



# Student and Early Careers Conference Abstract Booklet

## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE: Amplifying the Voices of Student and Early Career Archaeologists

Following the success of previous year's conference, the CifA Early Careers Special Interest Group and the Council for British Archaeology are hosting another digital Early Careers Conference as part of the Council for British Archaeology's Festival of Archaeology (18<sup>th</sup> July- 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2025).

This digital conference aims to platform students and early career archaeologists and give them the opportunity to gain presentation experience.

The event will run from 15:00-19.30pm on 30 July 2026, as per the following schedule. Sign up to attend [here](#).

Conference Welcome		
15:00	CBA	Conference Introduction
Session 1 Challenging Colonial Narratives		
15:05	Chair: Ulla Todd-Randall	Chair's Introduction
15:10	Ashlyn Weaver	'Āina Legacy: Pa'u Riders, Indigenous Knowledge, and the Politics of Movement in Hawai'i
15:25	Devanshi Panda	The Sari in Indian Women's Print: Desired Womanhood in 19th and 20th Century India

<b>15:35</b>	Matheus Vale de Medeiros	Rock Art and the Coloniality of Heritage Education in the Seridó Region, Brazil: A Public Archaeology Proposal
<b>15:50</b>	Speakers and Chair	<b>Panel Q&amp;A</b>
<b>16:00</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>Session 2</b> <b>Osteoarchaeology and Bioarchaeology: Challenging Assumptions</b>		
<b>16:10</b>	<b>Chair:</b> Tabitha Craig	<b>Chair's Introduction</b>
<b>16:15</b>	Jessica Bates	It Takes a Village: A Bioarchaeological Perspective on Health Related Caregiving in European Neolithic Communities
<b>16:30</b>	Magdalen Munro	Cracked Bones and Cursed Bodies: Osteological Markers of Torture in the Context of the Witch Trials
<b>16.45</b>	Francesca Futura Brigante Colonna Angelini	A Community of Care: Life and Death at St. Mary Magdalen Leprosy Hospital, Winchester
<b>17:00</b>	Speakers and Chair	<b>Panel Q&amp;A</b>
<b>17:10</b>	<b>Break</b>	

<b>Session 3</b> <b>Votive Deposition: what we leave behind</b>		
<b>17:20</b>	<b>Chair:</b> Valentina Lizama	<b>Chair's Introduction</b>
<b>17:25</b>	Jessica Holmes	Amongst A Patchwork Landscape: An Exploration of Contemporary Depositional Practises at Neolithic Avebury
<b>17:35</b>	Tanya Brown	Is the deposition of Trevisker ware Pottery in Roundhouse 3, Bronze Age Settlement at Boden, St Anthony-in-Meneage, Cornwall, structured?
<b>17:45</b>	James Davie	Arthur's last command: Iron Age votive deposition at Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey
<b>18:00</b>	Speakers and Chair	<b>Panel Q&amp;A</b>

**18.10** Break

## Session 4: Coast and Climate: how is climate change and heritage protections impacting coastal archaeology?

<b>18:20</b>	<b>Chair:</b> Ned Baker	<b>Chair's Introduction</b>
<b>18:25</b>	Carla Avenia Koency	Bridging Past and Present: How Ancient Trade Can Inform Climate Resilience An Intersectional and Decolonial Approach to Economic Archaeology
<b>18:40</b>	Olivia Thornberry	Assessing UNESCO coastal and underwater site vulnerability at the Ancient City of of Nessebar, Bulgaria
<b>18:55</b>	Rosie O'Toole and Archie Robson	The Hemley Project: Student-Led Archaeology in a Changing Coastal Landscape
<b>19:05</b>	Speakers and Chair	<b>Panel Q&amp;A</b>
<b>Conference Close</b>		
<b>19:15</b>	EC-SIG Committee	<b>Overview of Pre-recorded Talks</b>
<b>19:25</b>	EC-SIG Committee	<b>Conference Thanks</b>
<b>19:30</b>	<b>END</b>	



## SESSION 1: Challenging Colonial Narratives

CHAIR: Ulla Todd-Randall

### SESSION ABSTRACTS

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15:10-15:25 (15 MINUTES) | ASHLYN WEAVER | NORTHEAST INFORMATION CENTRE HAWAII

#### **‘Āina Legacy: Pa‘u Riders, Indigenous Knowledge, and the Politics of Movement in Hawai‘i**

This topic examines the origins, development, and cultural significance of Hawaiian pa‘u riders as an Indigenous equestrian tradition deeply connected to ‘ike (knowledge), kuleana (responsibility), and relationships with ‘āina (land). Emerging alongside paniolo culture yet grounded in distinctly Hawaiian epistemologies, pa‘u riding represents more than ceremonial display; it functions as a living practice through which cultural identity, genealogy, and sovereignty are embodied and transmitted across generations.

Conceptually, this topic is framed through Indigenous studies, gender theory, performance studies, and relational approaches to place and mobility. Drawing on mo‘olelo Hawai‘i, mo‘okū‘auhau, ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, and Indigenous methodologies, it explores how movement, protocol, dress, and horsemanship operate as forms of knowledge production and cultural continuity. The framework challenges dominant narratives that marginalize pa‘u riders within American cowgirl histories and instead positions Hawai‘i as a central site of transnational ranching, equestrian exchange, and Indigenous adaptation.

Key references include scholarship by Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, Haunani-Kay Trask, Candace Fujikane, Aikau, Silva, and Mei-Singh and Gonzalez, alongside Hawaiian-language newspapers, oral histories, archival collections, and material culture studies. Contributions are welcomed from conceptual, empirical, methodological, pedagogical, artistic, and community-based perspectives addressing Indigenous mobility, gender, genealogy, performance, ranching histories, landscape archaeology, cultural sovereignty, equestrian traditions, and Indigenous relationships with more-than-human relatives.

**KEYWORDS:** HAWAIIAN PA‘U RIDERS, INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE, CULTURAL SOVEREIGNTY, GENEALOGY, EQUESTRIAN TRADITIONS

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15:25-15:35 (10 MINUTES) | DEVANSHI PANDA | THE YP FOUNDATION

#### **The Sari in Indian Women’s Print: Desired Womanhood in 19th and 20th Century India**

In popular public perception, the modest sari is a symbol of an inherently conservative Indian culture and tradition. This study pushes back against this notion by conducting a gendered historical exploration of the female body and its association with the garment from pre-colonial (briefly) to 19th and early 20th century India. A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) and decolonial, feminist archival praxis is utilised to unearth the messy and

often contradictory ways in which sartorial modesty and respectability were interpreted and redefined in the print and visual archive.

The study posits that the Indian woman and her body has historically always been at the centre of sartorial policing that attempts to define and control her character by utilising patriarchal ideologies. These ideologies were not homologous, often unstable, and frequently operated in different capacities, pointing to the impossibility of ever fully realising an 'ideal' gender identity. Drawing on research from a Masters dissertation, this paper will pay key attention to Indian women's magazines of the era — specifically *The Indian Ladies' Magazine* and *Chand* — to explore how and on what terms women speak in the archive and navigate the complex politics of dress while interacting with competing forces of nationalism and colonialism. An attention to this print archive allows us to move beyond a simple victim/agent binary or monolithic conceptualisation of the Indian woman, enabling us to see her agency instead as a series of nuanced and negotiated performances within restrictive paradigms. The study argues that archives, when read with a critical and investigative eye that does not attempt to fix or reveal a single 'true' reality of these women, can help understand the multifaceted ways in which they navigated, resisted, and subverted patriarchal norms.

**KEYWORDS:** SARI, WOMEN'S PRINT CULTURE, COLONIAL INDIA, SARTORIAL POLITICS, AGENCY

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15:35-15:50 (15 MINUTES) | MATHEUS VALE DE MEDEIROS | FEDERAL UNIVSERITY OF RIO GRANDE DO NORTE — UFRN, BRAZIL

### **Rock Art and the Coloniality of Heritage Education in the Seridó Region, Brazil: A Public Archaeology Proposal**

In Brazil, heritage education remains deeply shaped by colonial hierarchies of historical value. In many state schools, the ancient past is commonly introduced through distant civilisations, especially Greco-Roman and Egyptian antiquity, while local Indigenous archaeological heritage is rarely addressed with the same depth, complexity, or visibility. This imbalance is not simply a curricular omission. It reflects a broader colonial structure of knowledge through which students are often encouraged to recognise antiquity elsewhere, but not in the territories where they live.

This paper presents an early-stage public archaeology proposal focused on rock art heritage in the Seridó region, in the semi-arid Caatinga of Northeast Brazil. The region is widely recognised for its archaeological landscapes, including painted rock shelters, lithic vestiges, burials, and material traces associated with long-term Indigenous presence. Yet, despite this richness, rock art often remains marginal within school narratives and public historical imagination.

Rather than approaching rock art only as an object of stylistic classification or specialist interpretation, this proposal frames it as a site of public memory, territorial awareness, and decolonial education. It asks how students in state schools understand local archaeological heritage, why Indigenous precolonial presences remain peripheral in formal education, and how public archaeology can challenge the separation between communities and the deep histories embedded in their own landscapes.

Drawing on my background in Design and my current training in Archaeology, the project explores how visual communication and information design can support accessible forms of archaeological engagement in public schools. Proposed outputs include mobile exhibitions, classroom panels, maps, timelines, and digital media centred on the rock art landscapes of the Seridó.

Ultimately, this paper argues that the invisibility of rock art in state-school education is not merely a pedagogical gap, but a symptom of the coloniality of heritage education. By placing local Indigenous archaeological heritage at the centre of public learning, the project seeks to contribute to a decolonial public archaeology grounded in territory, visual literacy, and heritage justice.

**KEYWORDS:** ROCK ART; PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY; HERITAGE EDUCATION; DECOLONIAL ARCHAEOLOGY; INDIGENOUS HERITAGE; SERIDÓ; BRAZIL

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## SESSION 2: Osteoarchaeology and Bioarchaeology: Questioning Assumptions

CHAIR: Tabitha Craig

### SESSION ABSTRACTS

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16:15-16:30 (15 MINUTES) | JESSICA BATES | UNIVERSITY OF YORK

#### **It Takes a Village: A Bioarchaeological Perspective on Health Related Caregiving in European Neolithic Communities**

Despite the well documented impact of the Neolithic transition on diet and health, there has been little attention given to the social and cultural responses to this changing landscape of wellbeing, with health-related caregiving frequently packaged up as part of the often overlooked female domestic role. To improve understanding of health-related caregiving in Neolithic Europe, this research considers osteological and palaeopathological data from 11 European Neolithic sites, applying the Bioarchaeology of Care methodology and accompanying Index of Care framework to assess palaeopathological evidence of health-related care and facilitate interpretation within the broader social and cultural frameworks under which this care was provided.

Conducting both inter-population and cross-population comparisons, this research first demonstrates that caregiving provisions in the Neolithic were broad, sophisticated and sustained, with multiple incidents of survival of traumatic injury, surgical intervention and chronic disease suggesting not only the presence of complex medical knowledge, but also that caregiving formed a part of daily life for many Neolithic communities. Exploring differential treatment, little observed sex or age bias suggests that care provisions may have been untied to observable elements of identity, perhaps dictated by physical need rather than social perceptions of vulnerability or special treatment. High prevalence of sustained caregiving indicates that responsibility for care may have been a shared one, challenging previous notions of care being a private, female practice and instead suggesting that it was a socially embedded, central part of Neolithic communities across Europe.

Illustrating not only sophisticated medical knowledge but also a deep sense of community cohesion, cooperation and adaptability, these findings provide a novel insight into health-related caregiving in Neolithic communities and demonstrate potential to contribute to growing research into social identity and structure in the period.

**KEYWORDS:** BIOARCHAEOLOGY; BIOARCHAEOLOGY OF CARE; PALAEOPATHOLOGY; HEALTH-CARE AND CAREGIVING IN ARCHAEOLOGY; ARCHAEOLOGICAL HEALTHSCAPES; DISABILITY IN ARCHAEOLOGY; FEMALE ID

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16:30-16:45 (15 MINUTES) | MAGDALEN MUNRO | UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, VANCOUVER

### **Cracked Bones and Cursed Bodies: Osteological Markers of Torture in the Context of the Witch Trials**

During the early modern period from the middle 15th century to the late 18th century, approximately 100,000 people were prosecuted and tried for the crime of practising heretical maleficium, or witchcraft. Of that number, nearly half were executed by means of hanging, burning, beheading, and other forms of violence. Furthermore, throughout inquisition periods, individuals would be subject to various types of torture, as it was believed that under the pressure of pain, the accused would confess to their supposed crimes. These trials and their associated murders spanned across continents before finally subsiding in the 18th century.

The anthropological, psychological, theological, and sociological dimensions of the witch trials have drawn many to the topic, and there exists a plethora of interdisciplinary scholarship that works towards exploring their causes and consequences. Despite this, there is an overwhelming absence of osteological considerations surrounding the topic of witchcraft and the witch trials in the academic community. As most archaeological projects surrounding the topic have primarily focused on associated objects and ancient texts, this presentation will address the lack of bioarchaeological subject matter of witch trials and witch burials, and produce an exploratory analysis of potential osteological markers that would be indicative of the torture sustained during the witch trials.

It is my hope that the osteological and bioarchaeological methods I promote within my work give agency to those falsely persecuted through the recognition of how these individuals might present themselves in the archaeological record. It will also be a call for more scholars to consider looking deeper into the archaeological history of the witch trials, expand the field from solely objects and historical texts to also include human remains, and to address the absence of archaeological projects pertaining to this subject.

**KEYWORDS:** WITCHCRAFT; WITCH TRIALS; ARCHAEOLOGY; BIOARCHAEOLOGY; HUMAN OSTEOLOGY; TORTURE

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16:45-17:00 (15 MINUTES) | FRANCESCA FUTURA BRIGANTE COLONNA ANGELINI | UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

### **A Community of Care: Life and Death at St. Mary Magdalen Leprosy Hospital, Winchester.**

Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic infection caused by the pathogen *Mycobacterium leprae*. The disease is debilitating and can cause skin lesions; destruction and remodelling of the bones of the face, hands and feet; and peripheral neuropathy, which typically presents itself as numbness of limbs, sensory and motor dysfunction, muscle weakness, and paralysis.

It has been historically understood that people suffering from leprosy in medieval Europe were cast out of society and treated as though they were already dead, with some sources even describing mock funerals given for the newly diagnosed.

However, archaeological evidence from the excavations at St. Mary Magdalen Leprosy Hospital, Winchester, contradicts this understanding of the harsh treatment of leprosy patients. Those buried in the hospital's cemetery seem to have had a high quality of life, despite the fact that around 80% of its population were suffering from a life changing disease that would have affected their ability to perform daily tasks unassisted, such as eating, moving around, and self-hygiene. Furthermore, burials at this site were carried out with care, with evidence of grave markers and grave goods.

This talk outlines the evidence for medical treatment and palliative care at this site through skeletal analysis of those buried in the hospital's North Cemetery. It uses isotope analysis and zooarchaeological evidence to assess the potential implementation of an adaptive diet to support patients who may have had trouble eating due to oral changes associated with the disease. The talk also compares the dietary evidence at St. Mary Magdalen Hospital with that of the general population of medieval Winchester and shows that the two populations had a very similar diet.

It concludes that members of the hospital community were cared for and treated with dignity.

**KEYWORDS:** LEPROSY; PALAEOPATHOLOGY; BIOARCHAEOLOGY; MEDEVIAL  
ARCHAEOLOGY

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## SESSION 3: Votive Deposition: what we leave behind

**CHAIR: Valentina Lizama**

### SESSION ABSTRACTS

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17:25-17:35 (10 MINUTES) | JESSICA HOLMES | UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

#### **Amongst A Patchwork Landscape: An Exploration of Contemporary Depositional Practises at Neolithic Avebury**

Avebury is a small village in Wiltshire, which more than being simply residential, lies amongst a Neolithic stone circle. The unique informality of the site means that Avebury takes on mutability of meaning for different interested parties: from a home, a heritage location, a tourist spot, or, for some Pagan and spiritual people, a sacred site. As such, Avebury attracts a range of material depositions, from crystals pushed into megaliths, to ribbons bedecking the large beech trees at the edge of the site.

However, rather than being an aesthetic addition, the depositions have the potential to cause heritage management and ecological issues, as well as being hotly debated within the Pagan community. This research takes a creative and reflexive approach, utilising a patchwork of methodologies including ethnographic fieldwork, digital exploration and photography to explore what is deposited at Avebury and unpicking the contested narratives around their deposition.

Despite this phenomenon being widespread at archaeological sites throughout the UK, there has yet to be a focused study specifically on material deposition. This research therefore helps to illuminate this understudied area to support understandings of the evolving and heterogeneous uses of heritage sites, breaking down key themes about relationality, discord, community and the self as to build a holistic picture of this multi-faceted practice. This paper illustrates that depositional practices, though thorny, are more than 'litter', but rather deeply relational.

**KEYWORDS:** CONTEMPORARY DEPOSITIONAL PRACTISES; PATCHWORK; PAGANISM; AVEBURY; MUTABILITY; RELATIONALITY; CLOOTIES; MATERIAL SEMIOTICS; HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

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17:35-17:45 (10 MINUTES) | TANYA BROWN | CORNWALL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, CORNWALL YAC

#### **Is the deposition of Trevisker ware Pottery in Roundhouse 3, Bronze Age Settlement at Boden, St Anthony-in-Meneage, Cornwall, structured?**

The deposition of artefacts within prehistoric settlements has increasingly been recognised as a deliberate and meaningful practice rather than the result of simple refuse disposal. This paper examines the deposition of Trevisker Ware pottery within Roundhouse 3 at the Middle Bronze Age settlement at Boden in St Anthony-in-Meneage, Cornwall, and asks whether the assemblage represents evidence for structured deposition associated with the closure of the building.

Excavated between 2024-2026 by the Meneage Archaeology Group, a local community archaeology group, Roundhouse 3 produced an assemblage of 356 pottery sherds, including decorated examples of Trevisker Ware. Plan and section drawings, and small finds registers, detailed the relationship between the spatial and stratigraphic relationships between the pottery, architectural features and depositional contexts. This provided evidence for deliberate placement during the final phases of occupation and abandonment.

The result indicates the distribution of pottery was not random as concentrations of decorated sherds were identified in specific areas in Roundhouse 3, particularly along the northern side and just within the entrance way. Several decorated sherds from vessels were recovered lying face-up, while associated evidence, including hearth sealing, deliberate backfilling, and patterns of posthole activity, suggests a structured sequence of abandonment events.

Comparison with other Cornish Middle Bronze Age sites, including Boden Roundhouse 1, Carnon Gate and Trethellan Farm, reveals similar patterns of depositional practice linked to roundhouse closure. These parallels support interpretation that the Boden assemblage formed part of a wider regional tradition of ritualised abandonment.

This research contributes to ongoing discussions surrounding settlement rituals, the social significance of material cultures, and the ways in which Bronze Age communities in lowland Cornwall marked the end of a building's life. Rather than representing ordinary domestic waste, evidence suggests that Trevisker Ware played an active role in the symbolic closure of Middle Bronze Age roundhouses.

**KEYWORDS:** MIDDLE BRONZE AGE, CORNWALL, TREVISKER WARE, STRUCTURED DEPOSITION, ROUNDHOUSES, RITUAL CLOSURE

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17:45-18:00 (15 MINUTES) | JAMES DAVIE | CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

### **Arthur's last command: Iron Age votive deposition at Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey**

Originating well before the Arthurian legend of Excalibur and extending to tourists throwing coins into the Trevi Fountain, the ritual deposition of objects into water has spanned over millennia. Archaeologically, these votive deposits range from individual finds, such as the Battersea shield from the River Thames, or in grand assemblages, such as at the Fiskerton causeway in Lincolnshire. They were once interpreted as casual loss or for hoarding during times of uncertainty. However, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century interpretation has shifted from the mundane to ritual when archaeologists recognized patterns of deliberately broken objects in deposits, references in classical sources, and probable links to funerary rituals.

One of the most spectacular cases of deposition into water during the British Iron Age comes from RAF Valley in Anglesey. During World War II, an assemblage of around 150 iron and copper alloy objects from the Iron Age was found during works on the RAF base. The finds were originally deposited into Llyn Cerrig Bach, an adjacent lake, and was discovered by workers only after peat from the lake was dredged and scattered across the airfield to combat wind-blown sand. The assemblage mainly consists of weaponry and chariot components but also includes other types of objects such as a portion of a trumpet, cauldrons, and most impressively, a slave gang chain that workers initially used to tow lorries out of the peat before it was identified.

No further archaeological investigations at the airfield had been carried out until 2024 when a series of metal detecting surveys began to search for additional artifacts from the assemblage. These investigations have been carried out by Operation Nightingale, a Ministry of Defence initiative that uses archaeology to aid the mental wellbeing of military veterans and appropriately uses a tool of healing to find ancient instruments of war from Llyn Cerrig Bach. Sir Cyril Fox, the author of the monograph on the finds, supposed that "objects now under the grass of the landing ground may be expected to come to light from time to time" and his prediction has certainly proven to be true although delayed by 80 years.

This talk explores interpretations of votive deposition into watery contexts and aims to apply these interpretations to Llyn Cerrig Bach and then briefly touch on the new finds from the recent investigations at RAF Valley.

The study of hoards is significant, especially for this period, as they are a predominant source of Iron Age material culture that can map social relations and identities. Further, hoards can provide clues as to how these social aspects changed after the Roman invasion of Britain.

**KEYWORDS:** IRON AGE; VOTIVE DEPOSITION; HOARDS; CHARIOTS; LLYN CERRIG BACH

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## SESSION 4: Coast and Climate: how is climate change and heritage protections impacting coastal archaeology?

**CHAIR: Ned Baker**

### SESSION ABSTRACTS

18:25-18:40 (15 MINUTES) | CARLA AVENIA KOENCY | UNIVERSITY OF CATANIA

#### **Bridging Past and Present: How Ancient Trade Can Inform Climate Resilience**

##### **An Intersectional and Decolonial Approach to Economic Archaeology**

What can ancient Mediterranean trade networks tell us about community-level strategies for managing environmental stress? The Mediterranean and Near East were defined by remarkably dynamic trade networks that linked coastal emporia, inland agricultural zones, and cross-cultural exchange hubs — systems that repeatedly absorbed, reorganized, and adapted in response to environmental disruption. Today, as communities worldwide face accelerating climate-induced displacement, coastal erosion, and resource scarcity, the historical study of these networks offers not merely academic insight but actionable lessons in resilience, adaptation, and structural inequality.

Drawing on archaeological fieldwork experience in Sicily, the coastal destruction caused by Cyclone Harry in eastern Sicily in January 2026, and open-source GIS mapping of regional Late Bronze Age and Iron Age trade routes, this paper presents a case study in which artifact distributions, amphora typologies, and spatial movement data are layered with contemporary coastal erosion projections and displacement modeling. The result is a methodology that treats the ancient landscape as a living laboratory for climate vulnerability analysis today. These methods are further enriched by ethical frameworks drawn from humanitarian crisis mapping — including participatory research design and community consent protocols deployed during UN field operations in the researcher's previous career — ensuring that the communities most affected by both ancient and modern disruption remain central to the research narrative.

By applying intersectional and decolonial frameworks directly to the material record, this analysis moves beyond cataloguing trade goods to ask *who* managed adaptation and under *what conditions*. The evidence consistently points to the agency of non-elite actors — women, migrants, and Indigenous communities — whose contributions to economic and environmental resilience have been systematically marginalized by hegemonic historical narratives. And we could be very well paying the price for this still today.

This paper ultimately argues for a reimagined archaeology: one that moves beyond the dig site to inform climate policy, challenge inequitable historical frameworks, and empower communities to build sustainable futures rooted in the lessons of their own past.

**KEYWORDS:** ECONOMIC ARCHAEOLOGY; ANCIENT TRADE; CLIMATE RESILIENCE; GIS; INTERSECTIONALITY; DECOLONIAL THEORY; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT; DISPLACEMENT; ENVIRONMENTAL ADAPTATION

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18:40-18:55 (15 MINUTES) | OLIVIA THORNBERRY | FULBRIGHT RESEARCH FELLOW IN ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY, BULGARIA

**Assessing UNESCO coastal and underwater site vulnerability at the Ancient City of Nessebar, Bulgaria**

The Black Sea Coast stands testimony to millennia of human development and multilayered cultural heritage through its coastal and underwater archaeological property. Unfortunately, Bulgaria's coastal and underwater archaeological heritage faces several existential threats which challenge how well it is protected and conserved. Damage to the cultural property along Bulgaria's Black Sea Coast endangers its further study and examination, and as a result, important data about the prehistoric and ancient civilizations once residing in these areas could be lost.

This research primarily investigates The Ancient City of Nessebar, located on the Black Sea Coast of Bulgaria, seeking to answer the following questions: To what extent are climate change and other human-driven threats impacting heritage along Bulgaria's Black Sea Coast? In what ways does UNESCO status impact Nessebar's vulnerability to these threats? To answer these questions, a mixed methodology was utilized, including a systematic literature review, a quantitative analysis of existing climate data, underwater field research and excavation, and qualitative interviews with archaeologists and researchers associated with Nessebar and Sozopol, Bulgaria. This research adapts a portion of the UNESCO-endorsed Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI) to better understand the human-driven threats to Nessebar's coastal and underwater cultural property and archaeological heritage. While it primarily focuses on climate risks, the research expands on other human-driven threats, including but not limited to, dredging, trawling, looting, and pollution.

In understanding the vulnerabilities of coastal and underwater archaeological sites, this research aims to add to the breadth of work examining site vulnerabilities through common vulnerability assessment frameworks. Nessebar remains an excellent case study for the application of the Climate Vulnerability Index. While its unique historical significance, cultural property, and heritage legacy may be at risk from the factors examined in this research, knowledge-building on the extent of these threats can help shape future policy-making and decision-making regarding the future of the site and the protection of its outstanding universal value.

**KEYWORDS:** UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE, CLIMATE VULNERABILITY INDEX, COASTAL ARCHAEOLOGY, UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY

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18:55-19:05 (15 MINUTES) | ROSIE O'TOOLE AND ARCHIE ROBSON | DURHAM UNIVERSITY

**The Hemley Project: Student-Led Archaeology in a Changing Coastal Landscape**

The Hemley Project is a student- and early career-led archaeological research initiative established in 2025 by the Durham University Archaeology Society. Investigating the archaeological landscape of High House Farm in Hemley, Suffolk, the project was designed to provide accessible opportunities of the full archaeological process, from project design and grant applications through to fieldwork, post-excavation analysis and publication.

Finding meaningful practical experience beyond brief periods of excavation or finds-washing can be difficult for students and recent graduates, and the project sought to fill this gap.

The area surrounding High House Farm shows evidence of human activity spanning from the Late Palaeolithic into the modern period, including prehistoric flint scatters; cropmarks such as ring ditches and Romano-British enclosures; and medieval and post-medieval domestic, agricultural and maritime activity. Today, both the modern farming and archaeological landscapes are being heavily affected by ongoing coastal change along the Deben estuary, particularly the erosion and inland expansion of the saltmarsh along the riverbank.

The project's first year looks to combine archaeological and palaeoenvironmental approaches to investigate the historic relationship between the changing coastal environment and its occupants, with a focus on the wider prehistoric activity. Work undertaken to date includes systematic fieldwalking; drone survey of the saltmarsh environment and features; and exploratory coring to assess the potential for reconstructing past environmental change and approaches to sea defence. Planned future work includes geophysical survey, targeted test-pitting, repeat drone survey, and further palaeoenvironmental investigation.

Alongside presenting initial findings, this paper reflects on the opportunities and challenges of conducting student- and early career-led research. Since its launch, the project has engaged more than 60 volunteers, the majority with little or no previous archaeological experience. The Hemley Project seeks to demonstrate how student-led initiatives can contribute original archaeological research while simultaneously creating accessible pathways for skills development, mentoring, public engagement, and professional growth within the discipline.

**KEYWORDS:** STUDENT-LED ARCHAEOLOGY; EARLY CAREER ARCHAEOLOGY; COASTAL ARCHAEOLOGY; SUFFOLK; CLIMATE CHANGE; PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY; ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRAINING

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## Pre-Recorded Videos

These will be available to view on the CBA's [YouTube Channel](#).

VALENTINA LIZAMA | UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA

### **The Sound of Death: Musical Instruments in Medieval Funerary Contexts**

This research explores the presence, distribution, and archaeological significance of musical instruments found in medieval funerary contexts through the construction and analysis of a catalogue of burials containing sound-producing artifacts. By examining these findings across different geographical regions, social contexts, and burial traditions, this study investigates the relationship between music, death, and social identity in medieval societies.

Even though medieval funerary contexts are easily associated with incredible treasures in rich tombs, the results reveal that musical instruments appear in a wide scope of funerary settings, ranging from these exceptionally elaborate burials associated with social prestige and wealth to more modest interments, suggesting that music functioned as a transversal vehicle of memory and identity that transcended social boundaries. The catalogue demonstrates a clear predominance of lyres among documented cases, while also identifying the recurrent presence of other sound-producing objects, including bells and tubular wind instruments.

Beyond typological identification, this study emphasizes contextual relationships between bodies and artifacts. Particular attention is given to the spatial positioning of instruments within graves, examining proximity, bodily association, placement patterns, and their potential implications for understanding social roles, memory practices, and expressions of identity.

Rather than interpreting musical instruments solely as prestige objects, this research argues that their funerary deposition reflects complex social meanings connected to remembrance and the continued construction of identity as a specialized musicianship after death. Through an interdisciplinary approach combining archaeological cataloguing, funerary analysis, and music archaeology, this study contributes to broader discussions concerning material culture, death, and sound in medieval Europe.

**KEYWORDS:** MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY; FUNERARY ARCHAEOLOGY; MUSIC ARCHAEOLOGY; BURIAL PRACTICES; MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS; MEMORY; IDENTITY; MEDIEVAL EUROPE

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GRAYSON WALTERS | AOC ARCHAEOLOGY

### **Picasso through Palaeolithic perception: How cave art informs our understanding of early human cognition**

Pareidolia - the tendency to perceive meaningful forms, such as faces, within ambiguous visual stimuli - is a fundamental feature of human cognition. This talk uncovers the role of pareidolic responses in the creation and interpretation of Upper Palaeolithic parietal art. Drawing on examples from decorated cave sites, primarily the Lascaux cave, it examines how prehistoric artists may have incorporated natural rock features and irregularities into

animal and anthropomorphic representations, transforming pre-existing forms into meaningful images.

Understanding the relationship between perception and artistic production is important for reconstructing the cognitive processes that grounded symbolic behaviour in the Palaeolithic. Whilst earlier studies have highlighted the technical and symbolic dimensions of cave art, the influence of innate perceptual tendencies on image creation has received comparatively limited attention. Investigating the perceptual biases to which the human mind is fundamentally susceptible to may provide insight into whether these tendencies played a role not only in human survival, but also in the development and prospering of our species through shared culture. Through applying interdisciplinary approaches to the study of archaeology, this research investigates whether humans' natural tendency to see patterns (pareidolia) influenced how they noticed shapes in caves, turned them into art, and gave them cultural meaning.

The analysis suggests that pareidolic perception played an active role in shaping the placement and form of parietal imagery. Rather than serving solely as passive canvases, cave surfaces appear to have been integral to the artistic process, with natural features guiding the recognition and development of representational forms. These findings contribute to broader discussions of early human cognition by proving how perceptual biases may have influenced the emergence of symbolic expression and the ways in which Palaeolithic communities engaged with subterranean environments.

**KEYWORDS:** PALAEOLITHIC, CAVE ART, SYMBOLISM, EARLY HUMAN, PREHISTORY, EVOLUTION

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GRACE MCFARREN | UNIVERSITY OF ALBANY

### **Shamanism in Stone: Interpretations of Dorset Beliefs from Effigies at the Stock Cove Site in Newfoundland**

The Dorset people were a Paleo-Inuit hunting and gathering culture whose territory spanned the Canadian Arctic, Newfoundland, Labrador, and Greenland from approximately 2,500 to 1,000 BP. The Dorset would have regularly encountered polar bears, whose subsistence practices of hunting seals at the ice edge paralleled those of the Dorset. From an animistic perspective, the Dorset may have viewed themselves and polar bears as conspecifics - beings with equivalent souls because of shared perspectives and ways of living. The Dorset at Stock Cove, a site in southeastern Newfoundland, created effigies that likely represent polar bears or human-bear hybrids. One class of effigies portrays a polar bear standing upright from a profile view, and another class depicts polar bears from a bird's-eye view, possibly swimming in the water. By examining these effigies and those found at other sites, it is possible to gain insight into Dorset shamanism, hunting, and worldviews. Dorset effigies are widely believed to be connected with shamanism, a belief system and ritual behaviour in which a shaman acts as an intermediary between humans and spirits and is aided by spirit helpers—ancestors, animals, and other spirits—whom they are able to transform into to access the supernatural realm. Polar bears were seen as shamanic figures by other Arctic groups because of their ability to cross from the land into the sea -into other planes of existence -similarly to shamans. Polar bear effigies from the Stock Cove Site may have been

used as conduits to channel spirit helpers or the hunting capabilities of polar bears, among other possibilities.

**KEYWORDS:** ARCTIC AND SUBARCTIC ARCHAEOLOGY; CANADIAN ARCHAEOLOGY; SHAMANISM; DORSET PEOPLE; EFFIGY CARVINGS

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EMILY KELSO | OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY

### **Research in Action: The Intersection of Commercial and Research Archaeology on the A66.**

Archaeological fieldwork is, perhaps with some justification, sold to university students as possessing two strands - that of commercial and research archaeology. Whilst both operate within the same legislative framework, there are noticeable differences in terms of their budget and time constraints, as well as the intended outcomes of any work. As a result, it is quite possible to have two wholly different experiences of what it means to be an archaeologist.

Long-term schemes within commercial archaeology can bridge this gap, however. Currently, Oxford Cotswold Archaeology (OCA) are over a year into investigation works for the A66 Northern Trans-Pennine Project on behalf of National Highways. Whilst the fate of any major finding is usually to wait until the site report, this has not been the case with the A66; news and images of significant discoveries have already been shared via TV and social media - which has been the direct result of the research culture at OCA.

The longevity of these excavation works has opened up unique opportunities for preliminary research to be conducted side-by-side with the excavations. OCA has encouraged this by inviting field and office staff alike to deliver internal research talks. To date, over 17 talks have been delivered across a wide range of specialisms, and all pertaining to the work being done on the A66.

Not only has such research proven enriching and educational for the OCA team, but it has similarly influenced its outreach programme and, crucially, has also influenced the ongoing excavations and interpretations too.

This paper will explore where commercial schemes such as the A66 fit into the overall matrix of commercial and research archaeology, as well as provide an overview of some of the research done to date. I will also conduct an in-depth exploration of one find in particular, that of five Roman-period shoes uncovered inside a wicker-lined well; such a discovery encapsulates what preliminary research can (and should, where possible) be undertaken in a commercial context, and how it might influence the interpretations of sites, and the public perceptions of our work, before the final ditch slot has been dug.

**KEYWORDS:** FIELDWORK; COMMERCIAL; RESEARCH; OUTREACH; ROMAN-PERIOD

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## **Encirclement, the ouroboros, and clues of ritual activity and religious belief in the magical gems**

Ancient magic is a relatively new area of study. For the longest time it was ignored or considered to be nothing more than superstition. As such, its already scant archaeological record was treated as curiosities, a matter not helped by how easily many of them were traded and transported, often without any marking of the context they were found in.

Recent studies have shown instead that magic is far more complex than originally believed. In fact, it can be an important source for understanding the true complexity of religion in Antiquity, specifically on how it impacts individuals and interacts with their personal issues. Magic is not something inherently on the fringes on society and while the concept existed, it was not most likely not defined the same and the lines between an amulet worn for magical, medical or religious reasons were blurred.

This paper aims to continue this trend by analysing one specific iconographical element on the most readily available magical artefact, the so-called magical gems, widespread in the Hellenistic and Roman world. This is the ouroboros, the snake that bites its own tail, which can be connected to the Greek Magical Papyri and to older Egyptian theological concepts that go back to the Old Kingdom.

This exploration reveals clues regarding the rituals that accompanied the artefact through the technique of encirclement, their lack of mark on the archaeological record an important issue, and further our understanding of the religious beliefs of the people who made use of these artefacts. Furthermore, it dispels some of the idea that magic is solely individualistic. That is an element of it, but the religious connotation of the ouroboros and the context it is in used in show a concern for the community too.

**KEYWORDS:** RITUAL IN ARCHAEOLOGY, MAGIC, MAGICAL GEMS, OUROBOROS, ENCIRCLEMENT, THE GREEK MAGICAL POPYRI, RELIGION IN ANCIENT EGYPT, ROMAN RELIGION, ANCIENT RELIGION

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MAYA DELAYAHU, MARLENE SCHILLING, ULLA TODD-RANDALL | HERITAGE NETWORK

## **Nothing about us without us: Carving spaces for youth engagement at the Heritage Network**

Meaningful engagement with young people is oftentimes coveted by heritage organisations. It cannot, however, be reduced to mere token consultations. Instead, organisations must recognise young people as collaborators and agents of change whose perspectives are vital to organisational relevance and sustainability. This talk explores how such youth-led and youth-centred initiatives can create relevant output within and for heritage organisations, discussing the Heritage Network's Youth Forum as a tangible example. The Heritage Network is a membership organisation for e.g. charities, community organisations, or local authorities committed to local heritage action. The presentation is given by the Network's three Heritage Trainees who are themselves early career professionals in the Heritage sector and 'young people', with this dual role also being reflected in the presentation. For the session, we will look at the Youth Forum as a community of over 350 members aged 18–30, who all share the same passion for heritage, in general and the new youth engagement

toolkit in particular, which is developed in co-creation with the Youth Forum members. The Youth Forum is a platform that the members can make their own and shape it in ways that seem meaningful to them, with the Heritage Network providing the framework and relevant support when needed. The talk will present the diverse ways members have put this into practice through interest-led projects, such as the members' blog, the advice library, or the Youth Forum's own podcast. A special emphasis will be put on the newest project of the Youth Forum: Many of the Heritage Network's members are continuously interested in genuinely and effectively involving young people within their heritage organisations or projects. We plan to address this need through a toolkit for youth engagement to be used by our member organisations and beyond. This toolkit will be co-created in close partnership with members from the Network's Youth Forum. The presentation will present the toolkit's proposed structure and intended outcomes while also considering the benefits and challenges of the collaboration process, underlining co-creation both as a method and as a principle that underpins the intent of the Youth Forum. In conclusion, the talk argues that effective youth engagement cannot simply be designed for young people – it must be developed with them as equal partners.

**KEYWORDS:** YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, YOUNG PEOPLE IN HERITAGE, CAREERS IN HERITAGE, TOOLKIT, CO-CREATION, CONNECT

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MATILDA EVANS | COUNCIL OF BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY

### **Meaningful Youth Governance is Essential to Ensuring Archaeology Remains Relevant, Representative, and Responsive to Future Generations**

Youth participation is increasingly recognised as an important component of inclusive governance across a range of sectors, yet young people remain underrepresented in decision-making processes within archaeology and heritage. While public engagement has become a central feature of archaeological practice, opportunities for students and early-career professionals to influence organisational decision-making and strategic direction remain limited. This presentation argues that meaningful youth governance is essential to ensuring archaeology remains relevant, representative, and responsive to future generations. It explores how organisations can create opportunities for young people to actively shape the sector and why involvement in governance can be particularly valuable during higher education and the early stages of a career.

Drawing on professional experience as Youth Governance Officer at the Council for British Archaeology (CBA), alongside previous experience as an elected Sabbatical Officer and Trustee within higher education, this presentation explores the practical realities of embedding young people within decision-making structures. It examines how principles of youth voice, co-production, and shared decision-making can move archaeology and heritage organisations beyond consultation towards genuine partnership.

The presentation considers both the opportunities and challenges associated with creating spaces where students and early-career professionals can contribute meaningfully to organisational priorities, projects, and long-term strategic thinking. It reflects on the structures required to support effective youth governance and the barriers that can prevent young people from engaging with these opportunities.

The presentation also explores the wider value of youth governance for those entering the profession. Participation can develop leadership skills, confidence, professional networks, governance experience, and a stronger sense of belonging within the sector. For organisations, youth involvement offers fresh perspectives, improves accessibility and relevance, and helps build a more sustainable and representative future workforce.

Ultimately, this presentation argues that youth governance should be viewed not as an additional engagement activity, but as a fundamental component of a resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking archaeological sector, and highlights why students and early-career professionals should be encouraged to take an active role in shaping its future.

**KEYWORDS:** YOUTH GOVERNANCE, YOUTH VOICE, PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY, HERITAGE PARTICIPATION, STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, CO-PRODUCTION, GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, INCLUSION

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CHARLIE ALLEN | UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

### **N-MESH and Advancing protein-based speciation of archaeological remains**

Interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches in archaeology strengthen and expand the evidence base used to interpret the past. The Nottingham Materials and Environment Science and Heritage Laboratories (N-MESH) provide a network of staff and facilities that support archaeological research across multiple schools. As part of N-MESH, this project explored a molecular method for protein-based speciation of ancient faunal remains.

The speciation of archaeological remains is necessary to more accurately understand the relationships of animals to their environment, and to humans regarding behaviours, economies, and landscapes. However, a range of factors may impact the condition of remains resulting in poor preservation and difficulty in phenotyping. For example, the differentiation between sheep and goats to contextualise husbandry has proven to be particularly problematic due to morphological similarities. Mass spectrometry may be used to explore proteins in species DNA, but this relies on the preservation of collagen in remains which can be poor in certain conditions. Novel immunological techniques are emerging offering new approaches toward species determination.

An evaluation was performed to determine the potential of Immunological techniques in distinguishing species using non-collagen dental enamel samples. Commercially available methods have exhibited the ability to distinguish some taxa, however there is some difficulty in differentiating between closely related species such as sheep and goats, limiting their usefulness. An exploratory analysis of the generation and use of synthetic immune proteins called 'Adhirons' was undertaken. Adhirons have shown reactivity with species specific proteins allowing clear differentiation. This provides an initial proof of concept that Adhirons may present an exciting new method of species determination.

**KEYWORDS:** BIOARCHAEOLOGY; IMMUNOLOGY; MULTIVOCALITY IN ARCHHAEOLOGY; PROTEOMICS; ZOOARCHAEOLOGY

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## CONFERENCE POSTERS

KATERINA KONSTANTINIDI | NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

### **The Matter of Heroes: three cases of Homeric agency, materiality and personhood**

The poster will demonstrate one notion of Homeric agency, materiality and personhood that emerged from my doctorate work (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, department of Archaeology). My research focused on things and their entanglements in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The divide between the Homeric material culture and the two epics as corpora of ancient literature is felt between archaeologist, historians, and philologists. Homeric artefacts are rooted in prehistory, while Homeric texts are rooted in history. By omitting those restrictions, I tried to engage with Homeric material culture, through text, while respecting the cognitive experiences evoked by the latter. In summary, I explored how Homeric objects are imbued with notions of agency, how bodies experience the materiality of Homeric things, and how material entities (bodies, persons and things) define Homeric identities. In the proposed poster I will focus on three cases, one for each term (Homeric agency, Homeric materiality and Homeric personhood). I will present how Homeric objects threaten human existence, how matter is a limit or extension of Homeric bodies, and how Homeric persons embody traits from their hybrid environment. Each example will bridge anthropology and archaeology, with theory, Greek Late Bronze Age with Early Iron Age, Aegean prehistory and history.

**KEYWORDS:** NEW MATERIALISM; HOMERIC EPICS; AGENCY; MATERIALITY; PERSONHOOD

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TABITHA CRAIG | UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

### **Society and Identity amongst the Bell Beaker People of Southwest Scotland: An Integrated Analysis of the aDNA and Archaeological Evidence**

Recent research published by Olalde *et al* and Patterson *et al* have provided insight into the Bell Beaker people as being ancestrally originating from the Pontic-Caspian Steppes, consequently reinvigorating the migration vs diffusion debate to explain the 'arrival' of Beaker culture in Britain. Our understanding of Bell Beaker populations across Britain is heavily influenced by findings made in southern England and, more recently with the publication of the Beaker People Project, north-east Scotland. Southwest Scotland has received comparatively little attention despite its potential to contribute to wider debates surrounding Beaker identity, migration, and social organisation. To advance our understanding of the Bell Beaker people within Britain we must devote attention to the most currently understudied regions and adopt an engendered approach to the available data. Integrating the new genetic data with the archaeological record will allow us to produce comprehensive interpretations of Beaker society, culture, mobility, and ancestry.

This poster presents the findings of a completed Masters dissertation that synthesises mortuary, settlement, genetic, and isotopic evidence to investigate Bell Beaker communities in south-west Scotland between c. 2400-1800 BCE. Drawing upon osteology, burials, settlement evidence, and recently published aDNA and isotope datasets, the study adopts an engendered and evidence-focused approach to explore questions of identity, mobility, kinship, and social organisation.

This research demonstrates that interpretations of Bell Beaker society based upon rigid assumptions of hierarchy, gender roles, and cultural homogeneity are not strongly supported by the available evidence. Analysis of burial practices suggests that biological sex had limited influence on mortuary treatment. Settlement evidence suggests a practice of seasonal occupation of lowland and upland landscapes. Genetic and isotopic evidence reveals complex patterns of ancestry and mobility. This research reveals regional variation within Beaker Britain, emphasising the importance of moving beyond southern English-centric models when interpreting Bell Beaker population and society.

By integrating archaeological and biomolecular evidence, this research offers a more nuanced understanding of Bell Beaker communities in south-west Scotland and contributes to broader discussions concerning identity, migration, and social organisation in later prehistoric Britain. More broadly, it demonstrates the value of interdisciplinary and regionally focused approaches for challenging long-standing assumptions within Bell Beaker studies.

**KEYWORDS:** BELL BEAKER, BRONZE AGE, CHALCOLITHIC; SOUTHWEST SCOTLAND, aDNA, ISOTOPES, GENDER ARCHAEOLOGY, IDENTITY AND MOBILITY

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JULIANNA FIKE | CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY-SACRAMENTO

### **When Do Dogs Pay Off?: A Literature Review of Canids as Biotechnology in the Archaeological Record**

Understanding when people used dogs as hunting tools rather than food resources is essential for interpreting subsistence strategies and human-animal relationships in the archaeological record.

Framed through human behavioural ecology and the patch investment model, dogs can be viewed as an adaptive technology when they reduce search time, increase encounter rates, and expand prey breadth. Particularly in more dense environments, dogs can increase encounters with secretive prey that humans may have difficulty detecting. In open environments, dogs aid in chasing fast prey into traps. If dogs were utilized as hunting tools, their presence should correlate with increased prey representation in faunal assemblages, burials, and dog shelters. If no shifts occur, we can assume dogs were likely companions without an elevated social status.

At this time, there are no results regarding the particular data set. However, results from computer simulations support the application of the patch investment model to canid biotechnology. In these tests, dogs are associated with increased net caloric returns and decreased search costs. Pairing canid and human hunters appears to be an important and useful decision.

The hypotheses of this literature review have not been applied towards a faunal assemblage but to computer simulations. The particular simulation utilized is Stardew Valley. This

application looks at how horses aid the forager in reducing search costs. In this simulation, dogs do not have a useful purpose but the horse is faster than the forager. This is why the horse is chosen instead of the dog, despite the topic being dogs.

**KEYWORDS:** OPTIMAL FORAGING THEORY; CANID ZOOARCHAEOLOGY; PATCH INVESTMENT MODEL; DOGS AS HUNTING TOOLS.

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