

28. THE BRITISH UPPER PALAEOLITHIC (1991-1996)

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Research on the British Palaeolithic has been thriving during the last 5 years. There is an active (and ever-growing) research community in the British Isles, and numerous Universities and Institutions of Higher Education have expanded into research in this area during this period. Regular meetings are held in London and in the provinces, keeping researchers up to date with current work, and stimulating interest amongst the general public in our ice age heritage. New fieldwork has been underway in the Wye valley, the Kennet valley, the Torbryan caves and at Three Ways Wharf at Uxbridge. To date only interim reports are available for these research projects. In the Wye Valley, R.N.E. Barton (Oxford Brookes University) has been investigating a series of caves and rock shelters. To date Late-glacial artefacts have been recovered from Symonds Yat East Rockshelter and King Arthur's Cave as well as Mesolithic and later material from a series of other sites (BARTON 1993, 1994 & 1995).

During the summer of 1995 R.N.E. Barton and S. Dumont re-opened the long blade site of Avington VI in the Kennet valley, originally excavated by F.R. Fromm. Their objective was to re-locate Fromm's original excavation and take environmental samples for further study. No published interim reports are yet available, but the field season was successful and further investigations are planned (S. Dumont, pers. comm.).

A.J. Roberts of the British Museum has continued to excavate in the Torbryan caves, Devon, revealing a wealth of Late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic archaeological residues. Once again, as is often the case with recent research, only brief notes are currently available regarding this excellent project (ROBERTS 1992; JACOBI & ROBERTS 1992).

The report on excavations at Three Ways Wharf, Uxbridge directed by J. Lewis (Museum of London) is nearing completion. This multiperiod site consists of a mediaeval bridge overlying in situ Lateglacial and early preboreal sites, containing both lithics and animal bones (LEWIS 1989, 1991). The Lateglacial component of the site is represented by obliquely backed points, debitage and lames "mâchures" found alongside the butchered remains of horse and reindeer. At present two radiocarbon dates are available from the Lateglacial scatter, both taken from horse bones (OxA-1778, 10270 ± 100 BP & OxA-1907, 10010 ± 120 BP), placing it in the Dryas III phase of the Lateglacial.

The last five years have seen relatively few major publications on the Upper Palaeolithic Archaeology of Britain, although a notable exception is the

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site report of the Lateglacial and early Postglacial settlements at Hengistbury Head, Dorset (BARTON 1992). This volume brings together the results of a multidisciplinary team, yielding information on geology, vegetational history, taphonomy, archaeology, and dating of the sites. Chris Smith's introductory volume on the British Palaeolithic (1992) gives a good overview of many of the British sites and their interpretation.

Numerous research projects are underway and have been completed on aspects of Upper Palaeolithic archaeology in Britain and abroad. Mr. William Davies (Cambridge University) is currently undertaking a review of the European Aurignacian and Ms Stephanie Swainston (University of Wales) is researching the Early Upper Palaeolithic archaeology of Paviland Cave, Rhosili. Dr R.M. Jacobi continues to work on aspects of the British Upper Palaeolithic. Ms C. White (Reading University) has recently commenced a re-evaluation of the Late Upper Palaeolithic archaeology of Gough's Cave, Cheddar. Mlle. Sabrina Dumont (University of Paris, Sorbonne) is presently researching the final Palaeolithic long blade technologies in Britain and north western Europe, and is a frequent visitor to our shores. Moving further afield, Dr Peter Mitchell (Oxford University) is continuing research, excavations and survey work on Late Stone Age sites in the Lesotho Highlands, southern Africa. Mr Brian Boyd (Cambridge University) is completing a re-evaluation of the Levantine Natufian. Dr A. Sinclair (Liverpool University) has recently completed a review of the Solutrean (SINCLAIR 1995) and the present author continues to work on faunal exploitation during the European Upper Palaeolithic.

In addition to this, the Accelerator Unit at Oxford, supported by NERC, continues to provide high quality radiocarbon dating (although their scope is not just restricted to Upper Palaeolithic Archaeology). Full listings of all radiocarbon dates obtained throughout the last 5 years can be found in the pages of Archaeometry.

On a final thought, I would like to conclude by noting that many of the leading researchers in Palaeolithic archaeology in Britain have recently been honoured by appointments to professorial chairs in archaeology at their respective Universities. They are Professors G.N. Bailey (Newcastle University), R.W. Dennell (Sheffield University) and C.S. Gamble (Southampton University). Research in Palaeolithic archaeology is thriving in Britain, long may it continue to be so.

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