangibly manipulated; skyscapes only metaphorically or by non-humans".

In this paper I will argue that in order to fully understand a site, we should indeed be practicing "total archaeology", but this time including skyscape analyses as part of the essential context of a site. Unfortunately most archaeological managers do not have an appreciation of archaeoastronomy, and it is rarely taught in British universities – unlike landscape archaeology. Why is this important? One cannot manage a site correctly without as full as understanding of it as possible. Managers need an appreciation of the possible skyscape associations of a monument as an essential part of its context, and if they are unaware or have never been taught archaeoastronomy, they will not be looking for it.

How can we manage astronomical alignments, sightlines and orientations? To date, there have been very few attempts to do this. Is it important to do so? Can we fully preserve sites without doing this? Can we manage alignments, orientations and sightlines differently? I am not here discussing the identification of monuments with astronomical associations – which would be the subject of another paper – but only the management of those sites where these associations are already accepted. Some case studies from in and around the Stonehenge World Heritage Site and elsewhere will be used to discuss this new "total archaeology" approach.

S14: Evolution

Session Organisers:

Enrico Crema (University of Cambridge), Marc Vander Linden (Bournemouth University) & Matteo Tomasini (University of Gothenburg)

Session Abstract:

The main theme of the 45th Theoretical Archaeology Group is 'Evolution?' It prompts us to consider *whether evolutionary models are still relevant for understanding culture change through archaeology*. While many scholars would agree that culture is characterised by the fundamental tenets of universal Darwinism (i.e. variation, selection, and heredity) and be sympathetic to a definition of culture as 'information that is passed from individual to individual nongenetically, via social learning processes such as teaching or imitation', there is an extensive and diverse, and often contrasting bodies of theory that aim to understand cultural change. Some of these, such as social evolution and dual inheritance theory, are comparatively well known to archaeologists, while others, such as cultural attraction theory, have received less scholarly attention. It follows that the term of *evolutionary models* is perhaps too broad as a category to allow us to determine its relevance in the archaeological discourse. Many models have been misunderstood, some concepts abused, and several opportunities for development and synergies were missed. Evolutionary thinking in archaeology also runs the risk of being outdated when compared with modern evolutionary thought - which is constantly changing, as demonstrated by the recent (debated) calls for an extended evolutionary synthesis. This session will gather speakers who believe that the answer to the question 'Evolution?' is 'Evolution.', but are critically aware of the many limitations of what has been achieved so far, and are open to reconsidering, updating, breaking, and possibly rebuilding many of the pillars of current thoughts and premises of evolutionary archaeology.

Keywords: Cultural Evolution; Dual Inheritance Theory; Niche Construction Theory; Cultural Attraction Theory; Extended Evolutionary Synthesis

Reframing Evolutionary Archaeology in the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis; a holistic scaled systems approach

Kuipers, K.J. & Soressi, M.A

In recent years the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis has gained traction in biology and paleoanthropology (Goodrum, 2023), leading to a blurring of the traditional boundaries between nature and culture. This shift presents an opportunity to revive 'evolutionary archaeology,' a perspective previously criticized for its reductionist approach and a failure to adequately account for human agency and intentionality (Boone & Smith, 1998). By reframing culture as "an extension of biology" (Lala & O'Brien, 2023), the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis offers a promising framework that addresses many of the limitations of earlier evolutionary archaeological models. If successfully integrated, this novel theoretical approach could pave the way for a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between biological evolution and cultural development in humans.

Here, we propose a holistic, multilevel model designed to bridge the dichotomy between nature and culture by accommodating different scales of human systems. Our model is structured around four key scales: the biological scale, the niche construction scale, the cultural scale, and the semiotic scale. We believe these scales effectively capture the diverse theoretical frameworks employed across various research disciplines. By acknowledging and integrating these distinct scales, archaeologists can more effectively select appropriate theoretical frameworks based on the specific period and the nature of the archaeological record they are investigating.

Grounded in the principles of the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis, our model emphasizes the interplay and interaction between these levels, while still allowing each to maintain its own established research traditions. To illustrate this, we present a case study from the African Middle Stone Age (Miller & Wang, 2022), which engages multiple theoretical frameworks of which certain approaches may be more effective than others in addressing complex questions about human evolution.

Finally, we suggest that a revival of evolutionary archaeology can contribute to refining the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis itself. In no other species are concepts like culture and niche construction so prevalently present as they are in humans, making the study of human systems a unique and valuable lens through which to advance this evolving theoretical framework.

Cultural Microevolution and Archaeology

Enrico R. Crema

For nearly three decades, archaeologists have applied microevolutionary concepts, theories, and methods to investigate archaeological assemblages. Despite such a comparatively long tradition of studies and an impressive array of statistical techniques claiming to reverse-engineer mechanisms and modes of cultural transmission from time-frequency data of cultural traits, cultural microevolution has never become a mainstream tool in archaeological enquiry. Rather, these stories of partial successes beg the question of whether cultural microevolution can help archaeological enquiry and whether archaeological case studies can help cultural microevolutionary research. In this paper, I will review 30 years of archaeological cultural microevolution, revisiting its successes and failures, re-opening key debates on subtle but important discrepancies surrounding key concepts such as *population*, and reflecting on missed opportunities that perhaps are still worth exploring.

‘Concepts’ in dynamic assemblages: an integrative and encompassing evolutionary framework and its archaeological relevance

Jennifer C. French, Marc Kissel, Somaye Khaksar & Agustín Fuentes

In this presentation, we outline a developing body of theory for an integrative approach to cultural evolution deriving from a multi-national interdisciplinary working group of anthropologists, archaeologists and philosophers. This theory is centered on the role of ‘concepts’ (defined as a suite of articulated and co-ordinated thoughts, ideas, and symbols that structure relationships between individuals and between individuals and their environment) in processes of cultural transmission and change; a role driven by the engagement between ‘concepts’ and a ‘dynamic assemblage’ of multiple forces (biology, material objects, environmental and social factors) that afford and constrain biocultural evolutionary trajectories. We consider how this framework relates to, and complements, wider evolutionary theories, focusing on those dominant within archaeological research, and address some of the ongoing challenges in identifying both the relevant cultural ‘concepts’ and the associated ‘dynamic assemblage’ in archaeological contexts. We further highlight how the ‘concepts’ approach might appeal to those archaeologists who share the uncertainty about evolutionary approaches inherent in this year’s TAG theme of “Evolution?” and how the approach can facilitate mutually beneficial discussion between evolutionary archaeology on the one hand and more interpretive approaches within archaeology on the other.

Relating Material Culture and Demographic Trends: A case on prehistoric arrowheads

Alfredo Cortell-Nicolau & Anne Kandler

During the transition to farming in Western Europe, it is common to find gaps in the ^{14}C dating series between the last groups of hunter-gatherers and the first groups of farmers. These 'radiocarbon gaps' have long been interpreted as evidence of demographic crises among hunter-gatherers, which early farmers may have taken advantage of in order to populate 'empty' lands. However, current research points to the fact that other processes might be responsible for the observed decline in the radiocarbon record, suggesting that the population crisis hypothesis needs to be reconsidered.

In this paper we will present a starting project where we will tackle this issue with an extensive deployment of computational simulation and modeling. More in particular, this project will focus on how can we analyse cultural information and cultural transmission patterns in such a way that we can obtain information on demographic trends and to extend such knowledge for periods of data absence. In doing this, the project will explore how demographic density and connectivity affect the evolutionary drifts of prehistoric material culture and, from here, how can we back-engineer demographic patterns from the known cultural assemblages.

As a first step, the project will focus on the simulation of characteristic arrowheads of the last hunter-gatherers and early farmers of the Mediterranean Western Europe in order to, further on, apply and understand different constraints related to how these groups learned, transmitted and replicated their cultural devices. This communication will focus on the first advances of this simulation.

The (Per)Mutation Problem: Outlining a new approach to long-term developments in ceramic technology

Erik Kroon

Ceramic production has long been studied from an evolutionary perspective. This perspective assumes ceramic production is a trait which slowly mutates while being passed from potter to potter. However, anthropology has demonstrated a more chaotic microprocess in which potters learn and permutate multiple production processes to fashion vessels. How can long-term evolutionary studies be combined with such chaotic micro-level processes?

This talk presents a novel approach to ceramic technology which addresses this issue. The approach captures the complexity of learning processes by combining the chaîne opératoire-approach to ceramic assemblages with network analysis and probability theory. This combination provides quantitative estimates of long-term processes such as regionalisation and knowledge transmission between groups.

The approach is illustrated with a case study of the Corded Ware transition in the Netherlands. This transition is shown not to be a dramatic disruption, but a period of co-existence during which migrants repeatedly learned from indigenous communities.

'Concepts' in dynamic assemblages: an integrative and encompassing evolutionary framework and its archaeological relevance

Can we use the present to interpret the past? Ethnographic analogy and cultural evolution.

Mark Vander Linden (Bournemouth University), Andreas Angourakis (University of Cologne) & Francesco Carrer (Newcastle University)

The interpretation of the sparse relicts of the past often relies on the use of analogical models gathered from historical contexts or the ethnographic present. The theoretical foundation of this practice is the principle of geological uniformitarianism: that the same processes operate in the past and in the present. As far as human societies are concerned, these processes are associated with the existence of similar biophysical constraints and with the idea of cultural adaptation, within the framework of human behavioural ecology. These concepts have been challenged in recent years, as they neglect individual agency, cultural diversity and cultural evolution. Ethnographic analogy and ethnoarchaeology have been downgraded to cautionary tales for archaeological interpretation. In this paper we suggest a new approach, which recognizes the complexity and temporality of human culture. By combining ethnoarchaeology and computer simulation to investigate pastoral interaction with mountain environment over time, we were able to incorporate key principles of evolutionary archaeology.

MetaPypulation

Marc Vander Linden & Matteo Tomasini

One of the key contributions of evolutionary approaches in archaeology has been the focus on population. The development of summed probability distributions is a good illustration, as is, at a more theoretical level, the importance of population thinking when assessing variation and cultural transmission processes. For various theoretical reasons, the focus has so far mostly lied on population size, somewhat at the expense of other dimensions such as population structure or dispersal. This situation is unfortunate from two main perspectives. Firstly, due to impetus of cogent fields and associated techniques, there is a growing availability of empirical data on varied forms of dispersal, but we would argue that archaeology lacks the conceptual and methodological tools to handle them. Secondly, there is a vast theoretical and empirical literature in ecology and evolution that demonstrates how dispersal, for instance in a metapopulation, shapes evolutionary trajectories. In this sense, we have developed an agent-based framework called MetaPypulation, which allows us to explore the interplay between population structure (metapopulation) and its range of parameters with various mechanisms of cultural transmission. This paper will explore some of our preliminary results, and will raise the question of how such exercise contributes to archaeology (e.g. in terms of theory, but also issues of validation with archaeological data).

Evolutionary Archaeology: Time for a Rethink

Mike O'Brien

The symposium organizers make two excellent points in their session abstract. First, they suggest that the term evolutionary models is perhaps too broad as a category to allow us to determine its relevance in the archaeological discourse; and second, many models have been misunderstood, some concepts abused, and several opportunities for development and synergies have been missed. They warn that concept abuse, misunderstandings, and missed opportunities could lead to evolutionary thinking in archaeology becoming outdated when compared with modern biological evolutionary thought, which, although it is constantly changing, doesn't stray very far from its central dogma. I agree, but I would add the point that archaeologists have a long track record of being wholesale borrowers of theory, concepts, methods, and especially models from other intellectual camps. Don Hardesty referred to such forays as "search-and-seizure" missions. There is a real danger underlying such forays, particularly with respect to "borrowed" models: They're beautiful to look at, and they're enticing, but at the same time they require considerable upkeep. To be taken seriously, evolutionary archaeology needs models, but it also needs considerable self-reflection in order

to address what its unassailable core theory and concepts are and how they can logically be modified instead of being draped in expensive fashions and placed in a store window. This reflection happened in evolutionary biology through what Julius Huxley referred to in 1942 as the “Modern Synthesis,” and the same definitely needs to happen in evolutionary archaeology and anthropology.

S15: Thinking Through Plants/Thinking With Plants: Archaeologies of Vegetal Becoming

Session organisers:

Kate Evetts (University of Leicester) & Ben Jervis (University of Leicester)

Session abstract:

Plants are essential to life. We depend upon them for the oxygen we breath, for sustenance and for the materials required to produce the 'stuff' of human existence. Plant life is vulnerable to human existence, but is also highly adaptable, emerging in a multitude of ways as relations of co-dependence develop, are erased and mutate. This session seeks to explore the intersections between archaeology and plant life in two ways.

Firstly, we ask how can we develop approaches to archaeobotanical and wider environmental datasets which engage with the precarity, resilience and emergence of forms of plant life in the past, to better understand the forms of more-than-human life that they sustain, stimulate or place under threat. Examples might include the impact of cultivation on species diversity and relational dependencies, the ways in which plants life makes new spaces and the responses of plant life to anthropogenic processes which both create potential for emergent co-dependencies between forms of life, and threaten their very existence.

Secondly, we ask how the plant-based thought of writers such as Emanuele Coccia, Michael Marder and Lesley Stern might shape the way in which we approach the past beyond the study of plants themselves. For example, within Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage thought the rhizome is a key concept which has been adopted by archaeologists, whilst they also use other botanical processes as touchstones in their writing. Thinking through plants opens us to worlds of co-dependence, complexity, temporality and becoming which create the potential to understand past lives, past becoming(s), from novel perspectives, creating a means to effectively de-stabilise the anthropocentrism of archaeological thought by approaching life differently.

It is our hope that this session will stimulate archaeologists to think through more-than-human life in novel and exciting ways, which take seriously the contribution of plants both to how we live in the world, but also how we think about it.

Keywords: Critical plant studies; posthumanism; archaeobotany; ecology; environmental humanities;

A Lasting and Bitter Relationship: Hops and Humans in the past

Brian Costello (University of Leicester, b1c9@leicester.ac.uk) & Barry Taylor (University of Chester, b.taylor@chester.ac.uk).

In this paper, we use the concept of botanical agency, developed within Cultural Geography, to rethink the relationship between humans and plants, using the example of the common hop (*Humulus lupulus*). Hops revolutionized the culturally widespread activity of brewing throughout the past, by means of its exceptional preservative qualities. But while research has generally focused on the importance of hops as an ingredient in human practice, we argue that hops played a more active role in this relationship, playing a key part in activities such as gathering, cultivating, brewing, travel, and social and ritual feasting. Far from being the passive recipients of human action, we argue that hops were the key players in their own histories, transforming human lives, disrupting and subverting economic and social practices, and taking humans to new parts of the world.

Keywords: Plant-Agency, Plant-turn, archaeobotany, posthumanism, *Humulus lupulus*

Compost Communities: Reconstructing Biorhythms of Medieval English Towns

Kate Autumn Evetts (University of Leicester, kae7@leicester.ac.uk).

Recent theoretical movements, particularly posthumanist assemblage theory, are driving discourse of medieval towns away from isolated issues related to their material components towards innovative ideas of towns as experiential, social places. Yet, these urban ecospheres sustain other forms of life, including animals and plants, whose experiences are marginalised within archaeological discussion. By combining critical plant studies with archaeobotanical investigations, the role that plants have in determining, constructing, and maintaining complex, shifting relationships with humans can be explored.

In this paper, I present a 'floragentic' framework for reconstructing the interconnectedness and interdependence of plant and human life in medieval English towns, conceptualised here as 'biorhythm'. This model brings together three theoretical paradigms: an appreciation for the agentic and affective capabilities of plants visible in the archaeobotanical record through instances of ecological temporality; the entangled, emergent nature of plant-people cultural engagements; and understandings of medieval spiritual ontologies and past perceptions of plant life.

Through case studies set in medieval English small towns, I hope to unsettle the anthropocentrism of urbanity by approaching urban life from a plant-based perspective. I approach medieval small town communities as 'compost' societies - an ecofeminist concept borrowed from the environmental humanities - in the hopes of expanding current archaeobotanical understandings and appreciating the unending, enmeshed interactions that create, evolve, and constitute our multispecies becoming and living-with.

Cropmarks as autographic memories: plants, growth, and duration in archaeological research

Andrew Jones (University of Stockholm, andrew.jones@ark.su.se) & Paul Reilly (University of Southampton, p.reilly@soton.ac.uk).

Cropmarks are durational phenomena which periodically reveal the various traces of archaeological features lying beneath them. How might we think with cropmarks to rethink our models of time and memory?

Archaeology is often drawn on by writers in other disciplines to provide models of memory. Many draw upon the archaeological concept of stratigraphy. In *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud famously promulgated the stratigraphic trope in which ever-deeper layers of buried memories are stripped away to reach the oldest traces of memory. Such thinking is reflected in everyday expressions such as 'looking for root causes' and 'getting to the bottom of things.' In this paper, we adopt and expand an alternative metaphor developed by Freud's onetime protégé Carl Jung in his autobiographical *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1963). Rather than seeing memories as anchored in specific buried layers, Jung suggested a more fluid metaphor: that of floors in a house connected by stairways which enable memories to circulate on several diverse levels, from the cellars up to the lofts, and vice versa. We replace this metaphor of the house with its itinerant memories with a plant life system that autographically expresses physical memories from several different layers, written in plain sight above the surface of the world. Cropmarks, the planetary diagrams produced by plants, therefore defy the trope of stratigraphy. Thinking with plants growing out of the earth towards sunlight also takes inspiration from Hesiod, writing about 730-700 BCE in *The Theogony*, where the two primordial forces of earth (the goddess Gaia) and sky (the god Uranus) conjoin to produce the titan Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory.

In this paper memory is more volatile and endures imprinted on the top of the earth, rather than being sealed in layers, occasionally erupting from it. We argue that thinking with plants

therefore offers us significantly different understandings of memory as both a human and more-than-human phenomenon.

Disturbance and the Urban Atmosphere in Medieval England

Ben Jervis (University of Leicester, bpj4@leicester.ac.uk).

This is not a paper about plants, but rather about how exploring how philosophical ideas derived from vegetal thinking might cast new light on processes of urban becoming in the English Middle Ages. Urban life generates excess, it exceeds any boundaries placed upon it by formalised spatial planning or rule regimes. Vegetal thought is well suited to exploring this excess, to understanding how forms of life do not just adapt to spaces, but work to make inhabitable spaces. Here, I draw on three key theoretical ideas; the concept of ‘disturbance’, derived from Anna Tsing, and the related ideas of ‘atmosphere’ (drawn from Emanuele Coccia’s philosophy of nature) and ‘milieu’ (drawn from Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*). I argue that urbanisation is a process of disturbance, which makes new ecological relations of co-dependency possible and that we can perceive of urban difference as emerging through the boring of more-than-human relations into an urban atmosphere, defined as those elements of urban life which repeat, in various forms, through medieval towns. The result of these experiments is to demonstrate that vegetal thinking may prove useful in developing new approaches to the political ecology of medieval urban life and in exploring the inseparability of modes of urban and rural existence in the medieval period.

Reconstructing Past Entanglements in the face of Climate Devastation

Anna den Hollander (University College London, anna.hollander.18@ucl.ac.uk).

Entanglement – a concept originating in South-American indigenous world systems – is increasingly finding a home within archaeological theory, and now also in environmental archaeology. Taking this concept at face value, “entanglement thinking” allows us to expand the situating of archaeobotanical finds within the more-than-human world of past ecosystems, allowing us to consider unpreserved elements such as fungi and soil micro-organisms, but also hidden human components such as violence and oppression that shaped the archaeological record. This paper aims to invite discussions about reconstructing past “entanglements” in a rapidly decaying and transforming world: through rapid species loss and climate change, current ecosystems are in a process of dramatic transformation that hurl their past equivalents further out of our intellectual reach. Through a case study of archaeobotanical work undertaken at the site of Jebel Barkal, Sudan, this paper aims to illustrate the urgency of understanding lost ecosystems and biodiversity, and how failing to do so may obscure the full scale of ecological devastation in our current world. Simultaneously, this paper questions how to account for archaeology as an “unentangled” praxis, especially when carried out in an area soon to be ravaged by civil war, hunger, and genocide.

Plant Encounters: Engaging students with the botanical world through archaeological accounts of plant lives.

Amy Gray-Jones (University of Chester, a.grayjones@chester.ac.uk) & Barry Taylor (University of Chester, b.taylor@chester.ac.uk).

Over the past 15 years, research within Cultural Geography and the Environmental Humanities has changed our perspective on the nature of botanical life and its relationship to human life. Rather than seeing plants as ‘passive objects’, this research highlights the ways that plants act upon and with the world around them through their own, distinctive ‘botanical agency’. By adopting such an approach within archaeology, we can not only develop new perspectives on the plant-human relationship in the past, but also help to address our own, contemporary relationship with plant life. In particular, foregrounding botanical agency in our teaching and outreach can encourage greater engagement with plants and plant conservation

while also helping alleviate the anxiety that has accompanied our growing awareness of the impacts of climatic change. To illustrate this, we draw on examples from an ongoing research project that combines archaeology and the concept of botanical agency to address the issue of Plant Blindness, our tendency to overlook plants and the important roles they play in sustaining human and all other forms of life.

S16: (I) Legible Landscapes running order

Session organisers:

Emma Stockley (School of Ancient History and Archaeology; Institute of Environmental Futures, University of Leicester, evs13@leicester.ac.uk) & Laura Basell (University of Leicester, School of Ancient History and Archaeology; Institute of Environmental Futures, University of Leicester, l.basell@leicester.ac.uk).

Session Abstract:

In this session we aim to explore whether concepts of environmental legibility and landscape learning can be used effectively in: 1. interpreting the archaeological traces of prehistoric hunter-gatherer communities, and 2. predictive modelling. From the outset we acknowledge the partial nature of the archaeological record; that culture is not separate from nature; that humans are not separate from landscape and that archaeologists frequently deal with non-analogue landscapes (particularly when considering evolutionary timescales).

Environmental legibility and landscape learning are crucial in hunter-gatherer communities, influencing decision-making, resource use, and the embedding of ecological knowledge within social and spiritual contexts (as explored through multiple theoretical lenses e.g. Kelly 1995, Basso 1996, Ingold 2000). Simply put, environmental legibility refers to the ease with which people can read and navigate landscapes (Guiducci & Burke 2016; Schmuck et al 2022). The concept of landscape learning, arises from the idea that population movement into unfamiliar environments can have significant consequences (Rockman 2003, 2009, 2012).

Recent studies aligning with these themes suggest extended periods of human dependency during childhood allow time for complex skill development required for the hunting and gathering niche (Kaplan et al., 2000; Hewlett & Lamb, 2005). The transmission of social learning processes often involves play; and the cultural emphasis on individual autonomy and socio-political egalitarianism among hunter-gatherers, shapes knowledge transmission mechanisms (Boyette, 2018; Salali et al 2019). Thinking through these themes allows new perspectives of prehistoric peoples and landscapes (e.g. Hiscock 2014).

We welcome contributions that address one or more of the following:

- a) Showcase applications of environmental legibility and landscape learning concepts to the archaeological record.
- b) Provide critiques which analyse and challenge the theoretical foundations and assumptions of environmental legibility, landscape learning and aligned themes. This could include discussion of locational, social and limitational factors.
- c) Investigate contemporary hunter-gatherer understandings of landscape.
- d) Present experimental studies focussed on understandings of environmental legibility.
- e) Consider the value of traditional ways of understanding landscape in informing adaptive strategies to future non-analogue climate scenarios.

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Predicting and protecting lithic landscapes – understanding the distribution of lithics across Dartmoor, UK

E. V. Stockley (University of Leicester evs13@leicester.ac.uk), L.S. Basell (University of Leicester), L.S. Bray (Dartmoor National Park Authority) & H. Chapman (University of Birmingham).

This paper explores whether the concepts of environmental legibility (Golledge, 2006) and landscape learning can be a useful heuristic for understanding the spatial distribution and nature of prehistoric lithic scatters on Dartmoor, a granite upland and national park in southwest England.

We present a summary of the GIS predictive modelling that has been employed to characterise the extent and significance of Dartmoor's lithic scatters, and describe how the model was tested using a citizen science methodology in April and May 2023.

Secondly, using the predictive model dataset, we show how the locations of Dartmoor's lithic scatters share certain environmental characteristics (south-facing elevated positions with gentle slopes) and how these locations relate to the extent of the moor's superficial geology (areas of deep peat). By comparing the locations of Dartmoor's lithic scatters to those in lowland areas of the southwest peninsula, we discuss whether the locational, limitational or social elements of landscape learning might explain any differences over time (Rockman, 2006).

Lastly, we combine the results of a broad literature review on palaeoenvironmental change, wayfinding, extant hunter-gatherer groups and nutritional landscapes, with Least Cost Path Analysis. Taking into consideration the biases of the archaeological data (lithic dominated) this permits a wider consideration of how people moved through Dartmoor's prehistoric landscapes, and its environmental legibility in comparison to lowland areas

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Exploring the interplay of environment and mobility in Pleistocene hunter-gatherers: a case-study from southern Ethiopia during MIS 3

Valentina Decembrini & Enza E. Spinapolice

When it comes to hunter-gatherers, the pivotal role played by the environment in shaping their lives and mobility strategies is widely acknowledged. This has sometimes been interpreted as passivity toward nature; however, we know that foragers engaged with and interacted with their environment, maintaining a deep connection between culture and space. Understanding this connection is crucial for a better interpretation of the archaeological record. This relationship can be translated into spatial and environmental legibility.

In our case study, we analyzed the location of known sites in southern Ethiopia during MIS 3. We built a paleo-hydrological model to examine the role of water as both a material resource and a cultural factor, which has undoubtedly influenced the mobility of past human communities. We tested whether watersheds in this area could have influenced the spatial organization of Pleistocene foragers. We found that some sites appear to respond to visual

prominence (high-elevation rock shelters), while others prioritize proximity to water resources.

The paucity of archaeological data in this area and for this period suggests caution when discussing the results. Nevertheless, these findings can also serve as a predictive model and provide insights for future research.

“I know where I’m going”: Finding the way in Stone Age Africa

Laura Basell (lb434@leicester.ac.uk).

This paper examines how hominins navigated landscapes, challenging simplistic representations of movement often depicted as simple arrowed routes on maps or quantifications of distance (e.g. between stone tool assemblages and raw material sources). These conventional representations rarely address the practicalities of traversing diverse topographies or habitats. Adopting an exploratory approach, this presentation focuses on the Early to Middle Stone Age in eastern Africa, synthesizing insights from hunter-gatherer studies, biological anthropology, archaeology, and animal behavioural science. Landscape legibility—how distinct, memorable environmental features may have guided navigation – will be discussed, raising the associated themes of memory, knowledge transmission, and multisensory wayfinding. The paper considers whether understanding hominin wayfinding strategies is possible, and if thinking about this can illuminate hominin habitat expansion and adaptations during the Early to Middle Stone Age. It also questions whether GIS, grounded in Euclidean geometries, adequately captures the complexities of spatial reasoning for these deep periods of our evolutionary past. Rather than offering definitive conclusions, the presentation invites dialogue on how hominins might have "found their way" in familiar, unfamiliar and dynamic landscapes.

S17: Excavating the Collection: New ‘evolutions’ in the Archaeology of Museum Collections

Session Organiser:

Beth Hodgett (Postdoctoral Researcher ‘Making the Museum’ (<https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/making-museum>), Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, beth.hodgett@prm.ox.ac.uk).

Session abstract:

In recent years archaeologists have—in increasingly greater numbers—turned to the study of museum collections which have not traditionally been perceived as ‘archaeological’ in nature (Flexner 2022). A small flurry of studies have explored the potential of developing an archaeology of archives (Baird and McFadyen 2014; Hitchcock 2021; Hodgett 2022) or delved into the role of photographic collections in archaeology (Baird 2011; Riggs 2018; McFadyen and Hicks 2020). Others have turned to ethnographic collections in the search for technological analogies to understand the creation and use of artefacts, or to demonstrate “continuity of practice between ancient and modern communities” (Flexner 2022:375). At the same time, the metaphor of excavating the collection is becoming increasingly common as a framing device for positioning museum and archival collections as field sites. With this metaphor comes the suggestion that the methodological and theoretical insights of archaeology—ideas of context, assemblage and formation—can offer new approaches to the study of museum collections.

This shift towards taking museum and archival collections as subjects of research in their own right marks a significant departure from prevailing perspectives on the relationship between museums and archaeology. As Stevenson (2022) notes, museum archaeology is often misconstrued as being limited to the pragmatic storage and display of excavated and fully processed assemblages, or dismissed as relevant only to antiquarian ‘collecting’ practices in the nascent years of archaeology. And yet, the growing realisation that museums are not neutral spaces has led to a new focus in museum studies on interrogating ‘hidden histories’—unearthing the stories and people whose presence has been erased through museum documentation practices. It is here that archaeologists are uniquely positioned to assist these efforts; using their expertise in giving voice to the past through the interpretation of material culture in situations where written records are absent or cannot be relied upon.

This session invites papers that consider the question what does an archaeology of museum collections look like? This may involve—but is not limited to—new methodological or theoretical approaches to studying collections, exploring collections that have not previously been considered ‘archaeological’ in nature, recovering ‘hidden histories’ through archaeological methods, or using museum collections as potent sources for writing histories of the discipline.

Keywords: Museum Archaeology; Archives; Collections; Photographs; Hidden Histories

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PANEL 1:

Creation of an ‘Excavation Stratigraphy’: Reusing archived data to excavate new details of cultural sequences

Heidi J. Miller (Middlesex Community College, USA).

Once dug through, is it possible to recreate an accurate sequence of finds at a deep protohistoric site? This depends on the quality of the record keeping and the creation of a methodology that focuses on limited areas and deep trenches. Although the early excavations of the first cities of the Bronze Age Indus Valley Civilization (1920’s and 1930’s) lack stratigraphic details, it is possible to reanalyze the data from these early fieldworks. This paper will focus on E.J.H. Mackay’s excavation at the site of Chanhu-daro in the lower Indus River Valley, which took place in 1934-35, and was financed by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston MA. The excavation permit allowed for half of the artifacts, along with the excavation records, to be sent to the United States.

All of the artifacts and records in Boston, Philadelphia and New Delhi, have been used to create an ‘excavation stratigraphy’, that is the order in which the architecture and finds were uncovered. Although lacking depositional details common in today’s excavation record keeping, Mackay’s data can be used to recreate the sequence of finds in discrete areas and this, in turn, has yielded new details of the transition from the Mature Harappan to the Late Harappan in the Lower Indus River valley. This paper will describe the data, the methods involved in verifying and organizing the data, as well as the results of ‘re-excavating’ this museum collection and reinterpreting the cultural sequence of the site.

Excavating Archival Traces in the Archaeological Record: The Case of the North-East House at Knossos

Renee Trepagnier (Ashmolean Museum & University of Bristol).

Scholars have tended to mine the archaeological archives of the Minoan (Bronze Age) city of Knossos, Crete—excavated by Sir Arthur Evans and Duncan Mackenzie from 1900 to 1931—for data to reconstruct the archaeological record of the site. However, the sometimes-questionable practices of 20th century archaeology and the excavators’ pre-conceived notions of Minoan society as proto-European mean that the archive is not a pure reflection of the archaeological reality of the Bronze Age city. In this paper, I view the archaeological archive as its own archaeological site with depositional-like layers and traces in order to understand how the archives of Knossos are shaped not only by the archaeological facts, but also by socio-political contexts, archival processes (record keeping, organisation, etc.), and subjective interpretations.

I discuss a collection of ‘legacy’ (c. early 20th century) materials related to the North-East House at Knossos, stored in the Sir Arthur Evans Archive at the Ashmolean Museum and the Stratigraphical Museum at Knossos. Much like the archaeological record is shaped by external

depositional factors that affect its preservation and interpretation, organisational issues and the misattribution of materials have altered how the North-East House is understood in the history of Knossos. Just as archaeologists look for the traces of certain activities and people in the archaeological record, I follow the archival layers or 'archival traces' of the North-East House materials to understand how the archival confusion occurred and how such factors impact the construction of archaeological knowledge at Knossos. By examining the archive as an archaeological site, I demonstrate that archaeological archives are not static reflections of ancient civilization but rather are mirrors of the questions, recording processes, interests, and narratives of its creators and users.

PANEL 2:

Concealing and Revealing the Secret Museum: The British Museum's Secretum, 1865-1896.

Helen Wickstead (Kingston University).

In 1867 Augustus Wollaston Franks finished installing one of the world's first international facilities for researching sex and spirituality. The British Museum's Secretum was a basement room containing more than a thousand items, with designated library and study area. Like the British Museum Library's famous Private Case of obscene publications, the Secretum had its own catalogue, kept separately from those available to the public. Although Secretum collections were mentioned in government reports and even national newspapers, knowledge about the Secretum's contents as well as details of who researched there and what they discovered were disseminated in highly controlled ways. The Secretum was presented as a "secret chamber".

This paper explores the sociality of secrecy among scholars who curated and researched inside the Secretum. Borrowing from archaeology, I pay attention to the Secretum's negative presences, examining not only how the Secretum appeared in different contexts, but also how it was made absent and occluded. Making use of Michael Taussig's idea of the public secret – "that which is generally known but cannot be spoken" – I investigate how the Secretum institutionalised the classed currency of gentlemanly discretion, mediating male sociability and scholarly distinctions. Information about the Secretum was occulted inside masonic and hermetic secret societies, who cultivated the esoteric art of knowing what not to know.

Adult Only Content Warning: This presentation includes images of sexual antiquities. It is not suitable for children.

Bronze in the Time of Cholera: Poverty, Disease, Antiquarianism and Victorian Prehistory

Martyn Barber

Museum stores contain many objects that can offer interesting new insights into both the archaeological past and archaeology's own history. But what about the stuff on permanent display – the items already used to illustrate the stories we tell about the past?

This paper focuses on one collection of Bronze Age bronzes, a collection repeatedly studied and cited over the past 150 years, and which serves as the type-find for a phase of the British Bronze Age. The aim is to highlight (1) the value of non-archaeological archives and resources for re-evaluating what is known of both its archaeological and contemporary context; and (2) the opportunity it provides for examining later 19th century tensions between antiquarianism and an emerging 'scientific' archaeology.

PANEL 3:

Archaeological ephemera in historic collections: excavating drawers in the Petrie Museum

Lisa Randisi (Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology & UCL)

The Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology is home to an extensive Accredited collection and archive – but also to 19th and early 20th century “ephemera” numbering in the hundreds: makeshift museum packaging and archival titbits repurposed from early excavations. Food wrappers, newspaper pages, receipts and lecture invitations, fragments of administrative forms and annotated tobacco boxes... These speak of life in the field, of academic rivalries and early museum operations.

This paper will consider the potential of such archaeological ephemera collections in museums. This material is often present in historic collections, but is yet to be discussed from a theoretical perspective, and lacks alignment in collections management practice across the sector.

By replicating archaeological thought and methodology in the archive, ephemera allow for a continuation of the archaeological process of investigation: thus material can continue to be “excavated” by new generations of archaeologists, to reconcile existing records and reveal significant new information about formerly excavated sites.

This paper will also explore how archaeological methods can be applied to ephemera in a museological context to unearth additional object histories – from histories of display and museum activities to insights on archaeological knowledge production.

The Petrie ephemera are a reminder to consider all that is left behind in the official, traditional outputs of our discipline. They bring to the fore voices that have rarely been amplified – Egyptian archaeologists and officials, students, secretaries, fieldworkers, volunteers and museum assistants. They prompt us to consider what, how, and even if things have changed in our practice over the past 100 years.

Egyptological dealers? Reconsidering the business of Egyptian archaeology and the supply of museum objects

Dan Potter (National Museums Scotland).

The end of the 19th and start of the 20th centuries saw an Egyptian antiquities rush, where an international desire to collect objects was enabled by vast numbers of excavations and a legal antiquities trade. Keen not to be left behind or overshadowed by their peers The Royal Scottish Museum (today, National Museums Scotland) began to pursue varied means of acquisition, including art market purchasing, commissioned buying from archaeologists, funding work in Egypt, and sending their own staff to join excavations. Egyptological historiography has frequently focussed on the apparently heroic actions of its foundational academics, though their actions as buyers has been recognised, their wider role as suppliers and vendors of antiquities has not been fully explored. Indeed, though conforming to several definitions of 'dealing', Egyptology has been reticent to label its excavators as dealers. This paper proposes a model of the business of Egyptian archaeology that centred on the transfer of financial, archaeological, and social capital. Museums formed a key part of this cycle as they were regularly the destination of exported objects that in turn encouraged future financial support. This paper will present examples of transactions detailed in museum documentation, excavators' correspondence, and related archives to discuss the nature of this business. This highlights the importance of financial valuations and several common market 'myths' utilised by excavator-collectors to justify their continued sales and funding arrangements.

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PANEL 4:

Making the Museum' and The Archaeology of the Pitt Rivers Museum Collections

Beth Hodgett (Pitt Rivers Museum).

The Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) was founded in 1884, following the donation of over 22,000 archaeological and ethnographic artefacts assembled by General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers (1827-1900) to the University of Oxford. But Lieutenant General Pitt Rivers did not make the museum that bears his name, or the objects within it. The real makers of the museum are the people who lived (and live) outside its walls; who made and used the objects on display, the people whose lives are captured in the photograph collections. The PRM database holds only a partial record of the lives of these 'makers' of the museum. 'Making the Museum' is a ground-breaking prospect; a new three-year AHRC funded project to investigate the identities of the makers of the PRM collection.

Surfacing the identities of makers and the subjects of photographs requires very different research methodologies to those traditionally used to explore museum collections. The names of field collectors and museum donors abound in the Pitt Rivers Museum database—and these records are supplemented by accession books, card catalogues, archival material, publications written by said field collectors, donors, curators and their contemporaries, census records, alongside research undertaken on the museum collection by members of PRM staff and visiting researchers. In contrast to this abundance of information, the lives and even names of makers and photographic subjects are rarely so well documented. As Kahn notes, the majority of the PRM's collections and associated documentation were formed during

historical periods where “attitudes towards ownership, recognition and consent” were radically different to the present (2021:64).

And yet, this is not to suggest that these submerged identities cannot be recovered. In this paper I introduce the ‘Making the Museum’ project, and argue that thinking about archaeological artefacts can help us develop methodologies for surfacing the identities of ‘makers’ and photographic subjects across the entirety of the PRM’s collections. Furthermore, I make the case that archaeological methods and theory—in particular the concepts of formation and assemblage—can provide new strategies for conducting archival research, in doing so bringing us closer to uncovering the lives of the real makers of the PRM.

Excavating intimacy: the Mortimer archive and collection, Hull and East Riding Museum

Melanie Giles (University of Manchester) & Sophia Adams (British Museum).

The Mortimer Museum, originally housed in Driffield (East Yorkshire, UK) has often been seen as a model of antiquarian avarice yet it was also the space in which seminal ideas about time, people and cultural traditions were ordered, experienced and embodied (Giles 2006). Now curated in the Hull & East Riding Museum, the associated archive has provided further insights into the professional and personal relations which shaped the collection (Harrison 2011), including sibling collaboration, competitor rivalry and familial intimacy. This paper sifts through the photographs, letters and correspondence, re-used receipts and manuscript drafts, to interrogate the materiality of antiquarian relations. It argues that archives have the potential to reveal the fragility of this ‘netting’ of knowledge, through which understanding was generated by a Victorian working-class businessman: contrasting his chorographic method with those of national collections and institutions (Janokovic 2000). We argue that this gives the collection its current potency and connectivity for local audiences. Finally, it lifts one back into the light: a delicate composite Iron Age brooch, which did not make its way into the Hull & East Riding museum until much later than the rest of the collection. Curated by John Mortimer’s daughter Agnes, throughout her adult life, it embodies a moving story of father-daughter relations, and the debt repaid for the illustrations she made as a young girl, for her father’s magnum opus: *Forty Years Researches in British and Saxon Burial Mounds of East Yorkshire* (1905). Through an object itinerary and excavation of archive approach, we reflect further on the way both things and the records associated with them materialise intimate relations, moving human stories hidden within our collections (Cooper et al 2024).

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S20: Mortuary Memes: Advances in the Digital Public Archaeology of Death

Session organisers

Ellie Chambers (University of Chester, 2024806@chester.ac.uk) & Howard Williams (University of Chester, howard.williams@chester.ac.uk).

Session abstract

What is the future of death in the digital age and what is the role of archaeology in online deathly domains? Mortuary memes evolve fast, and so must our approaches and strategies to digital public archaeology, specifically for the high-profile, often controversial and ethically sensitive subdisciplines of bioarchaeology and mortuary archaeology.

The impact of, and vast potential for, mortuary archaeology and bioarchaeology in contemporary debates and perceptions of mortality is undisputed (see Croucher et al. 2020). Yet, to date this field's digital dimensions have received only limited sustained evaluation. Drawing on this work and specifically building on a successful 2021 'DigiDeath' digital conference involving guest speakers and student contributions critiquing current approaches to digital public mortuary archaeology (Williams 2021), this session will showcase and promote key debates and new directions in the public archaeology of death via digital media.

The session invites contributions that critique and identify strategies to tackle pertinent topics in digital public mortuary archaeology in the media and social media, from newspaper headlines to TikTok videos, including:

- Evaluating ethical debates and challenges of digital media and social media;
- Tackling controversies and combating misinformation and disinformation online, including prominent pseudoarchaeological narratives which cross-cut the interfaces between digital, visual and media literacies;
- Introducing new approaches to digital public communication and education on mortuary topics including evaluations of both failures and successes;
- Case studies in digital public mortuary archaeology including those by projects and individuals at universities, museums, commercial units and other sectors;
- Considering pandemic and post-pandemic engagements with mortality and archaeology online;
- Challenging online abuse, harassment and bullying exploiting mortuary archaeology and bioarchaeology, from racial ideologies to transphobic rhetorics.
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Keywords: death; ethics; media; mortuary archaeology; public archaeology; social media

This session uses a multi-media approach to presentations, with both digital and in-person contributions. The following talks will be held in-person at TAG, with slides available on the *Archaeodeath* blog:

Using archaeology to support grief and bereavement: a digital toolkit for counsellors, therapists and patients

Karina Croucher, Eleanor Bryant & Aoife Sutton-Butler (University of Bradford).

The Continuing Bonds toolkit team were developing a resource for counsellors and therapists when lockdown hit, causing a rapid transition to digital workshops and collaborations. Initially this was seen as a setback, however we soon realised the benefits that online delivery can bring. This paper introduces the toolkit, which uses archaeology to prompt understanding of grief and bereavement. The toolkit has a dual purpose - designed as a resource to aid CPD for counsellors and therapists, as well as direct use with clients/individuals. The toolkit was designed by an interdisciplinary team, including specialists in archaeology, psychology, counselling and bereavement, and practitioners. The toolkit is modular, allowing flexibility for the user to tailor their experience to their needs. Preliminary feedback suggests the toolkit is valuable for discussions and understandings of grief, and takes an unusual approach of combining the past with contemporary challenges, particularly pertinent in our pandemic. The project is inspired by the Continuing Bonds project, and a Theory of Change with uses funerary archaeology to encourage discussion, normalise talking about death, and challenge perceptions about a 'right' or 'correct' way to grieve, mourn and remember the dead. The work is part of a growing recognition of the value of the past in contemporary society.

TikTok Archaeodeath

Howard Williams (howard.williams@chester.ac.uk, University of Chester).

What is TikTok Archaeodeath? Since 2013, my academic public engagement and education as a mortuary archaeologist has focused on my WordPress blog Archaeodeath. In 2020, this was supplemented and enhanced by long-format video blogging via YouTube and short-format content shared primarily via TikTok, each also under the name Archaeodeath. Previously, I have evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of blogging about the archaeology and heritage of death and memory (Williams 2019) and the YouTube channel deserves separate consideration in future. For this talk, I critically reflect on my own strategies and experiences of tackling mortuary archaeology via c. 15-second to 10-minute TikTok videos, reaching wide but unpredictable audiences given the algorithm-driven nature of the platform. I show how I have constructed profitable if complex responses and reactions by exploring death and memory via a range of data, contexts and strategies including explorations of museum collections, ancient monuments and heritage sites as well as a range of material cultures and landscapes of death, dying and the dead. Notably, the channel has evaluated new discoveries as well as to critiquing contrasting ethical debates, different theories and methods as well as combating pseudoarchaeological misinformation and disinformation online. I identify the key ethical and sociopolitical pitfalls I've faced whilst utilising this format but also the rich potential and clear successes it brings in reaching global audiences.

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Soyjaks, Tradwives, and a 1000-Year-old Finnish Burial: Exploring the Meme Reaction to Moilanen et al. (2022)

Owen Hurcum (owen.hurcum@york.ac.uk, University of York).

In 2021 Moilanen and colleagues (2022) published their aDNA analysis of the early medieval Finnish Suontaka Vesitorninmäki burial famous for its bronze hilted sword with Urnes style ornaments - now housed at the National Museum of Finland. Since excavation of the individual in October 1968 by Oiva Keskitalo gendered readings of their burial context have been hotly debated due to the presence of swords, usually considered a symbol of masculinity, and

ornamental grave goods like jewellery, normally considered feminine. Through the use of archaeoanthropology and aDNA analysis Moilanen et al. (2022) provided the most in-depth discussion of the Suontaka individual's gender yet published - with their aDNA study having demonstrated that this person had XXY chromosomes, an Intersex chromosomal arrangement known today as Klinefelter syndrome.

In early 2023 a meme lampooning Moilanen et al.'s (2022) paper began circulating on the internet. In this meme various 'Wojaks' were used, along with accompanying text, to suggest the burial should be read as that of a woman buried with her husband's sword - and not that of an intersex individual of ambiguous gender as Moilanen et al. (2022) suggested. However, the type of Wojaks deployed, 'Tradwife' and 'Random Ah Soyjak', demonstrate that this meme is far more sinister than the simple ill-informed lollygag it might appear at surface level. The use of this specific wojak iconography to discuss the Suontaka burial links this meme to the world of misogynistic and anti-trans violence as well as neo-Völkisch movements. This paper uses this Suontaka meme to explore the intersection of Mortuary Memes, archaeology, and neo-fascist propaganda. It highlights the ways that archaeological research is either (ab)used, or attacked, by online fascist agitators in furtherance of their political motives. It asks the open ended question to our discipline of how we are to react - and counteract - to this.

Content Advisory: Discussions of Transphobia, Misogyny and Racism

From Tombs to Television: The Problematic Use of Human Remains in 'Ancient Aliens'

Frederick Trusohamn (fredrik@diggingupancientaliens.com).

While "Ancient Aliens" and other pseudo-historical theories are primarily known for their controversial interpretations of artifacts and texts, their use and misuse of human remains often go unnoticed. This presentation examines how human remains are discussed, displayed, and utilized within the Ancient Astronaut narrative, mainly when employed as props in info-docutainment settings.

The talk highlights the implications of these practices by exploring instances where remains have been destroyed, smuggled, or subjected to testing without oversight or ethical discussion. It delves into the problematic values and ideas promoted when real human beings are co-opted to support speculative theories. The discussion also addresses the impact on the dignity of the deceased and the cultural heritage of affected communities, questioning the responsibilities of media and alien hunters in handling human remains.

Ultimately, this exploration seeks to start a discussion of the ethical boundaries that should govern the use of human remains in popular media and pseudo-archaeological narratives.

The dead as clickbait: images of human remains in British online news outlets

Ellie Chambers (ellie.chambers@chester.ac.uk, University of Chester).

Online news is a key source of information, entertainment, and political discourse for the British public, with engagement continuously increasing across different platforms. Archaeological research is regularly reported by online versions of traditional news outlets, offering a far greater reach than analogue public engagement projects and enabling the dissemination of research across the social web. The implications of the scale of this form of engagement is yet to be sufficiently considered in archaeological literature, and the resulting ethical considerations for the use of images of human remains in news articles has not received the critical attention it has in other forms of outreach (i.e. museum exhibitions, or social media).

Once placed in a news article, the context of human remains is often removed and any educational purpose is replaced with the sole intention of generating engagement- the dead become clickbait. This paper will consider the ethical implications of this treatment of the dead and will use data collected for my doctoral research to explore the use and misuse of human remains in the online news, a highly political and increasingly emotional space.

In addition to the in-person presentations, the session integrates a series of digital talks available from mid-December via the *Archaeodeath* blog:

Online only: dissemination of 3D bioarchaeological data: an exploration of ethics, user preferences, and contextualisation in an official digital archive setting

Solange Bohling (solange.bohling@york.ac.uk, Archaeology Data Service).

The Archaeology Data Service (ADS) is a UK-based, CoreTrustSeal accredited digital repository for archaeological and historic environmental data. As digital recording technologies such as photogrammetry become more frequently used in archaeological excavations, the ADS increasingly receives archives that include large volumes of digital bioarchaeological data (e.g., 3D models of in situ burials). This presentation summarises an MSc project which explored how potential ADS users prefer to be presented with this type of data and investigated how these preferences can inform the ADS's protocol for the dissemination of digital bioarchaeological data.

A Qualtrics survey was designed and shared online with relevant audiences (344 participants included). A majority of respondents thought that 1) a content advisory should appear prior to viewing human remains (66.0%), 2) contextual information should accompany 3D models of human remains (94.2%), 3) archive-specific ethics statements should be included (50.9%), and 4) users should be reminded to reuse digital bioarchaeological data with respect before downloading 3D models (65.1%).

The survey results informed the development of a series of suggestions for how the ADS might proceed with regards to providing content advisories, prioritising contextualisation of individuals, addressing ethical considerations specific to an excavation/project, and including a reminder requesting users to consider the human behind the data.

Since completion of the MSc project, the ADS has prioritised contextualisation of excavated individuals in three large-scale HS2 cemetery archives. This has focused on linking 3D models of in situ inhumations with associated excavation photographs, context sheets, burial location, and post-excavation analysis, and dissemination through an interactive digital map. The suggestions formed as part of this MSc project and the contextualisation process adopted by the ADS can encourage other digital repositories to consider how they can disseminate digital bioarchaeological data in an ethical and respectful manner.

Onlineonly: The Trade and Sale of Human Remains – dealing with the digital sales of the dead

Trish Biers (tmb40@cam.ac.uk, The Trading and Sale of Human Remains Taskforce).

The *Trading and Sale of Human Remains Task Force*, a subgroup of the British Association of Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology (BABAO), are concerned with the commodification of the dead and wish to educate the public about the ethical, legal, and social ramifications underpinning the existence of a private commercial trade in human remains on and off-line. It is ethically objectionable to commodify the remains of people as objects, and such a trade has been shown to encourage looting of both archaeological and contemporary burial sites, ultimately resulting in the banning of export/trade of human remains from many countries. In particular, the mass export of skeletons (e.g. from Asia) for medical school use

continued well into the 21st century, and thus many 'antique' skeletons found for sale likely fall under the Human Tissue Act. We would like to present our new infographic about the issues around the human remains trade in a digital discussion format.

Online only: Ethics on Display: How Professionals and the Public Debate Human Remains

Steph Black (adventuringarchaeologist@gmail.com).

Ethical questions surrounding the treatment and display of ancient human bones are increasingly discussed on social media platforms such as TikTok. Professionals can actively participate in these discussions by leveraging short-form media and the visual nature of the platforms.

Using short-form content to explore the ethics of the display of human remains within museums may appear as too complex a discussion for these platforms. Certainly, the limitations, specifically of time, prohibit nuanced discussion but they do not prevent it entirely.

Rather, now we need to be more innovative and creative. Decisions about what happens to these remains are complex and sensitive yet if we want to engage the public in these discussions we must go where they are and for now, they are on social media.

Online only: Digital Dilemmas: Navigating Ethical Considerations and Public Perception for Displaying Human Ancestors on YouTube

Vanessa Campanacho, (vcampanacho@gmail.com, NCIS - National Coalition of Independent scholars, USA).

The dissemination of images of human ancestors online has been a topic of discussion and research, particularly in the context of ethics. With the emergence of social media, new ethical concerns have arisen for how images of human remains are used in a digital format worldwide, and how they can be used for purposes beyond research and teaching in a respectful manner. This paper presents preliminary data on public and researchers' perceptions of showcasing human ancestors in YouTube videos. Opinions from the public and specialists on the dissemination of images of human remains were obtained from two sources: an online survey disseminated through social media, and an analysis of YouTube content and comments. The study will aid in understanding how human remains have been displayed, for what purposes, and how the public reacted to it on the second largest online search platform. Ethical considerations and guidelines will also be discussed for the use of images in YouTube videos.

Online only: Demystifying Archaeology Through 'Day in the Life' Content (short-form video)

Rosie Rhianna Crawford (rrc31@cam.ac.uk, University of Cambridge).

In this digital age, social media is a demonstrably important tool for widening participation in archaeology and related fields, 'demystifying' the discipline. Video sharing platforms, both short and long-form, provide space for archaeologists to present aspects of what may be seen as a traditionally exclusive field to a wider, more diverse audience for free, sparking discussion, debate, and career aspirations amongst those who otherwise may not have been exposed to the subject. The particular focus for this contribution, is the sharing of day-to-day experiences studying and working in archaeology, known online as 'Day in the Life' content. Testimonials for JustALittleRoo, a social media platform designed to demystify the transition to higher education as a lower income student, and widen participation in archaeology and forensic anthropology, demonstrate how pivotal 'Day in the Life' content can be in sparking new archaeological careers, and research interests. This format of video also allows for the informal introduction and discussion of prominent ethical issues within the discipline, such as ethical analysis of and digital sharing of human remains. By introducing these discussions in

context, whilst showing real-life archaeological work, we can combat misinformation and/or misunderstanding, and foster informed, respectful dialogue with the public. And by having them freely and internationally accessible online, presented in a relatable, engaging format, we can also help to create a more inclusive space for conversations around ethics and other sensitive topics such as death, mortality, the deceased, and the treatment of such in archaeology, which may otherwise remain exclusive to academic conferences or workshops.

Online only: The Death and Reincarnation of the Cathars (Virtual, pre-recorded presentation)

Grace Reinhart (grace.rinehart@ucdconnect.ie, UCD School of Archaeology)

Throughout the rise of pseudoarchaeology in digital media, public awareness of the Cathars, a heretical sect that once flourished in the southwest of France, has seen a rise in involvement with online conspiracy theories. One of the core beliefs of the Cathar religion was that of reincarnation. This belief was that a person would reincarnate over and over again until they lived a perfect life (in the body of a man of course) and only then would they achieve release from their mortal body and attain a place in heaven. After their extermination in the Albigensian Crusade by French Catholic forces in 1321 it appeared that the Cathars might finally have experienced true death. That is, until their unexpected reincarnation in the 20th century. Aided by French historian Michel Roquebert with the publication of his book *Les citadelles du vertige* in 1966, interest began to increase in the empty, crumbling castles left behind by the Cathars and the Occitan *feudal lords*, feudal lords who reigned independently in Occitania, who supported them. In modern excavations and research, we can confirm the remains of only two Cathar individuals, many others were burned en masse by the Crusaders and later Inquisition, in some cases dug up from their Christian burials and thrown on the pyre to burn. The resurrected interest in the fate of the Cathars and Catharism has led to a good deal of misinformation circulating first in newspapers and books, then on to television, film, and now short form media. The Crusaders and Inquisitors throughout the 13th and 14th centuries did their best to exterminate the Cathars from existence. It is thanks to their efforts that we do not have a full picture of Cathar beliefs and practices, which leaves much open for interpretation by those who spread conspiracy theories and undermine historical and archaeological information. This paper seeks to examine the death and reincarnation of the Cathars, and how they have been remembered through popular media, social media, and public observation.

Online only: Hunting Fake History with the Fake History Hunter (YouTube interview)

Jo Hedwig Teeuwisse (jo@jufjo.net).

Jo Hedwig Teeuwisse has been researching history for decades and hunts for people spreading fake history on social media for years. In this 'Archaeodeath Interview' - Howard interviews Jo regarding her 'Fake History 101 things that never happened' (WH Allen, 2023) and they tackle some of the mortuary dimensions of her fake history debunking pertinent to this conference session. For more details about her work, check out the Fake History Hunter website: <https://fakehistoryhunter.net/>, as well as Fake History Hunter on Twitter: <https://x.com/fakehistoryhunt> and <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3jRyCZmBrh2su1YmlncyLg> YouTube:

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtM1fAyj3Bc>

Online only: How Old Is This Grave? Misinformation and Digital Education on TikTok (TikTok video)

Robyn Lacy (rs1714@mun.ca).

Since 2020, there has been an increase of content creators online turning to gravestone cleaning to create videos for platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. This paper will discuss

the use of internet videos for discussing gravestone conservation, both as promotional clickbait and digital education. While many of these creators have conservation knowledge and permission from the cemeteries, there are others garnering thousands of views under the guise of good deeds or without explaining the process, leading to inspired individuals heading out into cemeteries with good intention, but poor understanding. Videos promoting cleaning products that contain harmful ingredients for historic stonework garner support from viewers, with comments like ‘they’re only cleaning it one time it won’t disintegrate’, further the spread of misinformation about gravestone conservation, while others aim to educate viewers on correct conservation techniques, using these same platforms for engaging education.

Online only: Digital Ghosts: Ethics, Images, and Human Remains in the Digital Context (Blog post)

Jude Seal (judeseal@hotmail.com).

This piece exams questions around the ethical use of images of human remains with particular attention to the crossover between digital and analogue media. It questions the ethics of the use of such images in both archaeology and medical humanities. Are images remains in and of themselves? Should we treat images of remains with the same standards we apply to the physical remains? Should questions of ethics override questions of licensing and intellectual property? What standards can we apply to continue to treat the ancient and recent dead with the same degree of respect and dignity? This piece goes on to suggest some basic principles on which such guidelines could be based.

S21: Ancestor? We hardly know her! Rethinking ancestors in archaeology

Session Organisers:

Andy Rogers (University of Leicester, ajr65@leicester.ac.uk) & Jonny Graham (University of Leicester, jag62@leicester.ac.uk).

Session abstract

In 2002, James Whitley declared there were ‘too many ancestors’ in archaeology following the ubiquity of them in Neolithic narratives of the 1990s. He was critical that they were invoked as an explanation for seemingly everything and could be found everywhere. Furthermore, it could be argued that several authors discussed ‘the ancestors’ without clearly defining who they were or what their relationship to the living was.

More than 20 years on, the ancestor’s hold on archaeology hasn’t loosened, yet we believe this concept can still be used uncritically. Therefore, rather than throw the ancestral baby out with the bathwater, we think it would be useful to rethink this major concept in archaeology. We both work in contexts with ancestors albeit understood differently. In Neolithic Britain, ancestors have been found in tombs, old pathways, and standing stones however ideas about ancestry draw heavily from ethnography. Similarly in the Caribbean, ancestor worship is often cited as the rationale for a whole host of practices, images, and objects.

In this session, we want to think about ancestors in archaeology without the theoretical baggage they have previously brought with them and are looking for papers reconsidering this concept in a radically different way taking inspiration from posthumanism, new materialism, and Indigenous theory.

Keywords: ancestors; Neolithic; Caribbean; radical difference; posthumanism

Ancestor? We hardly know her! An introduction

Andy Rogers (University of Leicester), & Jonny Graham (University of Leicester)

Who are “the ancestors”? What do they do? In this introductory paper, we would like to think more generally about the place of ancestors in archaeology and our research areas. We will discuss some problems and issues with past approaches we think need addressing but also highlight some of the accounts we see as being useful in thinking about the ancestors differently. Following this, we will provide an overview of the session and introduce the papers and speakers we have in the session.

Ancestral rupture, structural violence and the politics of kinship in 1st millennium northern Europe.

Kevin Kay (University of Leicester) & Marianne Hem Eriksen (University of Leicester).

Ancestry is invoked in several ways by archaeologists—as a collective presence (e.g. ‘Stonehenge for the ancestors’), as an individual genealogy, or as an individual’s participation in ancestral collectives (e.g. ‘Yamnaya’). In any of these cases, the relationship between the living and the ancestors is seen as an epistemological problem—a challenge of archaeological methods and interpretation—but rarely as an ontological one, wherein *what ancestry is, what it does, who can claim it and when* were unsettled and unsettling questions in the past as much as the present.

We want to build on black and material feminist thinking that moves ancestry and kinship away from ‘social facts’ and ‘biological truths’, embedding it instead in power-laden moments in past lives. We note that, especially in societies with elaborate ancestry discourse and practices, power is often embodied by cutting certain people off from genealogical and collective pasts, or denying kinship that threatens to undermine hierarchies. Focusing

1st millennium Scandinavia and northern Europe, we trace moments of ‘ancestral rupture’ – relations denied – and ancestral ambiguity as venues for power, trauma, and unconventional alliance-making among deeply unequal, slave-owning, and ontologically unsettled societies.

A building lineage? Palimpsests, brochs, and complex identity in the Scottish Iron Age

Sam Scott-Moncrieff (University of Edinburgh).

The Scottish Iron Age (c. 800 BCE – 400 CE) is notable for its unique architectural forms, and for the longevity with which those forms were constructed, (albeit with temporal and regional variations). An example of this phenomena are thick walled drystone roundhouses, traditionally known as brochs and duns. Brochs and duns were constructed from as early as the 8th century BCE in Western and Northern Atlantic Scotland and were still constructed in the Lowlands and Argyll & Bute around the start of the Roman Iron Age (c. 79 CE). In these areas, brochs and duns were also frequently inserted into the remains of Bronze Age or earlier Iron Age hillforts, forming complex architectural palimpsests. Therefore, this paper, drawing upon indigenous theories and theories of inhabitable, ‘enfolding’ and ‘haunted’ time will propose that palimpsests were constructed to assert ancestral connections and re-occupy ancestral pasts populated both by orally recalled antecedents and mythologised apical ones. Finally, it will be argued that brochs and duns may have been entities in their own right whose re-interpretation, construction (and disuse) throughout Scotland and throughout the long Iron Age formed networks of relationality and lines of descent.

Not quite dead: how ancestors shaped prehistoric cooperation

Mark Haughton (University College Dublin) & Mette Løvschal (Aarhus University and Moesgaard Museum).

Throughout European prehistory, the dead frequently appear in the domain of the living. Narrow understandings of ancestry focused on genetic relatedness fail to capture the vast and varying scales at which the dead make their impacts. Far from static and benign ‘remains’, the dead, both known and unknown, human and nonhuman, may have much more dynamic roles to play in past social worlds.

We focus here on the emerging pastoral landscapes of Bronze Age Northern Europe. The opening of these landscapes in the second millennium BC occurred alongside the striking emergence of new funerary forms: the dead inscribed upon the land in barrows. We argue that this co-occurrence of the ancestral dead, pastoralism, and open landscapes can best be understood as a socio-cosmological complex we term ‘ancestral commons’. Here, cooperation was enabled, mediated and encouraged by the presence of the ancestral dead. In this talk, we trace how the ancestors, both known and unknown, acted in tandem with animals and plants to shape the world of the living. Thinking with ancestors offers us a tool to broaden out the practical, mundane worlds which we allow for our archaeologies, and instead to embrace a world where agency resides in unusual and unexpected places.

What could ancestors do? – Reflections on different roles of ancestors in the Neolithic in north-west Germany

Sarah Bockmeyer (Cluster of Excellence ROOTS, University of Kiel).

Following Oliver Harris’ approach on New Materialism in the Neolithic, it is not only the materials that could do things in the past and present, metaphysical beings such as ancestors could, too. The capacities of ancestors might have varied depending on certain criteria such as where and how their bodies were buried, the grave goods that accompanied them and the materials they were buried in.

Among the north-west German Neolithic Funnel Beaker groups, deceased people were buried in contemporaneous megalithic and earthen burials of different forms and sizes. Graves – as places of transformation where deceased persons became ancestors or other beings – played an important role in ensuring that the transformation was successful in different ways.

Here, again, the materials and their capacities are in focus of this new materialist approach, as different materials might have led to diversities in the transformation processes, and therefore to varying types of ancestors. The roles of megalithic and earthen burials differ in how transformation took place and this paper will explore different outcomes of how materials affected these processes and the divergent results.

Memories of an ancestor: becoming-minoritarian at Quanterness

Jonny Graham (University of Leicester).

When we think about “the ancestors” in archaeology, more often than not we characterise them as humans who died long ago but are remembered and venerated by their living human kin. Past approaches to ancestorhood in the Neolithic in particular have also tied the concept to ideas of landownership and heteronormative “biological” families, and make liberal use of ethnographic analogies. In this paper, I challenge such ahistorical and anthropocentric assumptions by asking the question: what if a chambered tomb was an ancestor itself rather than just housing them?

With the Neolithic passage grave of Quanterness in Orkney, I draw on the work of Rosi Braidotti to ‘nomadically remember’ this site as an ancestor in light of its recent reanalysis. Moreover, I explore how we can think about ancestors as a post-anthropocentric becoming open to a multitude of more-than-humans whilst avoiding James Whitely’s (2002) criticism that ‘everything is ancestral’. I argue rethinking ancestors with posthumanism can allow new narratives and questions to emerge that could not previously be actualised.

S22: Evolving Practice? Knowledge Production and Intercultural Collaboration in Archaeology

Session Organisers:

Lisa Randisi (Petrie Museum/University College London) & Cecilia Conte (Freie Universität Berlin).

Session Abstract

As we consider how to make archaeological practice more inclusive, equitable, and societally relevant, it becomes increasingly necessary for our sector become self-aware and transparent about how, why and who in archaeology sets research agendas, gathers data, analyses and interprets it – in other words, how archaeological knowledge is constructed. This process is one that many archaeologists are intimately familiar with, yet in-depth discussion of its implications remains rare.

This session invites exploration of all aspects of knowledge production in archaeology. Contributions may include, for example:

- Addressing the gap between lived experience of research and the official narrative of the field report
- Focusing on the voices and perspectives that tend to be excluded from this process altogether
- Examining the implications of intercultural collaboration in the context of international projects, from systemic and localized power imbalances to the epistemic diversity of archaeological knowledge production within a single team
- Reflecting on how we can better address contemporary societal challenges, enhance the impact of our field.

Methods in archaeology are constantly “evolving”, but what of the knowledge construction processes underpinning it all?

Keywords: Knowledge production; ethnography of archaeology; decolonial practice

Part 1: Which archaeologists? Multivocality and representation in archaeological methodology and interpretation / practice

Unearthing Power: Qufti Labor, Colonialism, and the Making of Archaeological Knowledge at Abydos

Amany Abd El Hameed (Penn Cultural Heritage Center / Robert Anderson Trust) & Dr. Robert J. Vigar (Pace University)

This paper delves into the history and politics of Qufti labor at Abydos, highlighting its crucial role in shaping archaeological knowledge. While recent studies have acknowledged the contributions of Qufti laborers, they often overlook the broader social and political contexts of their work. By taking a critical historical approach, this research examines how Qufti labor has been employed over the long term, particularly during the British colonial period when W. Flinders Petrie first trained these skilled workers in 1893. The paper explores the lasting impact of Qufti labor on archaeological practices at Abydos and its influence on local labor dynamics, as well as how it has both challenged and reinforced dominant perspectives in Egyptology. Notably, the descendants of el Reis Ali abd el Raheem Omar, who collaborated with Petrie, continue to participate in excavations today. By conducting the research at the Lucy Gura Archives, this study aims to shed light on the ongoing significance of Qufti labor in shaping Abydos's archaeological landscape.

Dividing Stories: Knowledge Production at the site of Buhen, Sudan in the Post-independent Era

Yu Zhuang UCL Institute of Archaeology).

This paper explores knowledge production at the Buhen site in Wadi Halfa, Sudan, since 1957, focusing on who was involved, the knowledge they generated, and the motivations behind it. Further, it examines the power structures behind this process.

To address these questions, the paper reviews discussions about the relationship between knowledge and power, and draws from sources such as the EES Buhen Archive and SOAS Special Collections. The study reconstructs knowledge production in four stages: preparation, fieldwork, writing, and display.

It argues that Nubians, Western Egyptologists, Western UNESCO representatives, and Sudanese all had different interpretations of the ancient site. While UNESCO's physical and intellectual exclusion of Nubians helped establish its authority over World Heritage knowledge, Nubian perspectives persisted and evolved. The paper concludes that certain groups, such as Egyptian Qufties and Nubian workers, were underrepresented throughout the process, while Western archaeologists ultimately asserted their dominance in shaping the authoritative narrative.

“Base Camp”: practice and materiality of international field schools in rural Mongolia

Lisa Randisi (UCL Institute of Archaeology / Petrie Museum).

The year is 2023. On the edge of a small village in rural Mongolia, an international team of 30 archaeologists and field school students have set up camp for a month-long research expedition. The camp is a self-sufficient, independent unit, built of ephemeral material under the principle of “leave nothing but footprints” – an assemblage of tents, yurts and tarpaulin. This is where most of the thinking, the recording, and the socialising – if not the digging – will be happening.

What does this “base camp” reveal about the practice of field school archaeology in rural Mongolia? How does it materially reflect the relationships between international project participants, with the local population, and how do these in turn affect knowledge production and meaning-making? And, after the camp is dismantled – what will be left?

Through this experiment in (auto-)ethnography, I explore the archaeological spaces and traces of a recent field season to reflect on the way diverse cultural and professional identities are negotiated and expressed within the landscape of base camp, the dynamics of conflict, exchange and meaning-making, and the impact of what is left behind at the end of the season.

Part 2: Alternative voices: archaeology outside academia

Who are you calling pseudo-scientific? The magic-magnetic properties of the Karakol kurgans (Altai Republic, Russian Federation)

Cecilia Conte (Freie Universität Berlin)

This case study will focus on the *kurgan* burial mounds located in the valley of Karakol in the indigenous Altai Republic (Russian Federation). Based on archaeological fieldwork conducted in 2021, ethnographic and online materials, this paper will analyse the interpretation of the *kurgans* as having magnetic properties which are connected to the wider earth and can influence the human body. This view, put forward by local religious leader and geologist Danil

Mamyev, will be contrasted with the interpretation of archaeologists working in the valley. Instead of focussing on the boundaries of science - what is “pseudo”, what is “authentic” - this paper will contextualise the magnetic reading of *kurgans* in relation to the local history of archaeological practice, colonialism, and Russo-Soviet esoteric science. Ultimately, I suggest that Mamyev’s particular stance is a form of Altaian resistance against continued Russian colonialism and scientific extractivism in the valley, which combines scientific language and broadly animist concepts to re-appropriate the *kurgans*.

Exploring TikTok as a Tool for Participatory Public Engagement and Intercultural Collaboration in Archaeology

Julia Józefowicz (Independent researcher).

In recent years, TikTok has proven to not only be a source of entertainment for Generation Z but also a powerful tool for information dissemination, thus attracting a diverse audience of all ages. Increasing numbers of archaeologists acknowledge the platform as a potential tool for public engagement, yet much of the implications of this crossover remain unexplored. In this presentation, I plan to discuss the role of TikTok as a platform for participatory public engagement, based on data from my previous MA research. Simultaneously, I will create and analyse new data in the form of archaeology-themed videos, further implementing an empirical approach to the topic. While the focus of my earlier study was to understand TikTok’s capacity for digital public engagement through educational videos, the following paper aims to further explore the role of the lay audience in knowledge production and discuss TikTok as a potential arena for intercultural collaboration.

Are You Not Entertained? Exploring the Production and Interpretation of Archaeological Knowledge Outside of Academia

Isabel Scarlet King (Independent researcher)

Archaeology is often practiced in hierarchical and professionalised structures, but the world we live in today does not limit the production and sharing of knowledge to those with academic backing. The global nature of the internet allows communication between researchers with no offices to meet in, and gives access to information for those who look.

This set of three bitesize overviews aims to give an easily-accessible introduction to some key areas in which people outside of formal academic archaeology are contributing to knowledge production through their research, writing, and more. It will look at video games, fandoms, and experimental archaeology at home to explore how archaeological knowledge is produced for different audiences on different scales.

Part 3: The Bigger Picture: knowledge production in a wider context

A Climate Archive and Modes of Representation

Suha Hassan (ASH / AA Visiting School, Architectural Association)

The AA VS Climate Cartographies is committed to exploring the *longue durée* of climate change at heritage sites by deploying cartographic thinking to create new maps that capture unexplored relations in our environment through different modes of representation. The program under the Architectural Association in London engages closely with archaeologists and expands the conversation by including artists, architects, and other relevant practices to explore the site of interest. Furthermore, at each iteration, it uses new modes of representation to explore these sites. Two programs have concluded thus far at Meroë and Qal’at al-Bahrain. The students produced maps and films through these two programs. Future programs are planned in Dubai/Sharjah using sound as a medium of representation, Warsaw in using gaming technology, and Samarkand to explore the connection with the cosmos.

The presentation will highlight the outcomes of the program and the importance of such an interdisciplinary approach to these sites.

Website: <https://climatecartographies.aaschool.ac.uk/>

Solar Farms and Archaeology: 20th century thinking applied to a 21st century opportunity

Robert Sutton (Cotswold Archaeology)

Arguably, over the past 20 years the construction of solar farms has had the greatest influence on the rural character of English and Welsh landscapes. Heritage professions are directly and intimately involved in deciding the fates of hundreds of planning applications for solar farms every year. Solar farm locations, the style of the panels and the construction techniques employed are being shaped by the opinions of archaeologists and their judgements on heritage significance.

Archaeological (field survey) practice is evolving, but slowly, as it responds to the specific and unique situation of the impact of solar farms on buried remains. However, insufficient weight is being given to the benefits that can be delivered by solar farm developments regarding the discovery of, and better understanding of, archaeological remains (knowledge production). Furthermore, the collaborative rewards of archaeology facilitating (not hindering) our sustainability agendas, while solar farms allow for the protection (from ploughing) of buried remains is almost completely missing from the dialogue. Thinking and practice needs to evolve, and quickly.

Cultural heritage-security nexus: Understanding the evolution of cultural heritage as a security issue

Sabine Ameer (Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Glasgow) & Andreas Giorgallis (CREATE, School of Law, University of Glasgow).

This presentation documents the evolution of cultural heritage as an international security concern. From antiquity to the present, it examines how cultural heritage and/or archaeology has gradually changed and evolved into a security issue. In these cycles of change, this presentation highlights the critical junctures that have made this transformation visible. It does so by conducting an archival analysis of the international legislation around cultural heritage protection—and its reconstruction—during armed conflicts. Indicative examples include the destruction of Mostar Bridge during the Yugoslavian Civil War, the destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban and the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage by the Islamic State which eventually resulted in the unanimous adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2347 on the 23rd of March 2017. This presentation also discusses major conflicts from the 2020s onwards—such as the Armenia-Azerbaijan war over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, Russia's military assault in Ukraine, and Israel's war on Gaza—and whether this trend has been confirmed or not. Finally, it examines the (ab)use of this securitisation framing around cultural heritage, and at whose expense cultural heritage is securitised.

S23: Narrating the Past: Exploring Archaeological Storying and Creativity

Session Organisers

Laura Basell (*University of Leicester l.basell@leicester.ac.uk*), Fiona Coward (*Bournemouth University, fcoward@bournemouth.ac.uk*) & Neil Redfern (*Council for British Archaeology neilredfern@archaeologyuk.org*).

Session Abstract

Storytelling and narrative construction has long been a topic of interest to archaeology both in understanding the evolutionary role of stories in past societies, and in using archaeological data to create narratives about the past in the present. Contemporary archaeological theory acknowledges the need for diversity, multivocality and constructivism in interpretations of archaeological pasts presents and futures.

Diverse narrative and creative approaches can enhance impact and engagement, offering subversive, fictive, and alternative perspectives. With the inexorable rise of self-publishing, social media, bots, and AI, we are inundated with stories and content designed to evoke emotional responses or effect change. The power of the past, heritage, and material culture provided by archaeology offer a rich source of inspiration. But are archaeologists engaging effectively in this arena? If so, how can we do so ethically and responsibly, while maintaining academic integrity?

Questions we're eager to explore include:

- What do you create and why?
- What are the challenges and what are the benefits of a creative approach?
- What challenges did you face responding creatively to your own or others' research?
- What practical and ethical decisions did you have to make?
- Were there compromises made between research rigour and the demands of story, worldbuilding and plot?
-

We welcome submissions from any discipline engaging creatively with archaeological themes. You might be a creative archaeologist, writer, poet, artist, game designer, filmmaker, or crafter drawing inspiration from archaeology, or aligned fields. Whether you've already crafted or are contemplating:

- Science fiction with hunter-gatherers
- A graphic novel set in an Afro-futuristic Bronze Age
- An early Neolithic noir film
- A computer game about murder among contemporary academic archaeologists over a REF impact case study
- Ceramics inspired by indigenous Amazonian cultures
- Crocheted Venus figurines
- An E-Zine about the evolutionary impacts of climate change
-

we invite you to discuss your work with us!

We envisage dynamic discussions and encourage non-traditional 'presentation' formats: poetry, mime, dance, film, song, music, animation, painting, sculpture, installations. Opportunities for all participants to contribute to a co-authored output that transcends traditional text will be discussed during or after the session.

Developing new interdisciplinary approaches for engagement in the Caucasus: Reflections from the Caucasus Through Time Network (CTTN)

Caucasus ThroughTime Network (caucasusthroughtime@gmail.com): Narmin Ismayilova, Gwendoline Maurer & Sabine Ameer

The Caucasus is a crucial intersection for the understanding of the history of Europe and Asia. It is an area of exceptional cultural diversity, where a multitude of ethnic groups, languages and religions intermix over a relatively small geographical area. However, the region remains marginalised and often overlooked, not receiving the wider exposure it deserves in the Western world. Founded in the UK in 2021, the CTTN seeks to broaden the understanding of the Caucasus region through an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating fields, such as Archaeology, Anthropology, History, Ethnography, and Art History in the wider field of Arts and Humanities. We aim to provide a broad and in depth historical and cultural understanding of a largely underexplored region. The network offers a platform, particularly for young scholars and early career researchers to present new research and findings, stimulate discussion, and debate current hot topics related to the Caucasus geographical, social and cultural landscape, regardless of contemporary political boundaries.

The network seeks innovative ways to narrate the past of this complex region beyond the academic circle, employing creative approaches to enhance impact and engagement with diverse audiences. We ask critical questions such as what do we want to communicate and to whom? What message do we convey and with what degree of complexity? How do we convey it? This talk would critique different methods and techniques, with a particular focus on developing a single consensus-based communication methodology tool, or diverse communication decisions adaptable to the social, political and cultural dimensions associated with the target audience.

Metsemegologolo: of fragmented archives and story-mapping for the Exploration of ancient african urbanism

Stefania Merlo (University of Cambridge), Justine Wintjes (Kwa-Zulu Natal Museum, South Africa) & Anton Coetzee (Origins Centre, University of the Witwatersrand).

Story-mapping is a compelling form of presentation of curated narratives or pathways along which archaeological, historical and various other archives of the past can be explored and presented to various publics. As other forms of digital storytelling, it potentially enables users to share personal stories, produce novel, multiple, complementary and, at times, conflicting knowledges and to raise awareness of marginalized and contested histories through the co-creation of heritage. Yet, the premise of digital storytelling through maps is the existence of digital archives and a digital platform that facilitates the creative process as well as accessibility by both producers and consumers. The lack of one or all is a hindrance to its implementation and the reason for its almost complete absence as a narrative tool for the exploration of the African past.

Metsemegologolo means 'ancient towns' or 'old cities/places' in Setswana. It is the name chosen for a project, developed by a collective of researchers since 2019, aimed at both redressing the lack of digital materials that speak to the theme of pre-colonial African urbanism (with a particular focus, for now, onto Tswana settlements c.1600 into historical times in Southern Africa) and experimenting with varied forms of curations of this rich but rarely represented past, outside the bounds of scholarly research. The multimodal platform at the core of the project uses spatio-temporal principles to do so. This allows, at the same time, the re-aggregation of archival materials that have been refracted into different spaces over time and can therefore be reconnected and re-enlivened to subvert traditional hierarchies (most of which colonial in lineage) and the use of place and landscape as dynamic structural principles of creative mapping.

Journeys on the Tavistock Canal: navigating multivocal narratives of industrial Improvement

Andrew Thompson (School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester and independent heritage consultant, amt36@leicester.ac.uk).

Most of the academic literature on Improvement in the 18th and 19th centuries focuses on the physical transformation of rural and urban landscapes and the ideas and economic and social processes which created them. My PhD research emphasises the Improvers' individual and collective agency and explores how they and other people experienced Improvement in ways which shaped conflicting narratives and senses of place. This presentation discusses the challenges and opportunities of the approach I am developing.

People's experiences of Improvement were intellectual, emotional and sensory. To (re)create them I use an interdisciplinary methodology which combines a historian's reading of documentary material and archaeological approaches to the material culture. My research is informed by the experience of walking through the landscape which stimulated the senses, questions, ideas and the imagination. I also draw on my own biography and memories of a landscape I have encountered at various times over nearly forty years. By integrating these approaches I create a multivocal account of Improvement which allows for people's differences and gives a voice to those who are not represented in the written records.

The Tavistock canal is celebrated by industrial archaeologists and heritage professionals as part of the West Devon and Cornwall Mining Landscape World Heritage Site. In the early to mid-19th century it was lauded as an example of 'rational' economic and technological Improvement by local industrialists and officials on the duke of Bedford's estate through which it ran. However combining experiential walking with historical and archaeological evidence reveals how, from the time of its construction in 1803-17, the canal became entangled with other people's everyday lives and the stories they tell. It was a working waterway and a walking route to work at metal mines through farmland which could be experienced both as a safe, familiar and rationally organised landscape and/or one that was unpredictable, threatening and steeped in folklore. It was also a site of memories, for example for friends and relatives of people who died in industrial accidents and for the young woman who in 1836 walked to the canal to drown herself because she was pregnant and had been abandoned by her lover.

Stories of stone and soil – the intersection of materiality, landscape learning and human-environment interactions

Emma Stockley (School of Archaeology & Ancient History, University of Leicester, evs13@leicester.ac.uk).

Based on PhD research which has used GIS, predictive modelling, excavation and geoarchaeological approaches on Dartmoor, a national park and granite upland in the southwest of England, this paper explores how the materiality of stones (lithics) and soils can be used to tell intertwined stories about Dartmoor's past and present.

Through the study of a large collection of lithics using GIS, I reflect how this assemblage contributes to our understanding of the lifeways of Dartmoor's hunter-gatherer-fishers, whilst also providing an intimate glimpse into the life of the person who collected them, revealing patterns of movement, seasonal rhythms, and the story of his personal relationship with the Dartmoor landscape.

I conclude by describing how the physical properties of Dartmoor's unique soils are central to a creative response to the results of test-pit excavations, one that further explores concepts of landscape learning and human-environment activity on Dartmoor throughout the Holocene.

Recovering and reimagining absent archaeologies through creative engagement?

Claire Nolan (Department of Archaeology, University College Cork, clairenolan@ucc.ie)
& Ben Gearey

The disappearance/destruction of heritage has been shown to not only disrupt landscape narratives but also negatively impact wellbeing, cultural identity and in some instances, to cause communities to feel displaced (James-Williamson et al. 2024). One of the places where the absence of tangible heritage can be most keenly felt is Irish post-industrial peatlands. Decades of peat extraction have ensured that the majority of Ireland's rich peatland archaeological record is now erased forever. Thanks to the collections of some antiquarians, and more recent archaeological survey and excavation, however, some sites and artefacts have been recovered or recorded for posterity. Attempting to reconnect people and communities with this unique but problematic form of (in)tangible heritage, the IRC-funded Irish Peatland Archaeology Across Time project has employed a combination of creative and experimental archaeological practices with audiences, school children in particular, to help them artistically represent objects that have been unearthed from Irish raised bogs. This paper will present some of these different creative approaches, demonstrating how they have helped to 'make absent archaeology present' for different groups by stimulating creative reimagination and restoring meaning to place.

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The past fizzes and trembles in the present

Alice Clough (University of Bristol, Museum of London Archaeology, aclough@mola.org.uk).

The archival legacies created by developer-funded archaeology tend to rely overwhelmingly on the written form. The vast majority of these outputs are grey literature reports, written to satisfy the requirements of a Written Scheme of Investigation, in a style, language and format designed primarily to make data easily accessible for other archaeologists. Other outputs - for example monographs and 'popular publications' - come into being dependent on the availability of funds and time, meaning they tend to be reserved for larger or more impressive or impactful projects.

Even though these outputs are increasingly made open access via the Archaeological Data Service, they form a legacy loaded with structural barriers that make them inaccessible to many (through for example written format, style, technical language). Parallel to this, developer-funded reporting and publications tend to distil the fabulous complexity and multiplicity of the material record into linear narratives told by relatively few voices.

If the archaeological sector truly aspires to do its work for the benefit of future generations, it is necessary to step back and consider whether those future publics will find that work inspiring, accessible or understandable. There is huge scope to experiment with identifying underrepresented, hidden or unseen narratives that may be of interest to those exploring archaeology in the future. The challenge is how we do this, and the kind of hidden narratives we want to reveal.

I would like to argue that one way is through creative engagements with the archaeological process. To that end, I would like to share a work-in-progress that builds on the idea that the archaeological materials and deposits we engage with are not static entities. This work, made from early-stage sound experiments, seeks to make evident and amplify material vibrancy and the energetic nature of both the past and the present. Drawing on deep listening (after Pauline

Oliveros), you will hear the vibrations, echoes and interactions of archaeological materials and their environments.

Shards of the Past, Meanings of the Present: Bridging distant and recent memories by researching-exhibiting relationships

Mauro Puddu (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, puddu.mauro1483@gmail.com).

One of the challenges of archaeology is enhancing our knowledge of the past without compromising the human proximity, if not empathy, to the stories of its protagonists. The distance that often is felt by archaeological practitioners when dealing on a regular basis with pots, buildings, and often even with animal and human remains, becomes wider when the archaeological discourse is brought to the public, leaving the human dimension aside. This paper tackles this issue, and proposes possible tips towards overcoming it, through the case study of the exhibition “Shards of the Past, Meanings of the Present”, a collaborative endeavour between the archaeological research project IDENTIS and the Museum of Broken Relationships.

The exhibition, held in Venice in 2023, and now on in Masullas, rural west-central Sardinia, with the title “*Sardinnia e Mundu: Memòria, Corus, Passau, Presenti*”, aims to break down geographical and chronological barriers by highlighting those beyond-material elements that connect humanity as a whole. Just like the exhibits in the Museum of Broken Relationships, archaeological finds are exhibited here as proxies of histories that have come to an end.

This paper will go through the behind the scenes of the exhibition, analyzing the ideas that informed the curatorial project, from gender to subaltern and decolonizing theories, and exposing the numerous interpretive challenges of this collaborative effort. The exhibition’s criteria in selecting the exhibits will be shown, explaining why objects have not been chosen because of their widely recognised economical or aesthetic value, but because of the universal feeling of empathy that they can convey. Through material fragments of ordinary lives, the exhibition tells stories of the bonds between people, communities, landscapes, inviting us to reflect on what makes us - in the past as in the present - profoundly human.

¹ From the Sardinian language: “Sardinia and the World: Memories, Bodies, Past and Present”.

Animating the Narrative: Artefacts and their Adventures

Aaron Clarke (archaeoclarke@icloud.com).

ClarkeFilms© presents character focused stop-motion animation to build creative narratives of the past and present. Each short movie is directed by the artefacts themselves and the archaeological data recorded during recent excavations. This session unites academic contemporary theory with a playful pedagogy to the dissemination of information from within a commercial environment. ClarkeFilms© take material culture and aim to inspire others to consider their own perspectives on how our individual parts of the subject can be shared through creativity, in turn contributing to the storytelling of ‘our’ archaeology.

Playing - with - Light and Time

Laura Basell (School of Archaeology and Ancient History / Institute of Environmental Futures, University of Leicester, lb434@leicester.ac.uk).

A significant amount of my career has been spent absorbed in point clouds of places and ‘objects’ usually captured using LiDAR. This year featured a particularly intensive period of point cloud immersion focussed on the Bronze Age Cut Hill Cist, Dartmoor and its surrounding landscape. Plainly put, I hope to share some of the unintended and unexpected outputs from

processing point cloud data from such projects and consider the impact of changing recording methodologies on archaeological interpretations.

At a deeper level this contribution juxtaposes digital and traditional art to explore the roles of time averaging, corporeal fragmentation, and reconstruction in archaeological practice and interpretation. It considers how art functions as a powerful communication tool, capable of evoking deep physiological and emotional responses that are rooted in our evolutionary past. These responses can activate memory and potentially bridge vast expanses of time. By merging digital innovation with artistic creativity, this work considers whether such a synthesis can generate meaningful new perspectives and engage a wider audience? Or whether it is simply a reflection of our disembodied, disconnected world in which hyperstimulation and immersion in techno-surrealist experiences have become the new norm. Ultimately, it asks: are we reshaping our understandings of the past, the present and ourselves by playing – with – light and time?

Ice-bound Discoveries: An archaeological voyage to Antarctica

Felix Pedrotti (Southampton Marine and Maritime Institute, University of Southampton, f.pedrotti@soton.ac.uk), Grant Cox (ArtasMedia, Michael Grant, School of Ocean and Earth Science, University of Southampton) & Jack Pink (Historic England).

By February 1904, the research ship Discovery had been trapped in the Antarctic ice for two long years. The researchers and sailors aboard endured harsh conditions, living out their daily tasks in the frozen isolation of their ship, which had become both their home and their lifeline. The stories, lives, and objects from this extraordinary voyage are unique, all carefully designed to ensure the survival and safety of those on board. The scientific work undertaken was groundbreaking, exploring a new continent and advancing oceanographic, geographical, and biological research, as part of the British National Antarctic Expedition (1901-4).

While the scientific findings lived on in books, photographs and the samples they recovered, some of the personal stories and emotions of those on board faded into the past. Over the past year, the Tales of Discovery project has worked to revive these forgotten narratives by using cutting-edge technology to scan, reconstruct, and bring the ship, its objects, and the people's experiences back to life. These elements have been re-imagined through CGI, Virtual and Augmented Reality using modern game engines.

In this presentation, viewers will witness how drones and laser-scanning technology have revolutionized modern scientific practices and how this data was incorporated into digital storytelling. The CGI outputs, which have been used in several international outreach events, will be shown. The project not only brings history to life but also bridges the past and present through the lens of modern technology.

Lifeless Things? Archaeological Roleplay in Nothing Beside Remains

Florence Nicholls (School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science, Queen Mary University of London, f.c.smithnicholls@qmul.ac.uk).

I would like to propose an installation of the game Nothing Beside Remains (Ill Omens 2018) that I have co-developed with my supervisor, Mike Cook. NBR is an abstract game in which a player explores a ruined village and interprets what happened to that place based on the material remains left behind. The game contains procedurally generated content (content that is created algorithmically), and I have conducted a large scale study (Smith Nicholls and Cook 2023) of how and on what basis players interpret the material culture of the village and distinguish between procedurally generated and handcrafted content.

The installation consists of a laptop with a playable build of the game, alongside drawing materials to encourage conference attendees to collaboratively and creatively record the in-game village. I'm particularly interested in how players archaeologically interpret the game world, and how creative methods of recording also scaffold their narrative-making. The work engages with questions of abstraction and indexicality when simulating the past in games, and how game narrative design and environmental storytelling can benefit from archaeological theory.

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Participants as Designers: What Neighbourhood-Led Digital Heritage Storytelling Can Teach Us about Place-Based and Urban Heritage Relationships.

Claire Boardman (Digital Creativity Labs and Department of Archaeology, University of York, clb593@york.ac.uk).

In comparison with their historic cores or modern outer suburbs, the development route of town and city planning has acted to whitewash the deep histories of inner-urban neighbourhoods; both architecturally under the dense, utilitarianism of late 19th/ early 20th century 'worker housing' and further, with no requirement for preservation via record at the time of building and little redevelopment since, within civic memory. Without being physically or consciously visible and therefore cognitively and emotionally accessible, the active role local heritage can play in the daily sense and meaning-making practices, the 'connective tissue' of any social group, is negated. However, though elusive, there remain traces of deeper inner-urban pasts scattered across the city's archives, collections, memories, and myths.

This paper considers recent engaged, practice-led research completed in two highly transient but socially and developmentally differing inner-urban neighbourhoods in the City of York, UK. Focusing on the lack of social cohesion within these populations, it set out to explore the transformational potential of underused digital and digitised collections data: institutional, community and personal, combined with place-based digital storytelling. Learning into urban complexity, and informed by established theory and practice, a narrative-based ethnographic intervention was implemented in each study area. Specifically designed to transfer heritage engagement design and production decision-making to local participants, the interventions aimed to restore lost but deep neighbourhood Pasts into the consciousness of contemporary stakeholders whilst disrupting any existing sense of place and opening up new people and place connections.

Detailed observation of in-person and online participant reactions, responses and decision-making as the interventions spectacularly failed to achieve most of their objectives provided the unique opportunity to critically evaluate current ways of thinking and working within urban heritage management. These are presented here as a series of 'learnings' which challenge us to reflect upon both established theory and practice and our own personal understandings and actions.

Encountering movement: embodied perspectives on the “dancing stone”

Fiona Coward (Department of Archaeology & Anthropology, Bournemouth University, fcoward@bournemouth.ac.uk), Derek Pitman (Department of Archaeology & Anthropology, Bournemouth University), Rich Potter (Department of Historical Studies, University of Gothenburg) & Megan Russell (Department of Archaeology & Anthropology, Bournemouth University).

Traditional approaches to rock art are developing in new directions with a move away from approaches stressing a ‘decoding’ or interpretation of the *meaning* of representations towards an emphasis instead on processes of place-making and embodied, geographically situated constructions of narrative and identity at multiple scales of space, time, and identity. However, some rock art remains difficult to fit in even to this new framework, for example panels comprised mainly or solely of ‘footprints’ – this term in quotes, as these are not in fact footprints per se, but are instead foot- or shoe-shaped *engravings* in rock.

These sites and marks resist easy categorisation as ‘representational’ or ‘non-representational’ art, falling somewhere between them (or comprising aspects of both). One such panel is the Bronze Age rock art site at Fåglum, Sweden, which is colloquially known as the “Dancing Stone” and comprises of a protrusion of bedrock into which a large number of footprints have been pecked. As the name implies, one interpretation of the resulting pattern is linked to dance or dancing. However, it is unclear exactly what the panel reflects or represents, and what role it might have played in the lifeways of people in the past.

In this talk we will discuss a pilot investigation developing an alternative approach to this rock art panel. Working under the hypothesis that footprints imply embodied movement of some kind, we decided to generate a series of experiential encounters between people and the spatiality of the panel in an attempt to broaden our understanding about how people may have engaged with and thought about the prints. In doing so we do not intend to suggest that 21st century humans, particularly an arbitrary subset of Bournemouth University staff and students, will be able to perfectly reconstruct the meanings of the panel in the Bronze Age. Instead this experiment simply aimed to spark new ideas about how people engage with the panel when presented with it. Could their behaviour and impressions inspire new ideas and perspectives to inform the debate? In this talk we will discuss our approach, our findings so far, and some future directions we hope to take.

S24: Living (and Working) in Times of Unprecedented Change. A Speculative Design Workshop for Archaeology in the 21st Century: ‘Futurescaping’ Workshop

Session organisers

Lorna-Jane Richardson (UEA, lorna.richardson@uea.ac.uk) & Claire Boardman (University of York, clb593@york.ac.uk).

Session abstract

The impact of the unprecedented rate and scale of change in the 21st century is being felt in all areas of personal and professional lives across the world. Despite the informative and transformative potential of natural and cultural heritage to both challenge and contribute work in this area remains piecemeal, lacking focus and cohesion and therefore any sense of its effectiveness. If archaeology is to fulfil this potential, then a critical assessment of current practice is required. Are we asking the right questions? Working with the right people? Using the right approaches? Do we have the data, tools, funding, roles and structures we need?

This half-day, inter-disciplinary workshop aims to bring together a broad, representative group of archaeologists and heritage practitioners and will follow the ‘Futurescaping’ speculative design protocol (CoHERE, 2019) developed specifically for innovation and change the Cultural Heritage Sector by Areti Galani and Gabriella Arrigoni (Newcastle University) and their partners at the Copenhagen School of Design and Technology.

Grounded in critical theory and while future-oriented, speculative design is not about predicting the future. Leveraging collective intelligence its purpose is to suspend present-day constraints in order to ask questions about the politics and values in the sociotechnical systems that we currently experience (or might want to experience in the future) by creating an imagined world configured differently from our own. It is speculative in that it re-imagines the world to be organised into different social, political, economic, and technological configurations, or what Auger (2013: 12) terms “alternative presents”.

However, speculation alone is insufficient. The final action in this workshop will evaluate what is needed to deliver the desired future outcomes, against current capabilities and capacities to provide a starting point for a strategic sectorial response to unprecedented change.

Keywords: Speculative Design; Collective Intelligence; Uncertainty; Ownership; Archaeology Futures

1. Introductions & Scene Setting: UK 2050
2. IMAGINE: Creative responses to future scenarios
3. SHARE: Responses shared & key enablers identified
4. RETURN: Identified enablers compared to status quo
5. Close

S25 Heritage Therapy in Theory and Practice: Using Archaeology for Recovery

Session organisers

Mark Brisbane (Bournemouth University, mbrisbane@bournemouth.ac.uk); Karen Burnell (Solent University, karen.burnell@solent.ac.uk), Paul Everill (University of Winchester, Paul.Everill@winchester.ac.uk) & Richard Osgood (Ministry of Defence, Richard.Osgood273@mod.gov.uk).

Session abstract:

This session examines the theory and practice of running archaeological projects to aid those suffering from trauma in their recovery. Focusing on, but not exclusively, the role that archaeology has and is playing with the recovery of those who have served in the armed forces, the session will highlight how this area has progressed over the last 12 years or so, using examples from the UK (for instance, Operation Nightingale) as well as from abroad, such as Waterloo Uncovered.

Speakers with a wide knowledge of running projects that assist those who have suffered from trauma, especially on the battlefield, will be sharing their experiences with those who wish to run similar projects. Integral to this will be the need to evaluate what we do and how we do it, so that we can reach a consensus on what constitutes best practice in this important area and better understand what works well for all those involved.

Is it time for a recognised 'heritage therapy' to emerge? And if so, what evidence do we need to collect and scrutinise to make this happen? It strikes us that this is only the beginning of an exciting new role for archaeology in the service of the wider community and the health of its members, but one that also requires a properly considered body of evidence if it is to obtain recognition by mental health practitioners.

In keeping with the theme of this year's TAG (Evolution?), this session will discuss how the profession of archaeology itself is changing and in the process developing new ways in which to enrich society that even only 20 years ago were not considered.

This half-day session will have a number of elements to it. First, a keynote paper on Operation Nightingale to set the scene for what has been achieved to date and to set out some of the potential of similar projects. This will be followed by three or four shorter presentations that focus on the importance of having guidelines (i.e. AMPHORA); the need for the evaluation of projects, especially feedback from participants and its assessment, along with the wider question of the collection of evidence. After this, a workshop will take place to include veterans who have taken part in such projects, and from there the subject of how we develop an evidence-based, 'heritage therapy model' will be critically examined.

Keywords: Heritage Therapy, Archaeology and Trauma Recovery; Veterans.

Broken Pots, Mending lives: Archaeology and recovery for service personnel

Richard Osgood

In 2011 Operation Nightingale was established to utilise the components of archaeology to assist the recovery of armed forces personnel. From that point, the programme has worked on sites from prehistoric to 20th Century origin and has completed non-fieldwork elements too. This talk will explore some of the aspects that lead to successful outcomes and will also consider the assessment requirements from participants in order to improve results. As such it will set the scene for the other papers in this session and raise a number of issues that focus on how effective archaeology can be to the process of recovery.

Excavating the past and (re)finding myself: Exploring the therapeutic potential of archaeology with Veterans and Providers

Karen Burnell & Paul Everill

Military veterans in the UK experience higher rates of mental health challenges than the general population, including trauma and loss. Despite specific treatment pathways in the NHS, help-seeking and treatment uptake is low. Consequently, alternative activities have been offered and, since 2011, archaeological projects for veterans have supported transition of serving personnel and veterans' mental health and wellbeing. Outcome-focused evaluation suggests positive impact on mental health and wellbeing, leading to projects being framed as interventions and therapies, but there is little understanding of why and how archaeology may lead to these outcomes. Adopting an interpretative qualitative approach, we interviewed five UK veterans and four providers of UK projects about their experiences of archaeology. Through thematic analysis, three themes were created 1) connection and belonging explored how veteran-focused projects and engaging in military contexts can enable veteran participation. 2) authenticity and purpose explored how veterans participate purposefully and authentically in real projects, and the impact on purpose and identity. 3) meaning-making through the past explored how engaging with potentially confronting themes allows veterans to make sense of experiences, the role of mental health professionals in this process, and the impact on mental health and wellbeing. Implications for archaeology as a "therapy" are discussed with recommendations for future research and practice.

Methodology used to create a Questionnaire for Ukrainian military personnel within the 'Spiritual Revival by Culture' Rehabilitation Program in the National Preserve 'Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra' (2023-2024)

Maksym Ostapenko, Sergiy Taranenko, Ihor Tereshchenko and Oleh Topylko

From the very start of the Program, it became clear that we needed to accumulate information about the soldiers undergoing rehabilitation. We had to have their personal data and permission to use it in social network and media. It was also very important to understand how the Program was perceived by our veterans, whether we have helped in their recovery or not. At this time, we had some experience in conducting surveys for various cultural projects, but it was limited and done for civilians before the full-scale invasion of February 2022.

In 2023, we created the first version of the Questionnaire, which consisted of 10 questions. The second version was expanded. Then in August 2024, we created the third version, which we are still using, and that includes the recommendations of Dr Karen Burnell and Dr Paul Everill. The fundamental difference in that survey is that it began before the launch of the Program and continued after its end. The work to improve the Questionnaire continues. Despite the long experience of our British colleagues in rehabilitation issues, the situation with this process in Ukraine is somehow different, because:

- We have an ongoing war, and at the end of the Program, the military will be sent back to the front.
- These are not professional soldiers, but mobilised people of different social and age groups.

These points will be explored further in this paper.

Archaeology as part of the 'Spiritual Revival by Culture' Rehabilitation Program in the National Preserve 'Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra': Reality and Prospects"

Sergiy Taranenko

During 2023-2024, the Department of Archaeology at Lavra fully participated in the Preserve's military rehabilitation project. In contrast to the experience of Dr Richard Osgood and his project "Nightingale", archaeology is only a small yet important component of the Ukrainian program. During the summer season of archaeological fieldwork, the participation of the military in our excavations was sporadic. When the excavations were over, the military was introduced to the activities of the Department of Archaeology through lectures and practical classes held by its staff. But we think that the role of archaeology in rehabilitation of the military can be greater, so we are proposing some sizable developments to support this, including:

- A building (No. 55, Lower Lavra territory) to be used as the veterans' permanent all year-round residence has been allocated.
- Future excavations sites (total area 1500 m², in the Upper Lavra territory) has been identified. According to the author's Archaeological map, the first cultural layer of the 11th century is located there at a depth of approx. 3 m.

The implementation of the planned works can start no earlier than 2026. To do this, it is necessary to:

- Reinforce staffing capacity of the Department of Archaeology and give those delivering the Program the opportunity to concentrate on this project only.
- Allocate separate funding for permanent long-term excavations (approximately 3-5 years) followed by the annual conservation of the discovered artifacts.

Plenary Session: Feedback from Veterans and Discussion

S26: Exploring Human-Animal Entanglements in Archaeology: A More-Than-Human Approach

Session Organisers:

Emma Jenkins (Institute for Modelling Socio-Environmental Transitions, Bournemouth University) & Lisa Yeomans (Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen/Institute of Archaeology, University College London).

Session abstract:

Archaeological inquiry has evolved to encompass a more holistic view of human societies, recognizing the intricate relationships between humans, animals, and their environments across time. This session seeks to explore our understanding of these relationships through a more-than-human approach, emphasizing the dynamic entanglements that have shaped both human cultures and animal ecologies.

Animals have been integral to human societies as sources of food, labour, materials for technology, and companionship. Beyond utilitarian roles, they have been subjects of symbolism, spiritual significance, and artistic expression, influencing cultural identities and belief systems worldwide. Such interactions are not one-sided but involve reciprocal influences where animals, as active agents, have impacted human behaviour and vice versa.

This session invites contributions that explore how archaeological evidence illuminates these multifaceted relationships and focus on the complexities of human-animal entanglements across diverse cultural and environmental contexts.

Keywords: Zooarchaeology; human/animal entanglements; more than human approaches

More-than-archaeologists: Studying rat-human interactions across disciplines

Daan Jansen (University of York, daan.jansen@york.ac.uk)

Studying non-human animals within the humanities is an inherently contradictory task to which no single discipline can do justice. Just as animals challenge human notions of structure, transgressing borders and boundaries both physical and imagined, so too do they invite scholars and scientists to abandon our notions of strictly separate disciplines. The need for interdisciplinary research to address the challenges of the twenty-first century is evident and often called for, and animal studies has been long on the forefront of developing interdisciplinary methods. Just as our studies are more-than-human, we must become more-than-archaeologists.

The RATTUS project brings together researchers from a wide range of disciplines, from zooarchaeology to ancient DNA, to study the long history (or short archaeology) of rats – perhaps the most transgressive species of all. This paper reports from the rat-infested trenches of interdisciplinarity. It discusses the particularities of being part of an animal research-oriented interdisciplinary group, specifically from the perspective of an animal historian. The varying perspectives, informed by sometimes vastly differing epistemologies, lead to occasional misunderstandings which in turn become ground for creativity. Findings from historical research help guide and interpret the archaeological work, and thinking like an archaeologist informs how a historian can go about studying subjects that cannot write and are rarely written about, leaving little source material to work with.

The stories of working across disciplines are illustrated with the many fascinating (preliminary) findings we have already made. These include findings regarding physical rats, such as their migration, but also findings regarding cultural rats, such as how human cultural attitudes toward rats shifted over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries after a new rat species was

introduced into Europe. Crucially, the paper will explore how these two influence and inform one another.

Anthropogenic Niche Construction and Multi-Species Entanglements: Insights from Pınarbaşı, Boncuklu Höyük, and Çatalhöyük, Anatolia

Emma Jenkins (Institute for Modelling Socio-Environmental Transitions, Bournemouth University, UK, ejenkins@bournemouth.ac.uk), Michelle Feider (Department of Archeology, University of York, UK), Paul Clarkson (Institute for Modelling Socio-Environmental Transitions, Bournemouth University, UK), Sabrina Renaud (Laboratoire de Biométrie et Biologie Evolutive, Université Lyon, France), Katerina Papayiannis (The Malcolm H. Wiener Laboratory for Archaeological Science, American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Greece), Greger Larson (The Palaeogenomics & Bio-Archaeology Research Network, Research Laboratory for Archaeology and History of Art, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK), Kristina Tabadda (The Palaeogenomics & Bio-Archaeology Research Network, Research Laboratory for Archaeology and History of Art, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK), Lisa Yeomans (Department of Cross Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark), Emilie A. Hardouin (Department of Life and Environmental Sciences, Bournemouth University, UK), Thomas Cucchi (Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France) & Douglas Baird (Department of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool, UK).

This paper focuses on the microfauna from three key sites in the Konya Plain, Anatolia, which span the Epi-Palaeolithic to the Late Neolithic period: Pınarbaşı, Boncuklu Höyük, and Çatalhöyük. Using traditional taxonomic and taphonomic approaches, coupled with aDNA and Geometric Morphometric analyses, we explore the cascade effect that anthropogenic niche construction had on microfauna and small carnivores. This led to unintended yet complex multi-species entanglements, showcasing how non-human species had a profound impact on the humans they lived alongside, ultimately influencing human ritual beliefs and practices.

Evolution or revolution in the small animal world

Paul Clarkson (pclarkson@bournemouth.ac.uk)

Evolution, the genetic turnover of individuals that occurs generationally in a population, is largely predicated on natural selection (Mayr, 2002). 'Natural' selection became increasingly 'anthropogenic' from prehistoric times onwards and small animals with short generation spans and constrained environmental needs reacted swiftly to what people did. We consider whether changes in the house mice population at Ganj Dareh in the Iranian Zagros were more revolutionary than evolutionary by using the archaeological record and GMM and ADNA.

Reimagining Human-Animal Entanglements in Late Chalcolithic Mesopotamia (c. 4000-3100 BCE): Perspectives from Shakhi Kora, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Synnøve Heimvik (University of Edinburgh, Synnove.Heimvik@ed.ac.uk).

Animals are living beings with the ability to act-back, and alongside humans shape the world around them. This dynamic relationship between human and animals underpinned many of the socio-political developments that unfolded in the early urbanising societies of the Late Chalcolithic (LC), also referred to as the Uruk Period (c. 4000-3100 BCE) in Mesopotamia, modern-day Iraq. Despite literacy only developing in the latter part of the LC, views on human-animal relationships for this period have been examined almost entirely through administrative texts. This retrospective application of economic narratives produces a skewed perspective, where animals are rendered only as passive resources to be exploited. Zooarchaeological investigations of LC faunal assemblages have, in turn, focused on identifying the shift to intensive extraction of 'secondary products' – i.e., milk, wool, and traction.

These economic perspectives contrast sharply with the more nuanced discourse surrounding human-animal relationships in earlier prehistoric periods, which have largely moved away from purely economic interpretations granting animals capacity for agency and social influence. This paper challenges the reductionist economic lens applied to LC animals, instead imagining the role of animals through a progressive social zooarchaeological framework. By moving away from text-based inferences, and focusing instead on actual zooarchaeological evidence, this study will explore complex human-animal relationships throughout the LC urbanisation process. Special focus will be on the faunal material produced by the Sirwan Regional Project's excavation at Shakhi Kora, situated along the Diyala River in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The site spans c. 1000 years of continuous LC occupation and offers the potential for detailed diachronic understandings of these complex interspecies entanglements.

Multispecies interactions at an Eastern Jordanian wetland in the Late Pleistocene and Early Holocene

Lisa Yeomans (Department of Cross Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark and UCL Institute of Archaeology, UK, zhr605@hum.ku.dk), Maria Codlin (Department of Life Sciences and Systems Biology, University of Turin, Italy), Beatrice Demarchi (Department of Life Sciences and Systems Biology, University of Turin, Italy) & Camilla Mazzucato (Department of Cross Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark).

This paper examines faunal evidence from Shubayqa in Eastern Jordan bringing together results of morphological and proteomic identification to investigate the interactions between the multitude of species drawn to a wetland environment. Here we discuss niche construction activities by numerous species inhabiting the wetland and surrounding environment to envisage how changes induced by one species influenced others. Over the course of nearly 4000 years, from c. 14,400 to 10,600 cal BP, the entanglements between species are reconstructed and allow us to better understand the changing resources within this productive environment.

ZooMS and Isotopic analysis of El Hammar and El Hattab II caves

S. Iken (University Institute of Geology, University of A Coruña, Spain, National Institute of Archaeological Sciences and Heritage, Rabat, Morocco, shaymae_ik@hotmail.com), A. Bouzouggar (National Institute of Archaeological Sciences and Heritage, Rabat, Morocco) & A. Grandal-d'Anglade (University Institute of Geology, University of A Coruña, Spain).

The identification of fossil taxa is the main goal of paleontology. Knowing the composition of communities is fundamental to characterizing past ecosystems and understanding changes in environment and climate. However, taxonomic identification of animal remains is not always straightforward due to the high degree of fragmentation that bones tend to present. Recently, a technique of molecular biology (proteomics) has been developed for the identification of bone fragments, through the collagen peptide fingerprinting by mass spectrometry (ZooMS). This requires the collagen to be removed from the bones and that this collagen maintains a good degree of preservation. Breaking the collagen molecule between specific amino acids with tripsine, the obtained set of peptides can be identified by MALDI-TOF (Matrix-Assisted Laser desorption/ionization, time of flight). Some of them are characteristic of a certain taxon, and their presence or absence will allow us to differentiate the taxon from which they come, working as true markers.

In this work we applied those techniques to animal bones remains from the cave sites of El Hammar and Hattab II, both located in northern Morocco during End-Pleistocene and Holocene. In those two sites, the bone sample is usually fragmented and therefore taxonomic identification was only possible in a low percentage of the remains. However, the results obtained allowed us to broaden the faunal spectrum and the number of remains identified, including ursids, felines and several ungulates. Not only that, but also, we make an isotopic analysis for our samples to reconstruct the ecology of our species the collagen, and then

analyzing the carbon and nitrogen isotopic ratio. In addition to reporting on the type of diet of the organisms, they reflect environmental variables such as the degree of tree cover, temperature, humidity of the environment or the altitude and orographic conditions of the area where they lived.

Changing the lens: human-animal entanglements in Portuguese Holocene Prehistory

Nelson J. Almeida (Universidade de Évora, Portugal, nelson.almeida@uevora.pt).

Traditionally, archaeologists have had difficulty with wider views of human-animal intangible relations. In certain countries, the legislation and impact of zooarchaeology have been neglected, only more recently assuming a place where its contribution to the past starts to be discussed beyond mere subsistence. Opposite to other non-Euro-Western visions, this dynamic decisively impacts research, with human-animal entanglements and more-than-human perspectives remaining embryonic.

Portuguese archaeology is one of these cases – we lack proper legislation for faunal remains recovery and study – and this impacts funding, discussion and interpretation. However, a few colleagues have highlighted human-animal relations in the last years, emphasising the need, as occurs elsewhere, to look at animals under a different lens. This relates mostly to experts working on rock art, although important contributions have been made by archaeologists and zooarchaeologists alike. Late Prehistory contexts, especially recently excavated, are rich in information, but strikingly, hunter-gatherer archaeology has been left out of these discussions. Also, due to their archaeological “visibility” and supposed special status within these periods, some species have historically been more central in these discussions (e.g., deer, dog).

Following previous work and acknowledging data limitations, we intend to look at human-animal entanglements during the Holocene Prehistory, thus dealing with hunter-gatherer-fishers, early agro-pastoralists and early metallurgists, in today’s Portuguese territory. Even if subsistence plays a major role in these periods, it can be imbued with other meanings, as we know from archaeological and anthropological records and current times. Changing the lens on existing evidence allows us to discuss human-animal entanglements together with concepts of segmentation and participation, structured deposition, entanglement, personhood, agency, materiality and cumulative biographies in a *longue durée* perspective.

The Use of Animal Resources in the Economic Model of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra

Sergiy Taranenko (Department of Bioarchaeology of The Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine, taransun@ukr.net), & Mykhailo Kublii

Archaeological research at the National Reserve "Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra" began in the early 20th century, but the first professional osteological studies were conducted only at the end of the 20th century. Excavations revealed the presence of cultural layers dating back to the Eneolithic period. The Pechersk monastery has existed since the 11th century to the present day. These layers have yielded animal bones belonging to terrestrial fauna, ornithofauna, and ichthyofauna. The bones belonged to both domesticated and wild species.

Most of the bones were found in kitchen waste. Among them, species of domestic mammals and birds, as well as game and fish, were identified. By analyzing the kitchen waste, it is possible to reconstruct methods of preparing meat dishes.

It has been established that some agricultural animals were raised directly on the premises, or at least the slaughter of animals occurred on site. To supply the monastery, hunting was conducted for wild ungulates and hares. Additionally, sporadically, bones of animals that were not part of the monastery's economic scheme, such as bears, have been recorded.

Some bones were used for bone carving—a craft that traditionally developed within the monastery. There are also animal bones used for practical purposes, including those of horses, dogs, and cats.

Woolly thinking: St Kilda's three ancient sheep races

Andrew Fleming (Independent researcher, andrewfleming43@btinternet.com)

The St Kilda archipelago lies some 60 km west of the Western Isles of Scotland. Its only seriously habitable island, Hirta, saw the successive introduction of three pre-modern races of sheep – the ancestors of Soays (in the Neolithic/Bronze Age), then those of Borerays (probably in the 'Iron Age' in a broad sense) and then those of the St Kildas (whose descendants are now 'Hebrideans'). When new sheep arrived, their predecessors were 'exiled' to other islands (Soay and Boreray). The St Kilda 'Rosetta stone' may eventually be helpful to 'sheep historians' including geneticists working on 'Northern short-tails' across a broad NE Atlantic/Baltic region. The first two sheep introductions are virtually contextless. However, a 'Norse' context for the St Kildas would raise several interesting questions about the contemporary value of sheep to humans, the role of small island societies within the Norse realm of the 'Southern Isles', not to mention human power relationships. There is also the question of modes of sheep management, including ferality, and the interdependence of different aspects of 'the economy' on an island like Hirta. This paper explores some of these issues.

S27: Experimental archaeology: a useful methodology for researching the evolution of cognitive and behavioural complexity?

Session organiser

Helen Hampton (Independent/York University, h.hampton@alumni.ucl.ac.uk)

Session abstract:

The evolution of cognitive and behavioural complexity is a major focus of Palaeolithic research. Experimental archaeology - a hypothesis-driven, practical approach for testing theories about past production processes - has contributed to this field as a provider of a “maker’s knowledge” (Currie, 2022, 337). Interpretation of this knowledge can involve assessment of the relative behavioural complexity of a process. For lithic studies this can be the number of discrete production steps (Perreault et al., 2013, S398) or degree of “indirect thinking” (Köhler, 1925; Muller et al., 2017, 166).

To what degree do the results of experimental archaeology confirm or contradict prior assumptions about the evolutionary trajectory of behavioural complexity? How should we interpret expedient or ad hoc behaviour?

Experimental archaeology can also be used to test hypotheses about alternative methods of production. Should we expect different human populations or species to display the same evolutionary pathways for tool production?

This session invites contributions from authors who have used experimental archaeology to investigate cognitive or behavioural complexity, or to test new hypotheses about tool use – whether for the Palaeolithic or more recent prehistory.

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Keywords: Experimental archaeology; Palaeolithic; Evolution; Behavioural; Complexity

A “Leap” Too Far? Experimental Archaeology and the Nature of the Oldowan- Acheulean Transition

James Clark (University of Cambridge, UK)

The Acheulean—as defined by the presence of large bifacial tools (“bifaces”) in archaeological assemblages, or a relationship to such assemblages—is often considered a critical transition in hominin cognitive evolution. This has largely been because the intrinsic features of bifaces, alongside their wide spatio-temporal distribution, were seen to be reflective of a shift towards shaping (or *façonnage*) raw material into a final artefact form with a specific purpose, which would require modern- like cognitive traits. This includes a

propensity for extensive planning, the ability to form mental templates, and perhaps even a sense of aesthetic appreciation. Experimental archaeology has played a critical role in operationalising such hypotheses, and has been used as a more scientific basis from which to support this broad link between the appearance of bifaces and cognitive development across the Oldowan-Acheulean transition.

At the same time, however, a large majority of this work focuses on comparing Oldowan technology to the Acheulean from the Middle Pleistocene, at least 1 Million Years after bifaces appeared in the archaeological record. Very few studies have focused specifically on the transition between industry, and whether the concepts involved in the earliest bifaces reflect a genuine rupture in the nature of hominin tool production, or whether they are the outcome of a much longer-term process with shared technological aims throughout. Here, I present results of an experimental study aiming to explore the hypothesis that bifaces functioned as specialised core forms in the Early Acheulean, sharing the focus on flake production for which the Oldowan is known. The results narrow the perceived technological gap between the two industries, and suggest that any cognitive change at this point in time was extremely minor. This also underlines the potential of experimental archaeology for exploring the nature of cognitive evolution on the hominin lineage.

Cognitive Extensions: Hand-Tool Interaction and Visuospatial Integration in Human Evolution

Annapaola Fedato (UKRI Postdoctoral Individual Fellow, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, UK).

This study investigates the role of hand-tool interactions in the evolution of cognitive and behavioral complexity through the lens of experimental archaeology. By examining tool morphology, grasping patterns, and electrodermal activity during tool use, we explore how hominins integrated tools into their body schema, influencing both spatial planning and cognitive processes. The analysis reveals that Acheulean tools, compared to earlier Oldowan artifacts, required greater visuospatial integration and cognitive involvement, particularly in terms of attention and motor coordination. These results suggest that tool use extended beyond mere functionality to reshape cognitive pathways, reinforcing the co-evolution of brain, body, and technology. The inclusion of electrodermal measures provides new insights into the emotional and attentional demands of tool use, highlighting the deep connection between technological development and cognitive evolution. This study contributes to understanding how hominin populations may have followed diverse cognitive trajectories based on their tool-making practices, with implications for interpreting archaeological records and behavioral complexity in human evolution.

Re-thinking about bipolar technique: New Approaches to the Bipolar Flaking Technique: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Kinematic Perspectives

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The bipolar technique, a method of lithic flaking and retouching, has been utilized from as early as 3.3 million years ago to the 20th century, albeit with diverse geographical and chronological occurrences. This approach involves the intentional contact of a hammerstone

with a core placed on an anvil, which some researchers have hypothesized as a low-skill strategy for hominins who struggled with free-hand flaking.

In a controlled experiment, we recruited 12 participants with varying knapping expertise to flake a quartzite cobble using the bipolar technique. Then, we conducted a 2D video motion analysis to measure key functional parameters, such as hammerstone position, velocity, acceleration, and kinetic energy. We also applied a technological analysis of the resulting lithic assemblages to identify any skill-related differences in bipolar flaking strategies.

The findings reveal distinctions: intermediate knappers applied greater velocity and kinetic energy than both experts and novices, while expert knappers demonstrated longer, more sustained reduction sequences. Novices, in contrast, often struggled to produce any flakes. These results highlight the technical complexity of the bipolar technique and suggest a need to reconsider prior assumptions that link it with lower skill levels.

Cognition and the origins of aceramic cooking: An experimental study of wet-cooking in organic vessels

Andy Needham (Department of Archaeology, University of York, York, UK), Andy Langley, (Department of Archaeology, University of York, York, UK), Roland Kroger (Department of Physics, University of York, York, UK), Gabriel Cifuentes-Alcobendas (Departments of Archaeology & Physics, University of York, York, UK; Area of Prehistory Department of History and Philosophy, University of Alcalá, Spain), Alexandre Lucquin, Department of Archaeology, University of York, York, UK) & Aimée Little (Department of Archaeology, University of York, York, UK).

Fire management is a major human evolutionary step, offering the advantage of being able to cook. The connected questions of fire harnessing and the development of cooking are of central importance in human evolution, carrying implications for the extraction of additional energy from food, perhaps dietary change, and probable energetic facilitation of brain growth in hominins, with implications for cognition. While evidence for early traces of fire and for ceramics grows, aceramic cooking technology remains poorly understood, with potentially a significant period of container use being archaeologically unrecognisable. This has encouraged the presumption that, prior to ceramics, cooking must have been simplistic, with an inability to enclose foods in a container with water.

Actualistic experiments were used to test two cooking techniques - the Direct Fire method (fire positioned below a container to heat the contents) and the Hot Stone method (fire used to heat stones that are transferred into a container to heat the contents) - using minimally modified animal stomachs and hides as containers. Results show 1) water can be boiled in aceramic containers and 2) sub-boiling temperatures can be maintained for protracted periods. The simple material culture repertoire used leaves open a long history of use for this technological repertoire. While previous discussions of aceramic technology have focussed on the ability to boil, sub-boiling temperatures are a staple of some cuisines. Approaching the heating of water as a series of functional thresholds, rather than as an obstacle to reaching boiling point, potentially alters the way we view the evolution of container technologies, and perhaps also early hominin cognition.

Walking a Mile in Their Shoes: An Experimental Approach to the Question of Neanderthal Footwear.

Phoebe Baker (University of Liverpool, UK) & Andy Needham (University of York, UK).

Footwear is a key aspect of dress for many contemporary communities around the globe, frequently associated with both functionality and identity. Whilst some degree of clothing use is now mostly accepted for Neanderthals, taphonomic constraints have created a conversation limited to establishing fundamental baselines such as the links between clothing and changes in environment and ecology, and the possible materials and methods associated with clothing production. This has meant that until this point, little dedicated work has been dedicated to the form and function of specific aspects of clothing such as footwear. Footwear may have performed a similar role in Middle Palaeolithic society to that in contemporary society and may have even been vital for those living in colder climates.

This talk presents the results of a series of experiments designed to explore the range of potential Neanderthal cold-weather footwear and their effectiveness. Five different configurations of footwear were tested which ranged in their 'complexity.' These configurations included examples proposed in the literature as well as novel configurations. All configurations utilised materials and methods thought to have been available during the Middle Palaeolithic. These were tested for mechanical and thermal durability through a two-pronged assessment involving walking followed by controlled heating. The former approach allowed for consideration of wearability and durability, while the latter provided data on insulative properties.

Our results indicate that 'simplicity' in shoe design may not necessarily disadvantage insulation and wearability. In this way, these experiments show how experimental archaeology can be a valuable tool in testing preconceived ideas about the necessity of 'complex' clothing in the Middle Palaeolithic world.

Bringing Neanderthals in from the cold: introducing an experimental methodology to test the hide cutting and piercing capacities of Mode 3 technology

Helen Hampton (independent/ University of York), Andy Needham (University of York).

Modelling of the insulation needs of anatomically modern humans (AMH) and Neanderthals living in Europe during the late Middle/Upper Palaeolithic predicts some members of both species would have needed clothing to survive cold climates. Although no direct evidence of Palaeolithic clothing exists, indirect evidence - skinning of animals for hides and the presence of lithic scrapers and bone smoothers, supports the hypothesis that both species processed hides for clothing.

The presence/absence of specialized cutting and piercing tools is argued to permit differentiation between complex (fitted and sewn) and simple (cape-like) clothing. The laminar stone blades and pointed bone tools of AMH Mode 4 technology are argued to meet the requirements for creating complex clothing. The absence of bone points and stone blades in Neanderthal Mode 3 technology, is cited as evidence that Neanderthals made simple, cape-like clothing.

Differences in Neanderthal and AMH technology and clothing type, have influenced discussions about the evolution of technological and behavioural complexity. So far, however, the assumption that the more expedient, Mode 3 technology is unsuitable for making complex clothing, has gone untested. Fortunately, experimental archaeology provides an opportunity to establish empirical evidence of the functional capacities of Mode 3 technology for creating clothing. This talk will introduce the methodology to be used in a PhD which will begin in September 2025.

Many ways to get to the point: Experimental insights into the behavioural complexity involved in Middle Stone Age point-making

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The Middle Stone Age of southern Africa involved a marked diversity of lithic points, including triangular flakes (unretouched and retouched), Still Bay foliate bifaces, and Howiesons Poort backed blades. While these pointed artefacts may have served many functions, circumstantial evidence like basal thinning and tip cross sectional area, as well as more direct evidence like residues and diagnostic impact fractures, suggests they were at least sometimes used as spear, dart, or arrow tips. Those that served as tips could have been hand thrust or thrown, or propelled via a spear thrower or bow.

The cognitive implications of these various delivery mechanisms have been well explored. But the behavioural complexity involved in the manufacture of the armatures themselves is less well understood. We thus zoom-in on the minutia of their reduction sequences, to ask how different methods of point-making differ in their requisite behavioural complexity. The three point methods (triangular flakes, foliate bifaces, and backed artefacts) represent radically different solutions to the same problem, namely the need for a sharp pointed stone. We thus seek commensurate means of estimating their problem-solution distances and the degree of indirect thinking involved. These three point making strategies are based upon fundamentally different lithic reduction sequences: prepared core *sensu lato* (including discoidal, Levallois-like, and Levallois technologies), bifacial, and blade core knapping respectively. This talk will synthesise results from a series of knapping experiments that seek to estimate the cognitive and skilful demands levied on past hominins by these different reduction sequences. The production of dramatically different points of varying levels of behavioural complexity within a relatively narrow timespan is a valuable reminder for why we should treat this complexity as branching and multidirectional, and attests to the behavioural flexibility of MSA hominins.

The replication and hafting experiments of Blade and Flake Technology in Late Palaeolithic Settlement of Laranga, North Karanpura Valley, Jharkhand.

Pronil Das (Department of A.I.H.C. & Archaeology, Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute (Deemed to be University), Pune, India).& Shubham Rajak (Department of A.I.H.C. & Archaeology, Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute (Deemed to be University), Pune, India).

The emergence of blade technology and the systematic preparation of blade cores are one of the major technological evolutions of Early Anatomically Modern Hominids. The systematic multiple-blade reduction sequence with a single prepared fluted core or non-cortical chunk core is a fundamental characterization of Late Palaeolithic and microlithic lithic assemblage. However, the emergence of blade technology did not lead to the

cessation of flake-based retouch tools within this cultural context and prehistoric hunter-gatherers of the Late Pleistocene-Early Holocene might have morphologically diversified the blade and flake tools which needed variations in striking angles and reduction techniques. The interpretation of technological and physical mobility diversification of blade-and-flake-based assemblage with the prepared core elements can help us to interpret the knapping techniques and efficacy of blades in relationship with the striking angle and knapping skills. In the present research, we aimed to interpret the replication and hafting- behavioural aspects of the blade-and-flake-based assemblage of Late palaeolithic assemblage of the semi-dry forested plateau region of North Karanpura Valley, Jharkhand.

This research has analysed the blade and flake elements found from the open-air site of Laranga (LRG) where tools were prepared by using locally available quartz, quartzite, and ortho- quartzite. The present study has tried to interpret the tool preparation technology and retooling operation as well as hafting technology. This research has found the hafting of blades as well as use of other ingredients like adhesives(gums), wood, bones for the base of the tools. Paper will also focus on the usage of the hafted tools.

Different bronze alloying techniques, different possibilities: how experimentation shapes existent histories of technology

Julia Montes-Landa (McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge), Simon Timberlake (McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge) & Marcos Martín-Torres (McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research; Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge).

The accepted narrative on the prehistory of bronze alloying technology follows deterministic assumptions of technological progression that ignore the role of contextual and performance factors in the decision-making processes. It predicts that newer techniques were overwhelmingly more advanced than older ones and hence replaced them. We present a critical synthesis of worldwide literature to expose that, contrary to predictions, the oldest alloying techniques persisted for centuries after newer ones were invented, and several techniques usually coexisted in the same contexts. These findings could be explained by differences in performance between techniques, (dis)advantageous at different settings. To obtain empirical information on the performance of techniques and test for behaviourally relevant differences between them, a series of alloying experiments were conducted. The results show that all techniques can produce objects of broadly equivalent quality while offering different trade-offs during production. Therefore, every technique—or a combination—can be advantageous under certain conditions, and there are no grounds to support a linear development. This debunks the traditional narrative and predicts that co-smelting and cementation techniques were more frequently practiced in the past than assumed.

These conclusions demand readjusting existent explanatory models of bronze production organisation, trade, and consumption and open unexplored research paths.

SG: General Session

Part 1: Iconographic landscapes, indigeneity and emancipation

The spirals in Atlantic neolithic rock art all spin clockwise: a theoretical foundation for an ideographic/pictographic approach to a decipherment of the iconography of Newgrange, County Meath, Ireland.

William Murphy (University College Dublin).

This paper presents the argument that spirals in the neolithic passage grave and open air rock art of Ireland and Britain always and only spin clockwise. This hypothesis begins with the spiral carvings on the Entrance Stone at Newgrange - with the change in direction of their spin across the midline of the stone. This change in spin provides the basis for considering that the carvings at Newgrange may consist of ideograms and pictograms, containing information that was meant to be extracted and understood in a reasonably straightforward way by the contemporary reader. The hypothesis is consistent with all currently available evidence, passes two moderately severe tests of falsifiability, and leads to interesting novel insights.

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Curation and (re-)creation: not so hidden monuments; a solar legacy

Robert Sutton (Cotswold Archaeology Director of Heritage Consultancy).

Arguably, over the past 20 years the construction of solar farms has had the greatest influence on the rural character of English and Welsh landscapes. Heritage professions are directly and intimately involved in determining the location of, and shaping the layout of, hundreds of solar farms every year. Alongside other environmental factors buried archaeological remains are often protected from the perceived effects of construction via 'no build zones'.

This paper conveniently ignores the wider landscape character of the solar farm, focusing in on where the panels aren't being erected. While the intention of these no build zones is to prevent the loss of archaeological evidence, the side effect is the creation of a twisted inversion of our landscape; invisible, buried remains are taking on a surface expression, of sorts. Gaps are being created within the 'strings' of panels, apparent from the ground and from the air. These pot marks, these 'non-places' haunt our new 21st century landscapes, often without explanation or interpretation. Sometimes these vacant areas eerily match the dimensions and scale of lost prehistoric burial mounds. In other locations land parcels are subdivided: solar panels to the left of me; the remnants of an Iron Age settlement to the right. In other cases, new monuments are being created based on scant evidence, when maybe nothing survives or ever existed.

The understanding of archaeological and historic interest is the bedrock (or should be) of decision-making when it comes to the curation and interpretation of our heritage. Yet something is awry here; our landscapes are evolving, as they always have, but is this intelligent design?

Indigenous Involvement for Rock Art Protection in the Vindhyan Range: How Indigenous Archaeology can preserve Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Central India

Shriya Gautam (*Speaking Archaeologically*).

India has the third largest reserve of rock art sites in the world, of which 55% lie in the state of Madhya Pradesh. However, the study of these sites remains largely dominated by colonial narratives while the modern research on these shelters is limited to new reports or suggestions for future research. To compound the problem, most of these sites are slowly being lost to both natural and anthropogenic factors despite the best attempts of archaeologists employed in the region and foreign scholars frequenting these sites. One major factor responsible for this is the indifference of the ethnic communities inhabiting the forest areas surrounding these sites. This problem is particularly more pronounced in the Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh, where the tribal communities inhabiting areas closest to these sites do not culturally relate to the motifs or the rock art in their regions. As a result, several of these shelters are encroached, converted into dwellings, temples and toilets or mined for sandstone.

The present paper is based on an interactive initiative undertaken by the author while working on these sites, which required engaging with the ethnic communities in order to access the sites. Since the local tribals of Bhil, Gond, Lodhi, Naik and Meena communities are economically affluent and have access to modern amenities such as smartphones and internet connectivity, the need to create archaeological awareness and stakeholderhood among indigenous communities was particularly felt during the fieldwork conducted from September 2023 to February 2024. This paper is therefore based on the practical problems faced while attempting to empower indigenous stakeholders of rock art sites in the Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh and familiarising them with the benefits that digital, non-invasive recording can have for the region, culturally as well as economically.

It will talk about the benefits of promoting indigenous digital archaeology but will also critically analyse the challenges faced in trying to contextualise these sites for the locals who do not connect to them culturally or emotionally.

Emancipatory Archaeology: A Proposal

Guo Peng Chen 陈国鹏 (*University of Oxford*)

This paper proposes a collective project of archaeology *emancipatory archaeology* — an approach that seeks to leverage archaeological research for human emancipation. Emancipatory archaeology is not a theory, or a philosophy. It is a collective initiative for archaeologists and beyond to challenge oppression and foster flourishing lives. It aligns with the broader framework of *emancipatory social science*, as championed by Marxist sociologist Erik Olin Wright (2010), who explored *real utopias*—existing alternative social organisations that offer insights for future societal transformations. Emancipatory archaeology adds a material dimension to these real utopias by drawing on past examples. Emancipatory archaeology has three major tasks. First, it aims to diagnose and critique, exposing biases and oppression within archaeology, while also providing archaeological insights into contemporary issues. Second, it seeks to explore alternatives, illustrating what it means to be human and what might be possible. Rather than offering a detailed blueprint for the future, it advocates for key values for a better future, such as equality and fairness, freedom and democracy, community and solidarity, sustainability and resilience. Finally, emancipatory archaeology envisions paths for social transformation, helping us to imagine alternative societies rooted in these values. Though still a nascent and tentative proposal, this project encourages collaboration among archaeologists, the communities they engage with, and other stakeholders to collectively work out its potential.

Part 2: Imperial entanglements and militias

Imperialism as Structural Totality: Determinism, Teleology and Normativity.

Sahal Abdi (Cambridge University).

Roman imperialism, and imperialism more generally, was initially conceived of as a predetermined strategy of civility and enlightenment. Romanisation as a theory was conceived of in this vein, as a theory that sought to explain the changes seen in Roman Britain. Imperialism has been critiqued for both its determinism and its teleology. In this talk, I am going to controversially defend both these positions, by arguing both defenders and detractors of imperialism as a deterministic and teleological have misunderstood how these ideas relate to the development of imperialism, and of the imperial administration in colonial territories.

To do this, I will introduce the idea of the imperial structure. The imperial structure names the totalising effects of imperialism in a colony. By creating the means to effectively administer the colony, the imperial structure creates its own subjects. These subjects are then forced by dint of this totalising structure to react pragmatically to the new conditions created on the ground. It is in this context that we understand imperialism as deterministic and teleological: the imperial structure determines the range of identities and social relations that exist, and these identities are produced *in the last instance* to adapt to the new structural reality. This is to argue that determinism and teleology are emergent from the social conditions that produced them, and identities as normativity instantiated within the overall imperial structure.

Reflection: mirrors in Roman and Han Empires

Goran Đurđević (University of Zadar).

The Roman Empire and Qin-Han China were two of the most significant and powerful states and empires in antiquity. In recent years, extensive scholarly research has focused on the connections between the Roman Empire and Qin-Han China, encompassing areas such as trade and maritime connections, currency and monetary systems, the dissemination of social ideas, and the exchange of military knowledge. Building upon these research findings, and drawing inspiration from the numerous archaeological discoveries of mirrors in the Roman Empire and Qin-Han China, this proposed project aims to demonstrate how contemporary scholars can utilize specific archaeological artifacts, such as mirrors, to enhance our understanding of social archaeology and gain insights into the ideas and concepts of the ancient and classical world. The primary objective of this project is to conduct a comparative study of mirrors in the Roman Empire and Qin-Han China, analyzing the similarities and differences between the two empires. The central concept chosen as the foundation of this research is "reflection," accompanied by four sub-concepts: (1) soul/spirit and religion; (2) social identity and beyond (dream and fantasy); (3) empire and reflection; and (4) beauty. By employing archaeological remains, findings, and ancient written sources, the study aims to utilize the concept of reflection as a means to connect mirrors within the context of social archaeology. This encompasses the understanding of mirrors as personal items associated with the concepts of soul and spirit, the role of dream and fantasy in mirror usage, and the use of mirrors as artifacts for propagating the ideas and roles of empires as political structures during the Qin-Han and Roman empires.

The role of the military in the evolution of technology through a case study of ceramic and glass production in Roman Britain.

Helena Fahy (Bournemouth University).

The Roman Empire saw the spread of technology and trade goods across all provinces, and this may have been a by-product of the movements of the Roman Military. This paper will explore the role of the military in the transference of technology and whether the evolution of high-temperature production (glass and ceramic) in Roman Britain could be a result of this. Using Freestone's 2000 model of primary and secondary glass production sites the research draws together a desk-based comparison of the excavated remains of glass and ceramic production sites across Britain, and studies of significant artefact assemblages. By discussing evidence of glass blowing and continental workers, relationships between these production sites and military sites can be highlighted and further explored. The results demonstrate that ceramic styles from the provinces (e.g. Samian ware), and Gaulish furnace technology are adopted at British ceramic production sites, and specific types of glass vessels thought to have military links were not simply imported but began to be produced on local sites. Overall, the evidence suggests that the military presence along with a shifting economic attitude and increasing consumer needs resulted in a visible adoption of new technologies and techniques in Roman Britain, and it can be argued that a similar evolution of production took place in other provinces as well.

Part 3: Bodies, kinship and mobility

What Do We Do With The Commingled Sailors? Investigating Disarticulated and Commingled Skeletal Remains As An Under-Utilised Source of Information.

Xander King, Mélie Le Roy, Gabrielle Delbarre & Martin Smith (Bournemouth University).

Within archaeological collections, commingled remains are often underused due to a perception that they are out of context. As a result, they are rarely included within funding requests for commercial osteology and often left unstudied in the storage of museums, leaving aside a whole part of past populations.

When the Plymouth Naval Hospital's cemetery (1762-1825) was excavated in 2007 and 2014, 467 articulated individuals were uncovered along with a large amount of commingled, disarticulated remains. The former has been the focus of several studies of their biology, demography, activity markers and pathology, while the latter was forgotten. This paper will present the results of the biological study of the Plymouth commingled remains and that new information can be gained from these disarticulated remains.

The commingled remains from the Plymouth Naval Hospital represent a minimum of 128 heavily fragmented individuals and likely commingled by a secondary burial deposition. The biological analysis indicates a young population with mixed sex distribution, and approximately half of whom died before reaching skeletal maturity. Pathologies included woven bone, maxillary sinusitis, rickets, dental caries, calculus and tuberculosis. There was also the presence of anatomisation, autopsy and evidence of healthcare with craniotomies, a sawn through mandible and a trephination.

This study demonstrates that this assemblage offers a unique look into life and death in the 17th and 18th Navy and complete the knowledge highlighted by the articulated remains.

‘Kinship work’ in pre-Nuragic Sardinia? Carving community through rock-cut tombs (domus de janas)

Kirsty Lilley (University of Edinburgh, kirsty.lilley@ed.ac.uk).

The *domus de janas* rock-cut tombs of Sardinia provide a rich and diverse dataset through which to consider aspects of pre-Nuragic society (c. 4400-2300 BC), including symbolism, carving technologies, and cultural developments. Despite extensive typo-chronological and cultural-historical studies, the social roles of these tombs, and their centrality to notions of identity, ancestry, and place-making, remain underexplored.

In a recent article, Cummings and Fowler (2023) propose that Early Neolithic chambered tombs in southern Britain were constructed to demonstrate lineage strength and generational choices, a concept that they – and others – refer to as ‘kinship work’. Whilst few *domus de janas* have offered human remains suitable for archaeogenetic analysis, alternative methods exist for examining these concepts in prehistoric Sardinia, such as through architectural decisions, decoration, tomb modification, and the endurance of landscape places through time.

This paper explores how the construction and use of *domus de janas* can be interpreted in relation to social networks and kinship within tomb-building communities. Drawing on architectural information, archaeological and ethnographic comparisons, site diversity and distributions, and archaeogenetic evidence, it suggests that pre-Nuragic groups materialised ideas of kinship and belonging through burial monuments, creating places for ongoing transformation and renegotiation. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of situating these tombs within their broader cultural context, and recognising the diverse strategies communities employed to ‘carve out’ their identities and ancestries in stone.

Archaeogenetics and modes of mobility in the ancient Mediterranean

Hannah Moots (Centre for Palaeogenetics, Stockholm University/Stockholm Natural History Museum).

Since the first ancient human genome was sequenced in 2010, many studies have examined temporal and spatial variations in genetic correlations to estimate past admixture and/or population replacement events caused by large-scale migration. However, human mobility occurs and has occurred in many diverse patterns. These include processes driven by various push and pull factors, from forced or organized labor, military invasion, or refugees from natural or social crises, to trade, pilgrimage, and tourism. Mobility can be seasonal, continuous, or multigenerational, and it can be gender-dependent or independent. These processes, depending on the circumstances, may or may not be identifiable in human archaeogenomic data. In this talk I will examine how the ancient DNA literature has explored these various types of mobility, focusing on the Mediterranean, paying special attention to the ways that interdisciplinary research and the integration of historical, archaeological and bioanthropological sources has allowed for these types of movement and mobility to be distinguished and thoughtfully discussed. I will highlight challenges in the study of mobility patterns, including limits to inference using current-day techniques, developing a shared terminology across disciplines, and ethical pitfalls related to the politicization of results. Finally, I will discuss recent developments that can boost the power of archaeogenomics in revealing the diversity of past human mobility patterns and individual lived experiences.

SP: Poster session

Neanderthal Cultures in Britain and Doggerland: a computational investigation into selected Middle Palaeolithic assemblages.

Alexandra Barroso (Southampton University).

The story of *Homo neanderthalensis* took place at a distant point in time, and has left little durable evidence, besides lithics, through which we can understand it. This human species has often been portrayed as isolated, seclusive and unsocial, but what if this interpretation of aloofness is not entirely correct?

Over the years, research on Neanderthal cultural behaviours has steadily accumulated data confirming their creation and use of symbolic material culture, with some scholars even suggesting that lithic tool morphologies may be regionally distinct and culturally significant. My research exploring the phenomenon of lithic regionalism in North-Western Europe has produced encouraging (though preliminary) results which corroborate this claim and suggest that morphological patterns appear to be present at varying scales of observation. This may reflect some form of stratified mechanism in place for object meaning, expressed through prescribed sets of characteristics.

This project is now being expanded upon using a larger, improved dataset and 3D Geometric Morphometric analyses; it investigates the role of regionalised handaxe morphologies in the communication of socio-cultural information across the sparsely-populated Late Middle Palaeolithic landscape. These symbolic objects could have acted as agents in the dissemination of information about Neanderthal groups, which may have facilitated the monitoring/maintenance of population dynamics, movements, or resources.

Tigers in Film: Past, Present and Future Perspectives

Farah Benbouabdellah (University of Reading).

This interdisciplinary research examines the changes and evolution of tiger representations in visual media by combining anthropology, material culture, art history, and film studies. It analyses depictions of tigers in static images (16th-19th century) and moving images (19th-20th century) to provide a nuanced understanding of the tiger's symbolism and impact across historical contexts. Anthropology contextualises tiger imagery by exploring themes of symbolism and the socio-political implications of representations during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Material culture helps reveal how representations of tigers reflect shifting cultural values and evolving relationships between humans and nature. On the other hand, film studies examine the portrayal of tigers in cinematic narratives, analysing visual techniques, narrative structures, and audience reception in Asian (with particular emphasis on Indian cinema) and Western films from the early 20th century to the present. Art history investigates the aesthetic and historical contexts that have shaped static representations of tigers in various art forms. By synthesising these disciplinary perspectives, this research offers a comprehensive comparative analysis of tiger symbolism, highlighting how cultural, social, and political dynamics have influenced the representation of the animal across various mediums. Ultimately, it seeks to elucidate the tiger's enduring role as an influential cultural symbol, tracing its significance within human society through historical periods.

The evolution of object biography: cauldron's obituary

Wenqing Zhang (The University of Edinburgh).

After years of development and practice of object biography theory in archaeology, I would like to introduce a perhaps radically new concept—the obituary of artefacts. Traditional perspectives focus on the birth and life of objects. I would like to step away from these two stages and pay more attention to the 'death' of objects. I would like to flip our perspective, starting with the end of object lives - not writing biographies but obituaries.

My case study are the cauldrons in Late Bronze Age and Iron Age Britain and the tradition of ending their lives by burying them in hoards as part of the wider metalwork deposition phenomenon occurring in Later Prehistory. Recent studies of cauldron hoards still concentrate on the manufacturing techniques and usages of cauldrons before their deposition. I am interested in the burying and hoarding of cauldrons, tracing geographical and chronological shifts and patterns in deposition. These can reveal relationships and connections between the vessels and other objects deposited together, surrounding contextual information, and any specific landscape features—the circumstances and contexts of cauldrons' death and burial. Burying may also not be the end of a cauldron's story, but an extension and supplement to their roles. Cauldrons begin an afterlife, a second life, when they are recovered from the hoards, through excavation, and subsequent research and interpretation brings them to life again.

Therefore, exploring the distribution, depositional pattern and contextual association of cauldron hoards in Later Prehistoric Britain, I would like to introduce a new theoretical concept, the obituary of cauldrons, as a new means to portray and interpret cauldron hoards, and discuss how the death of cauldrons speaks to the living.

Antiquity Lecture

Ian Hodder (Stanford University, US).

This talk looks critically at the evolutionary paths of archaeological theory in the UK since 1984. There is much to applaud and celebrate but I have become concerned about the perhaps unwitting implications of some of the developments. Two long-term trends are identified – one is the transformation of materialism into materiality, and the other is the gradual decentering of the human. The focus on post-humanism occurs throughout many disciplines in many forms and it is a trend that mirrors societal concerns and debates about AI, the internet of things, cyborgs and singularities, the Matrix rather than meshworks. An argument is made that this displacement of humans parallels the displacement of humans from the work place, from community and from identity. The two trends together weaken attempts by humans to assert their rights in relation to specific material conditions of existence. 'Archaeology in 1984' (*Antiquity* 58(222), pp.25-32) was written in response to Orwell's fantasy. 40 years later, what will be the role of archaeological theory as an Orwellian future beckons?

Keynote lecture

Gill Hey (former CEO, Oxford Archaeology & University of Oxford, UK)

In 1990, Mrs Thatcher's Conservative government issued new planning guidance to local authority planning departments, setting out how archaeological remains on sites to be developed should either be preserved or recorded. Importantly, the cost of any work (mitigation) was to be borne, in the vast majority of cases, by the developer. This fell within the Conservative party's strategy to privatise many sectors of industry and business, to cut costs and red tape and increase efficiency; gas, water and the railways are well-known examples, but consideration was also given to privatising universities. Henceforth, archaeological work in the UK would no longer be the preserve of universities, museums and local government units.

Since that time, there has been an exponential increase in the amount of money spent on archaeology, the size of projects and the number of archaeologists. What has the effect been on the acquisition and sharing of the knowledge gained? This talk will explore how the discipline has evolved, its methodologies, its relationship to theoretical concerns and the benefits (or otherwise) that have been derived.

Greg Egan lecture, Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology

Laura McAtackney (Radical Humanities Laboratory and Archaeology, University of Cork, Ireland/Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, Aarhus University, Denmark).

The question that has haunted me through my research career has been what are the potentials and limits of material culture in revealing unresolved aspects of difficult recent pasts, most specifically in the conflict and peace in the North of Ireland? It is a question I have been trying to answer for over twenty years and one that has involved engaging with various material forms that have constantly been in motion and in flux. My first inclination was to turn to an 'icon' of the conflict, Long Kesh / Maze prison, as a monumental and materially rich site that was largely off-limits to researchers. The politics of its inaccessible dereliction meant I had to consider it in an expansive way as a place with 'distributed self' (2014) that materially and psychically reached far beyond its confines and deep into communities. It was in those communities that I eventually started traversing streets and noting their ever changing configurations of murals, graffiti, and grassroots memorials creating memoryscapes alongside enduringly materialized segregation, so-called 'peace walls'. More recently, I have thought on how my understandings of the conflict has been shaped not only by presences but also absences; a place with a desire for peace but also fear of forgetting injustices. Ultimately, my faith and despair in material answers to loaded questions has evolved in ways that I could never have foreseen at the start and so this lecture will consider what under-explored pasts have been revealed and what are the limits of the material in knowing the contemporary.

Stalls:

- Antiquity
- Ancient Wessex Network
- Archaeopress
- BAR Operations
- Butser Ancient Farm
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA)
- Cotswold Archaeology
- Council for British Archaeology (CBA)
- Equinox Publishers
- Hare & Tabor
- The Prehistoric Society
- The Roman Society
- The Sanctuary
- Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology (SPMA)
- Springer Nature Books