**The prehistory of northern England**

*New research over the last 5 years*



Location: Stockton Library, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1TU

Time: 9am-4pm

Date: Saturday 19th October 2024

Keynote Speaker: Richard Bradley

Speakers: Jan Harding, Steve Sherlock, Alison Sheridan, Clive Waddington, ASDU, Paul Frodsham, TAP and Chantal Conneller

**Programme:**

9am                      Registration - Jim Cooke Conference Suite

9:20-9:30            Introduction – Dr Emma Watson

9:30-10:30          Keynote Speaker – Richard Bradley

10:30-10:45        Coffee, tea and biscuits

10:45-11:15        Chantal Conneller

11:15-11:45        Steven Sherlock

11:45-12:15        ASDU

12:15-12:45        Paul Frodsham

12:45-1:30          Buffet lunch and soft drinks

1:30-2:00             Alison Sheridan

2:00-2:30             TAP

2:30-2:45             Coffee, tea and biscuits

2:45-3:15             Clive Waddington

3:15-3:45             Jan Harding

3:45-4:00             Closing statements



Prices:

£25 for adults / £15 for students – This includes morning and afternoon tea/coffee/biscuits and a buffet lunch with soft drinks

Book now:

Payment can be made by cash, cheque or direct payment via credit card, simply email Ian Jones for more information:

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Sir William Gray House

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Really excited for this…speaker titles and summaries below ☺



**Tees Archaeology Conference – Saturday 19th October 2024, 9-4pm**

**TITLES AND ABSTRACTS:**

***If you see something that doesn’t look right … Tales of the unexpected in the Neolithic of Northern England* - Richard Bradley**

For many years studies of the Neolithic period have focused on the archaeology of the Yorkshire Wolds, but more recent fieldwork have shown that the archaeology of northern England is far more complicated. Apparently plausible interpretations have not kept pace with the results of fieldwork. This contribution will begin with the problems posed by the re-dating of axe production at Langdale before discussing some new ideas about stone sources, harbours, earthworks, and stone monuments. It will focus on the results of new work in Cumbria before considering sites across the Pennines in north-east England and the relationship of both regions to wider networks in Britain and Ireland.

***Excavations at Star Carr 2004-15: New insight into an old site* – Chantal Conneller**

Star Carr has dominated our understanding of the British Mesolithic. Since its excavation by Grahame Clark between 1949 and 1951 it has been subject to extensive debate and reinterpretation. These led to new questions for the site that could only be addressed through *excavation*. This talk discusses the results of these excavations between 2004 and 2015 and explores how our understandings of the site have changed. New work beyond Star Carr also enables new understandings of how the site fits into broader patterns of the Mesolithic inhabitation of Britain.

***Bringing the Neolithic to Teesside via a Saltern, Henge, House and Circle* – Steve Sherlock**

This lecture will explain my work over the last five years in Teesside exploring Neolithic Sites. Whilst the presentation will focus on three sites south of the Tees that I have been excavating since 2019, I will also present new insights into an earlier excavation north of the Tees.

***Recent excavations at High Tunstall, Hartlepool* - Jamie Armstrong - ASDU**

In 2022 Archaeological Services conducted excavations at High Tunstall, near Hartlepool. The excavations comprised two areas (A and B). Archaeological deposits comprising pits, postholes, ditches, and gullies were identified in both areas, and broadly represent multi-phase agricultural activity dating to the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. The features also included a T-shaped corn drying kiln and a small updraught kiln, both identified in Area A: the latter is likely to be a small pottery kiln. A sheep cremation presumed to date to the Iron Age was also recorded. There is also evidence for activity dating to the earlier prehistoric and post-Roman periods: this included the discovery of a curated Neolithic polished stone axe which was recovered from Area B.

***WAM23* – Paul Frodsham**

A complex cup-and-ring marked outcrop on Wallridge Moor, central Northumberland, was excavated by Durham University's *Belief in the North East* project in Summer 2023. Finds included many lithics, and several C14 dates were obtained, but firm links between the rock art, the finds and the dates remain frustratingly (if perhaps predictably) elusive. This presentation will present the results of the excavation and offer some speculative interpretation, along with some suggestions for future work at other rock art sites.

***Ingleby Barwick – an important Early Bronze Age cemetery in North Yorkshire -* Alison Sheridan**

This year saw the long-awaited publication\* of the results of Blaise Vyner’s and Richard Annis’ excavation of an Early Bronze Age cemetery at Windmill Fields, Ingleby Barwick – a site discovered by chance in 1996. Among the finds was a grave of a young female, richly furnished with grave goods. This presentation will summarise the results of the excavation and situate the cemetery within our understanding of Early Bronze Age funerary practices, not just in North Yorkshire but further afield in Britain.

\*Vyner, B and Annis, R. 2024. An Early Bronze Age cemetery at Windmill Fields, Ingleby Barwick, Teesside, North Yorkshire. Archaeologia 113.

***Low Coniscliffe Enclosure: A Neolithic and middle Bronze Age Ceremonial Site on the River Tees* – Richard Carlton, The Archaeological Practice (TAP)**

The site of a circular enclosure on the north bank of the Tees at Low Coniscliffe west of Darlington was discovered by geophysical survey in 2015. Subsequent excavation provided Neolithic dates for the substantial outer ditch and a cluster of post-holes within it, while two ring ditch enclosures and burials of middle Bronze Age date provide evidence for later reuse of the site before its apparent abandonment. It is speculated that the position of the site at a crossing point of a major river on a likely north-south routeway is significant.

***From the earliest tepee to the terrors of tsunami: recent insights on the Mesolithic of northern Britain* – Clive Waddington**

This talk will outline the recent discoveries at Killerby Quarry, North Yorkshire, where an innovative programme of evaluation and excavation works identified the remains of timber lavuu (ie. tepee) structures dating as early as Star Carr, together with high resolution evidence for the past environment and proxy evidence for Late Upper Palaeolithic activity. The talk will then proceed to put this discovery in a broader spatial and chronological context moving on to discussing recent studies into the impact of the ‘8.2 kya Event’ and the ‘Storegga Tsunami’ on the Mesolithic population of Britain.

***Henges reunited: Thornborough and the Neolithic of central Yorkshire* - Jan Harding**

The last eighteen months have been momentous for Thornborough. The trio of giant henges, for which this landscape is best known, are now owned and managed by English Heritage, and for the first time in at least 1500 years the public can visit and enjoy all three sites. To be able to do so is essential, for only when you experience them together can you truly appreciate the scale and complexity of what was achieved here. As one of the largest acts of building ever undertaken by later Neolithic communities, they are testament to the poignancy, intensity and power of religious belief and practice during the third millennium BC. Yet their significance goes beyond their size. They are more than simply the northern English counterparts to the better known sites of the Wessex chalkland, for they challenge the assumption that henges are the religious ‘capitals’ of distinctive social entities, highlighting instead a more nebulous and complex system of relations and identities. However, these variations are only a starting-point, and much more needs to be done― both at Thornborough and further afield across central Yorkshire― to address the empirical and conceptual limitations of our current interpretations. This was certainly one of the motivations behind the recent creation of the Thornborough Archaeology Group (TAG), whose aim is to employ community-centred fieldwork and research to better appreciate the region’s remarkable Neolithic archaeology, including at the four other similarly large henges found within 11km of the Thornborough complex. Only by understanding the relationship between these sites, and their wider landscapes, can we come to terms with the region’s distinctiveness and the alternative vision of Neolithic Britain it offers.

**THE SPEAKERS:**

**Richard Bradley:**

Richard is, deservedly, one of the most famous British prehistorians. He specialises in the study of European prehistory, and in particular Prehistoric Britain. His fieldwork has centred on prehistoric settlements, landscapes and monuments in England, Scotland, Spain and Scandinavia. These include the Neolithic axe quarries of Great Langdale, the stone circles of north-east Scotland, the Clava Cairns of northern Scotland, the megalithic art of Orkney and recently the Dunmailraise cairn, the Copt Howe rock art site and King Arthur’s Round Table henge, all in Cumbria.

**Chantal Conneller:**

Chantal specialises in the European Mesolithic. Her interests range from technology and materials, human-animal relations, mortuary practices, radiocarbon dating of Mesolithic settlement and human responses to sea-level rise. Chantal focussed her doctorate on understanding Mesolithic technologies at Star Carr in the landscape of the Vale of Pickering. She is co-director of the Ice Age Island Project, which is responsible for survey and excavation of a number of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic sites on Jersey and is currently penning the book, *The Mesolithic of Britain*.

**Stephen Sherlock:**

Steve has been a professional archaeologist since the late 1970s and has spent much of that time working in North East England. His primary research has been focused on the landscape of North East Yorkshire, centred upon Street House on the coast between Saltburn and Whitby. Since 2004, he has undertaken a number of major excavations on Neolithic, Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon sites in this area. Commercially he has excavated numerous settlements and oversaw the A1 road improvements in North Yorkshire. Over the last ten years he has been involved in managing major excavation programmes associated with roads and railways. His work is published in both regional and national journals, conference proceedings and Tees Archaeology monographs. He is currently writing a book about the discovery of Neolithic Salt manufacture at Street House.

**Jamie Armstrong, Archaeological Services Durham University (ASDU):**

Jamie is senior archaeologist at ASDU and has worked on numerous projects in England and Scotland over the years. He is particularly known in the area for his work at Binchester Roman fort and Auckland Castle, where he has worked with teams of Durham University students and community volunteers. He is really well liked and always offers kindly and thoughtful advice. Since Richard Annis’ retirement, Jamie has also been completing building recording surveys.

**Paul Frodsham:**

Paul has worked as a professional archaeologist in northern England for 35 years. After three years in Cumbria and a spell 'down south', he was appointed as the Northumberland National Park Authority's first archaeologist in 1992. From 2007, he spent a decade with the North Pennines AONB Partnership during which he set up the Altogether Archaeology project (now the Altogether Archaeology Group, for which he acts as Archaeology Advisor). He now runs an independent consultancy - Oracle Heritage Services. He has designed and helped to deliver many important research projects, mostly as community initiatives, and has published numerous books and papers on a range of archaeological themes, though his main passions are Neolithic, in particular monuments and rock art.

**Alison Sheridan:**

Alison specialises in the Neolithic and Bronze Age of Britain and Ireland. She has investigated the Neolithisation of Britain and Ireland, specialising in the study of Neolithic pottery, jewellery of jet and amber, stone axeheads, and interactions between different areas. She has researched Chalcolithic and Bronze Age jewellery and dress accessories, especially those of jet, faience and amber, as well as studying the pottery used during those periods. She has been responsible for the National Museums Scotland archaeological programmes of radiocarbon dating since the 1990s and has been an archaeological curator in National Museums Scotland, in various capacities, since 1987.

**Richard Carlton, The Archaeological Practice (TAP):**

Richard is a professional archaeologist with a wide interest and involvement in the multi-period archaeology of Northern England. He has completed numerous investigations into the sites and landscapes of Northumberland and has completed a long-term study of erosion damage at Harehaugh Iron Age hillfort. He is well known for his community archaeology work and has prepared over 40 detailed village histories with communities in Northumberland, North Yorkshire and East Durham.

**Clive Waddington, Archaeological Research Services (ARS Ltd):**

Clive is the Managing Director of Archaeological Research Services Ltd, which recently won a King’s Award for Enterprise. He specialises in landscape archaeology, geoarchaeology and rock art, with period specialisms in the Mesolithic and Neolithic. He has led and published flagship excavations at Howick, Low Hauxley, Fin Cop and many other sites, especially across the north. He’s authored and edited more than a dozen books, both academic and popular, and lectures widely. Clive has led several innovations in commercial archaeological methods and loves exploring ideas, encouraging discussion and lively debate.

**Jan Harding:**

Jan is a Neolithic and Early Bronze Age expert. He worked for nearly thirty years as a university-based academic archaeologist, teaching later European prehistory, archaeological theory, and fieldwork. His research specialisms were the monuments and landscapes of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Britain, publishing seven books and over forty papers. He retired in 2017 but continues to conduct research and support archaeology. Jan is most famous for his work in the Swale-Ure landscape of North Yorkshire, particularly at Thornborough, where he has recently founded the Thornborough Archaeology Group, which he also chairs.