



COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY

CBA Wales/Cymru

CYNGOR ARCHAEOLEG BRYDEINIG

<http://britarch.ac.uk/cbawales>

Newsletter 48 Autumn 2014

New Archaeological Investigations of Mesolithic Flint Procurement Strategies and Tool Making Processes on Anglesey, North Wales

Worked flint tools from the Mesolithic period exhibiting technological processes typical of a post-glacial hunter-forager economy have been consistently discovered on Anglesey, North Wales. Irrespective of the means of the recovery, whether during systematic invasive research or derived from isolated surface finds, this material confirms the presence of both early and later Mesolithic communities with the means to repeatedly, exploit the lithic resources for tool making. The emergent Holocene clearly offered new opportunities for natural resource exploitation by bands of Mesolithic foragers, and the rising sea-level and breaching of the Menai Strait, the re-establishment of the ecology, formation of soft sedimentary features, such as peat beds, mudflats and salt-marshes, are all important factors when assessing the conditions prevalent during the Mesolithic period.

From a preliminary review of the evidence of Mesolithic activity from the archaeological record of Anglesey, many well documented investigations offer comprehensive accounts and provide essential evidence of both Mesolithic broad and narrow blade manufacture. As an example, the west coastal landscape of Aberffraw has proved to be of significance, with worked flint recovered from both systematic invasive and isolated surface collections. Previous field research reports have referred to the quantities of microliths discovered in clayey loam below sandy deposits that underlay the scheduled Bronze Age monument 'Trwyn Du'.

Accounts of the lithic material, including *obliquely truncated points*, and similar locations of research and finds have provided the means for conjecture about chronological frameworks and patterns of land exploitation during the four to five millennia following the end of the last glacial period. Explanations tend to maintain the general view of prehistory, presenting the Mesolithic period as the forerunner to major economic changes, the invisible precursor to the very visible onset of Neolithic monument building.

The Mesolithic archaeological record of Anglesey however, is by no means complete, and typically, a high percentage of worked flint derived from unstratified context and isolated surface finds. Field investigations inevitably appear to show a 'piece-meal' approach to Mesolithic enquiries, with the curated large assemblages often from a small number of individual prominent coastal sites, which may more accurately reflect a proclivity for coastal locations in choices for archaeological investigation on Anglesey rather than Mesolithic primary activities and contemporaneous land-use.

Therefore, the initial stages of a comprehensive archaeological research project, which aims to provide a more complete explanation of the Mesolithic occupation and exploitation of the Anglesey landscape, has been considered and recently commenced. Using general and specific spatial and theoretical areas for investigations, a range of research methods are proposed, involving site prospection, limited invasive evaluations, sampling, recovery and recording. Specific case study field investigations are anticipated to utilise landscape areas for testing explicit ideas regarding Mesolithic occupation, and specialist lithic technological assessments will be made on recovered Mesolithic worked flint and known collections and palaeo-organic remains.

An important yet still unresolved issue relating to the Mesolithic worked flint collections from Anglesey, is the provision of a plausible explanation for raw flint sources and flint procurement strategies. Although good quality research has contributed to the collection and cataloguing of Mesolithic flint finds, with assemblages that include diagnostic types of the Mesolithic period and associated debitage fragments suggesting in-situ tool manufacture, there has been little more than speculation about flint source locations and procurement strategies. Much of the worked material is thought to be derived from fairly poor quality beach flint and chert, with procurement hypotheses suggesting beach pebble foraging on now lost post-glacial coastal areas. Therefore, the proposed investigations will also include studies of the beach flint lithology through systematic surface evaluations by sampling, to make available a general database of existing local flint sources for consideration.

The research in total, aims to provide new archaeological perspectives of the Mesolithic period of Anglesey, several data base for further synthesis and signposts for further investigations, and theoretical considerations into the lifestyle of post-glacial Mesolithic populations in this area of north-west Wales.

Carol White, Anglesey

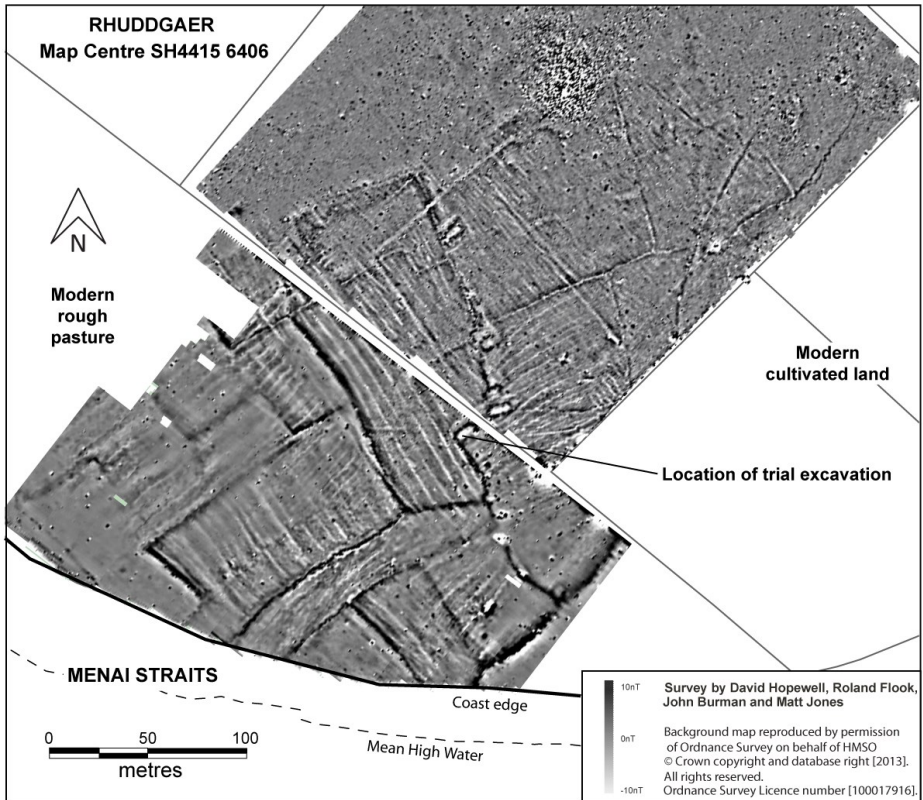


Trwyn Du, Anglesey

Rhuddgaer: A Deserted Medieval Village in Anglesey

Rhuddgaer is a farm lying at the extreme south-west corner of Anglesey, close to the Menai Strait, by the mouth of a small river, the Afon Braint, and facing Caernarfon. The farmhouse itself lies on the summit of a slight hill and within the slighted remains of a small, strongly defended enclosure of presumed Iron Age date, but which has produced evidence of occupation in the Roman period. In the 19th century the remains of a lead coffin of probable 5th-6th century AD date were found in low-lying arable fields to the south. At the same time there are records of a 'destroyed village' in the same general area. A project was subsequently started by Matthew Jones of CR Archaeology to investigate this area, beginning with a sample area of geophysical survey which identified a complex of early field enclosure ditches. A more extensive area of geophysical survey was then carried out by David Hopewell of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust with grant-aid from the Anglesey Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The survey revealed a discrete area of settlement with several probable long huts and their accompanying small fields, still retaining marks of ridge and furrow cultivation (See Fig.). Field walking also produced a scatter of Roman pottery in the north part of the area, where a stony spread suggested the presence of a destroyed structure or cairn. Test pitting suggested that the settlement and its fields had been preserved because of burial under about one metre depth of blown sand. A trial excavation of part of one of the long huts was carried out in January 2014, again with grant-aid from the Anglesey AONB.

The hut was stone-walled and about 12m by 6m externally. Ridge and furrow cultivation in the adjoining field appeared to have continued after the hut had fallen into ruin. The plan of the field system from the geophysical survey suggested at least four phases of layout of small sub-rectangular fields. The overall pattern suggested that it had developed from an earlier system of narrow, elongated strip fields of medieval type. No artefacts were found in association with the long hut but charcoal from within the internal surface produced two radiocarbon dates centred on the first half of the 9th century Cal AD. It seems likely that the settlement is to be identified with a documented but so far not located medieval township of Aber-Braint (Mouth of the Braint). The western end of the Main Strait has been affected by the build up of coastal sand bars over the post-glacial period and by a number of sand blows, the last, possibly greatest and best documented of which, in 1330, buried over a hundred acres of farmland and several cottages at the west side of the village of Newborough. The sand blows created a large dune field, known as Newborough Warren, the eastern edge of which buried the land at Rhuddgaer.



Geophysical survey at Rhuddgaer, Anglesey, showing settlement and field system with cultivation marks.

It seems likely that an Early Medieval settlement here was gradually affected by blown sand and was eventually abandoned, possibly in the 14th century AD. There have been no subsequent major sand blows and the land was later brought back into cultivation, at least by the 18th century. The good preservation of a settlement and its field system of the Early Medieval period is rare and of great potential for future research so further work is envisaged.

David Hopewell and George Smith, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

An update from the Brecon Beacons National Park Young Archaeologists' Club



The Brecon Beacons National Park Young Archaeologists' Club has now been up and running for 9 months, and what a busy 9 months it has been. After our busy and bustling taster event at the Brecknock Museum in October we have jumped feet first into our hands on exploration of our past...

....We have had our arms amputated and skulls trepanned by a medieval barber surgeon....Explored prehistoric cave art and had a go at creating our own....Tried our hand at games played by the Egyptians, the Romans, the Tudors and the Victorians...Investigated the life of local soldiers fighting in the First World War with the help of the Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh...Put our lab coats on for a spot of Crime Scene Investigation to solve a medieval mystery...Explored the forgotten lime heritage of the National Park...Got soaking wet and rained off Mynydd Du on our first ever field trip (ah, the lovely welsh summer!)...Scaled Pen-y-Crug hillfort, channelled our inner celtic warrior and saw off a Roman attack...and, delved into the gruesome world of cesspits, bog bodies and coprolites to understand ancient diet!

The club has been steadily growing month by month, and our membership now ranges from Herefordshire in the east, to Carmarthenshire in the west, and from the Heads of the Valleys in the south to Builth Wells in the north. Our leaders, all volunteers, come from across the National Park and beyond, from various backgrounds and professions, all united by our love of archaeology and desire to share our passion with children and young people who will grow up to be the guardians of our wonderful cultural heritage.

At the end of our first action packed 9 months we are all set to take a short break for the summer before returning for more archaeological fun and excitement in September... so look out for us out and about exploring the Brecon Beacons National Park's heritage. Thanks to our lovely new high vis vests you will be sure to see us coming...

The Brecon Beacons Young Archaeologists' Club is part of a network of Young Archaeologists' Clubs across Wales, and the UK, administered by the Council for British Archaeology. YAC is the only UK-wide club for young people up to the age of 17 interested in archaeology. YAC's vision is for all young people to have opportunities to be inspired and excited by archaeology, and to empower them to help shape its future. The Brecon Beacons Young Archaeologists' Club was established by a group of local volunteers in order to fill a gap in the provision of YAC branches in the Brecon Beacons and the Usk Valley. Brecon Beacons YAC is supported by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

You can find out more about the Brecon Beacons Young Archaeologists' Club by visiting our blog <http://bbyac.wordpress.com/>

To register an interest in joining the club, or find out about our next session please contact Branch Leader Natalie Ward on: 01874 624437
natalie.ward@beacons-npa.gov.uk



Young Archaeologists' Club

Porth Ruffydd, Anglesey : Mesolithic Surface collections

Porth Ruffydd is a small bay at the south side of Holy Island at the north-west end of Anglesey. On the promontory overlooking the bay is an area of peaty heathland traversed by several footpaths from which, over several years, have come a number of lithic surface finds, including two flint cores of Mesolithic type. More recently the late John Hallam organised volunteers from Anglesey to carry out organised surface collection there, the largest quantity of lithic material being collected by Julie Roberts of Holyhead. The resulting collections have been studied as part of an ongoing coastal project for Cadw and will be published later. There are some identifiable differences between assemblages from different areas and there appear to be areas of Early Mesolithic, Later Mesolithic and probably Neolithic flint working. The area is clearly one that was repeatedly visited in the past and is comparable to coastal promontories with extensive lithic surface scatters that are known in South-West Wales and in Cornwall. The reason for the apparent density of prehistoric activity here is uncertain. It is a fairly level area but very exposed to winds from the west. It is best interpreted as a summer camp-site with good access to the nearby rocky shoreline and its marine food resources. However, the presence of a lithic raw material source (pebble flint) might also be involved. The area has considerable potential for more detailed study, especially as some flint scatters, and possibly associated features, must lie relatively undisturbed under the uncultivated peat.

Archaeolegwyr Anturus Eryri – Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, Mawddach Heritage - Canoe Expedition Weekend, June 2014

As part of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust's Archaeolegwyr Anturus Eryri programme, a group of young people took part in an exciting canoe weekend during June. Canoeing down the Mawddach Estuary from Penmaenpwll to Fairbourne, the two day trip saw the young people engaging with the historic landscape in one of Wales most beautiful areas. Some of the highlights from a thrilling itinerary were: a guided walk around the mining landscape of the Dolgellau gold belt, interpreting an Iron Age hill fort (along with a comparison of site plans from different eras), recording a standing stone, interpreting a stretch of Drovers road, an examination of some of the areas post-medieval field systems and a visit to a Grade II listed 18th Century milestone. Also, shortly after canoeing underneath it, we learnt about the history, and architecture of Barmouth Bridge, discussing some of challenges faced by those undertaking restorative work.

We finished the trip with an interpretation of Fairbourne's Second World War anti-invasion defences and their context within a six part strategic defence system. The packed educational itinerary was interspersed by: chips on the beach, riverside camping, foraging for wild food, excellent weather, visiting a field of sundews (magnifying glasses in hand), lively campfire conversation (with marshmallows) and of course the exciting - if at times challenging - paddle down the Mawddach.

Working in partnership with Yr Urdd, who were on hand to provide equipment, logistical support and outdoor instruction, the trip formed part of an on-going programme of activities designed by the young people during autumn last year. The project was made possible by funding from the Heritage Lottery, Young Roots programme and Natural Resource Wales.



Young people listening to media archaeologist Rhys Mwyn at Llugwy burial chamber, Anglesey

Check out the Archaeolegwyr Anturus Eryri Facegroup group

If you're interested in taking part in the project contact Daniel Amor:

Daniel.Amor@heneb.co.uk 01248 366971

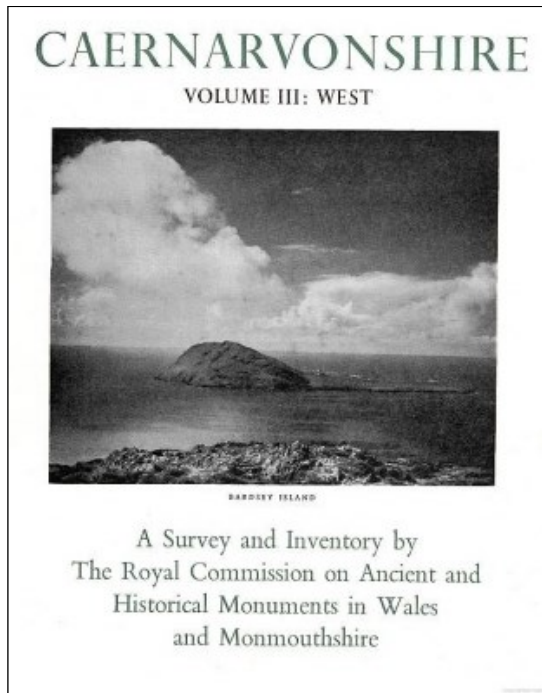
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust: www.heneb.co.uk Twitter: @GwyneddArch



Are you coming to the Llŷn Peninsula in 2014? Do you live here? If so, get your camera out and visit our heritage sites

<http://www.crwydro.co.uk/aberdaron/>

You can be part of a one off project for 2014, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the publication of the third volume of the Royal Commission's Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Caernarvonshire, covering the Cantref of Lleyrn. Fieldwork in Caernarvonshire began in earnest in the late 1930s and continued during the war when, for a short period, the Royal Commission was based in Criccieth. After the war, work continued under the new Secretary A.H.A. Hogg who moved the Commission to Aberystwyth, still the base for its work today.



The 50th anniversary of the publication of Volume III offers the opportunity to re-view and enhance the information published in 1964, by revisiting and recording the monuments listed in its pages in order to enhance our understanding of the archaeological and architectural resources of the area. We are asking people to visit and photograph sites during the course of the year and to upload their images of these sites, and any other comments and observations, onto our webpage (<http://www.crwydro.co.uk/aberdaron/>). This will provide an important snapshot of the surviving heritage of the Llŷn Peninsula. The project is being managed by digital volunteers, members of the local community, who will moderate uploads during the course of this year.

The project demonstrates the huge contribution made by the local society to archaeological research and the value of community recording in raising the profile of archaeology in the area and beyond. In addition to enhancing the National Monuments Record of Wales and the regional historic environment records, the information will be made available on-line to all interested in the rich and varied archaeology of this part of north-west Wales. As the Inventory was written in 1964, English remained the official language of the public sector, and as a result all publications were in English. We have not translated this as it represents the authentic nature of the publication. To conform with the Cymdeithas Archaeoleg a Hanes Llŷn / Llŷn Archaeology and History Society ethos for bilingual engagement with heritage, the website is available in Welsh or English, and we encourage uploads in either language.

The project promotes the fantastic work of the commission - from its hardback inventories to its current digital platform- making the National Monuments Record accessible and identifiable. It will also strengthen the fantastic work that Gwynedd Archaeological Trust undertake through the use of the Historic Environment Record in planning guidance.

The project is a partnership between the RCAHMW and Cymdeithas Archaeoleg a Hanes Llŷn/ Llŷn Archaeology and History Society.

For more information email archllyn@hotmail.co.uk or Jamie on 07773346323

Project partners: Cymdeithas Archaeoleg Llŷn a Hanes Llŷn /Llŷn Archaeology and History Society. Lead Contact: Jamie Davies and Simon Jones

RCAHMW . Lead Contact: David Thomas and Tom Pert

ARCHAEOLOGY FOR ALL

Council for British Archaeology

CBA Wales/Cymru Annual General Meeting and Autumn Symposium 2014

Saturday 18th October 2014

Royal Oak, Welshpool

Business Meeting: 11am—12.30pm

Symposium: 2.00pm - 4.30pm



Cyngor Archaeoleg Brydeinig
WALES • CYMRU
Council for British Archaeology

Newsletter Editor

Items for inclusion in the next newsletter should be sent to:

Dr Gary Robinson

School of History, Welsh History and Archaeology

Bangor University, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2DG

g.robinson@bangor.ac.uk