

COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY

CBA Wales/Cymru

CYNGOR ARCHAEOLEG BRYDEINIG

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

Newsletter 51 Spring 2016

Marches Young Archaeologists' Club

Marches YAC, based in Welshpool, launched in June 2012 and currently has 20 members from a wide area covering Oswestry to the north, Shrewsbury to the east and Newtown to the south. The club is run voluntarily by a dedicated core team of four local professional archaeologists along with a teacher with an archaeological background and an outdoorsman with many years of experience in public engagement and a keen interest in history and archaeology. We have had lots of interesting sessions which we tend to run along different themes. These have included 'What Archaeologists Do', which included geophysical survey, finds processing and map regression; 'The Mesolithic', which included studying and making casts of footprints, making a very long timeline and hunting and gathering; and 'Food and Farming' which included the archaeology and history of beekeeping, bushcraft, studying past diets from 'mock poo', and a session on soldiers and sailors rations through the ages. To fit in with our various themes we also go on visits to local sites or museums, or have demonstrations and workshops with visiting professionals. These have included visits to Beacon Ring Iron Age hillfort near Welshpool, Wroxeter Roman City, Montgomery Castle, Shrewsbury Museum, Ironbridge Gorge Museums, The Old Bell Museum in Montgomery, Park Hall Farm Trenches Experience near Oswestry and Acton Scott Historic Working Farm; and workshops with a geophysicist, a medieval historian and re-enactor and an Environmental Archaeologist doing pollen analysis. We have also had stands at the Welshpool Airshow and Montgomery Show promoting the work of YAC and offering activities for families.





For more information see our website <http://marchesyac.blogspot.co.uk/>

ARCHAEOLOGY ROCKS

Council for British Archaeology

Festival of Archaeology

The Festival showcases the very best of archaeology, with special events right across the UK, organised and hosted by museums, heritage organisations, national and countryside parks, universities, local societies, and community archaeologists.

Over 1000 events take place across the UK each year to give everyone the chance to experience our unique archaeological heritage for themselves. Read more on the Festival website: <http://www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk/whatson>

The Festival of Archaeology 2016 will take place from 16-31 July.

Follow us on Facebook for the latest news:

<https://en-gb.facebook.com/archaeology.for.all?v=wall>

A Celebration of 40 years of the Welsh Archaeological Trusts

Saturday 16th April 2016

St Mary's Priory Centre, Monk Street, Abergavenny, Gwent, NP7 5ND

1.45pm Welcome

1.50pm Chris Musson – Origins of the Trusts

2.10pm Ken Murphy – Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT)
40 Years of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust – edited highlights.

2.30pm Andy Marvell – Gwent and Glamorgan Archaeological Trust (GGAT)
Past achievements and future challenges for GGAT

2.50pm Tea

3.05pm Andrew Davidson – Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT)
Past achievements and future challenges for GAT

3.25pm Paul Belford – Clwyd and Powys Archaeological Trust
Past achievements and future challenges for CPAT

3.45pm Gwilym Hughes – Cadw
“The Bill and the Future” some thoughts on the future in the context of emerging legislation and regulation and how this sets a new context for some of the future work of the Trusts.

4.05pm Plenary and questions

4.15pm Close



Neolithic Village

In October 2014 archaeological works began at Llanfaethlu, on the north coast of Anglesey. This ongoing project has yielded spectacular results and to date three Early Neolithic longhouses and a Middle Neolithic pit group have been excavated at the site. This discovery is of national importance and is the first multi-house settlement of this date found in North Wales. In addition to the structural evidence the site is also of great significance due to the sheer size of the artefactual assemblage recovered which to date includes over a thousand sherds of pottery and over seven hundred stone artefacts. The stone artefacts include fragments of Graig Lywd stone axes, utilised beach pebbles, worked stone and worked flint including a leaf shaped arrowhead.

Early Neolithic House 1

House 1 was 21.6m in length and 7m wide and was orientated on a north-east – south-west axis. A number of different methods had been utilised in the construction of the outer walls of the house and numerous internal stone lined post holes and wall slots were recorded. As in the other structures these divisions create separate compartments within the house and generally formed lines at 90 degrees to the outer walls.

One internal feature was of particular significance and had been treated with special attention by its creators. This posthole was steep sided and flat bottomed; sub-oval in plan and measured 0.73m x 0.65m and was 0.50m in depth. It is similar to the general style of the other postholes of the building; but it is how this feature has been filled and used that provides a fascinating insight into the Neolithic mind. Following the digging of this pit the cremated remains of a sheep or possibly a deer leg joint was placed at its base. This is evidenced by the survival of an intact *astragalus* bone. The cremation must either have taken place *in-situ* or the material placed in the hole whilst it was still very hot as there is reddening of the surrounding clay. A heavily burnt saddle quern had been placed on top of the cremation which perhaps had been burnt as part of the same episode. The quern formed a base or post-pad for a stone-lined posthole and protected/sealed the cremated material below. The final act of ‘structured deposition’ associated with this feature was the “closing” of the opening following the end of the life of the posthole (and possibly the house). The post was removed from its slot and the hole backfilled with stone, closing the earth back over the buried items. It is interesting to think of one feature representing the whole sequence of establishing and then decommissioning the house and further work is needed to see if the timeframe over which this activity took place can be established. The stone backfilling contained a beautifully polished rubbing stone which was carefully pressed into the side of the hole.

Early Neolithic House 2

House 2 was originally interpreted as a sub-square structure consisting of an external circuit of large posts set into substantial stone-lined post holes, with smaller internal posthole rows and wall slots. There were a number of further possible pits/postholes identified against the eastern limits of the excavation area during the January 2015 excavation but no dating evidence was recovered and as these pits were aligned on the same axis as both the Neolithic house and a Post Medieval field boundary it was unclear as to which site phase they were to be attributed.

The house measured approximately 16.6m (east-west) by 9.6m (north-south). There are three outlying postholes to the north of the structure and the largest of these outlying features contained stone packing and would once have held a substantial post. The suggestion is offered that this single large post was possibly carved or adorned and could have served as a marker or totem for the house.

Within the house is a clearly gridded arrangement of stone-lined postholes, some of which are linked by hollows with some surviving packing stones. The somewhat haphazard arrangement of stone packing within these hollows has been taken as evidence that, rather than being beam slots, these trenches are dug to support a wattle and daub structure with the stone packed around the hazel uprights. Pieces of burnt daub were recovered from the hollows during excavation and there was some evidence that this area had been subject to burning. The partition creates a clearly defined square area within the main building which measures approximately 1.60m². There is no obvious entrance into this space and it is possible that the partition was continuous at ground level with a higher opening through which one stepped to gain entry to the inner space. It is clear that this internal division has been replaced/renewed in the same position on at least one occasion.

Early Neolithic House 3

House 3 was defined by a series of postholes, stakeholes and beam slots/hollows and contained a hearth area. These features were arranged to form a rectangular structure measuring approximately 6m by 11.5m and orientated roughly north-east – south-west.

Features attributed to the building show that the interior was divided into clear zones. There was an area of heavy burning approximately in the centre of the building and a clear compartment defined by beamslots/hollows at the south-western end of the building. Within this compartment was a large circular feature with stone packing containing pieces of worked stone, Irish Sea Ware pottery and struck flint along with hazelnut shells. This feature is likely to be the base of a larger feature truncated by later activity. It is located opposite the hearth area in the gap between two opposing beamslots.

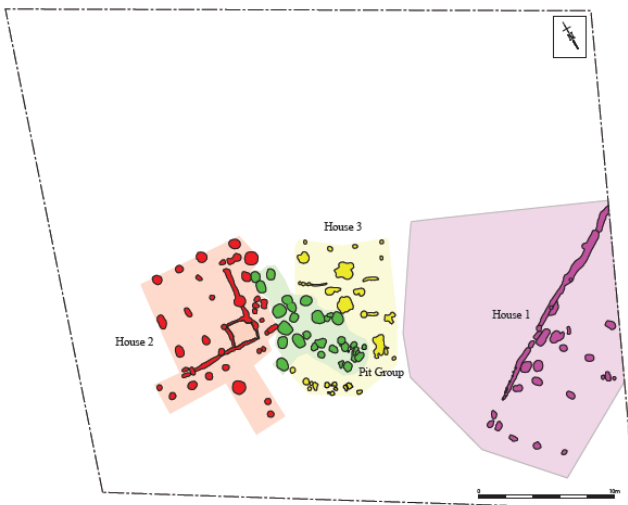
It is hoped that post-excavation work, particularly radio-carbon dating, will help to refine the inter-relationships of these three houses and the length of this Early Neolithic occupation. Dates from other Neolithic settlements and the fact that all three houses are associated with very similar Irish Sea Ware pottery, would suggest that this occupation would have lasted some two centuries (3,800-3,600 BC). The site was re-occupied perhaps some three centuries later (if dates for Mortlake pottery as other sites are a guide) but the way in which the pits are fitted tightly between Houses 1 and 2 might suggest that some indication of their presence persisted, to attract later farmers.

Middle Neolithic Pit Group

The pit group contained 35 cut features - 19 pits, 4 hearths and a number of post/stakeholes. The hearths and pits were broadly similar in terms of size and shape and were circular or sub-circular in plan with bowl shaped profiles. Two of the hearths had stones remaining within them and are likely to have been used as cooking pits. Four of the pits appeared to have had quite large pieces of pottery placed around their sides. The pottery from the pits is essentially Mortlake Ware, a heavily decorated style of bowl with heavy rims and high shoulders. Originally believed to be characteristic of central and south eastern England, it is now being found in increasing quantity in North Wales.

To date Llanfaethlu is the first multi-house settlement of Early Neolithic date in north-west Wales, and whilst it has some striking resemblances to the houses at Llandygai near Bangor and Parc Cybi at Holyhead, it is exceptional in terms of the artefactual assemblage and the level of site preservation. There is a strong resemblance to Irish sites where a recurring pattern of two or three buildings clustered together is evident.

This location has been chosen as a focal point to return to – potentially over a period of several centuries, and in order to position the pit group where it is it would seem that two of the houses must have been visible above ground – either as an abandoned, decaying structure or as earthworks.



C.R Archaeology

ARCHAEOLOGY FOR ALL

Council for British Archaeology

CBA Wales/Cymru Spring Business Meeting and Symposium 2016

A Celebration of 40 years of the Welsh Archaeological Trusts

Saturday 16th April 2016

St Mary's Priory Centre,
Monk Street, Abergavenny
Gwent, NP7 5ND

Business Meeting: 11am—12:30pm
Symposium: 1:45pm - 4.30pm



Newsletter Editor

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

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