

A draft Research Agenda for Later Prehistory

This brief paper attempts to synthesize common threads running through the regional papers presented at a series of seminars in the autumn of 2002. Underlying themes are evident in both the existing knowledge and the gaps within our understanding. Regional variation is evident and any research agenda should operate against the background of these regional differences and if necessary, target specific regional issues.

Throughout the process it is evident that there are issues which will move the subject forward but are more contextual than thematic.

- Better use of the development control process and archaeology within the planning system would help further knowledge. We must however be constantly aware of the limitations of archaeology within the planning process. Where Planning Guidance Wales and TAN 60/96 relating to Archaeology are there to inform the planning process. The emerging research agenda will input into archaeological briefs produced as part of the planning process but cannot be the drivers of this process. Throughout the development control process has as its aim to 'bring about sensible solutions to the treatment of sites with archaeological remains and reduce the areas of potential conflict between development and preservation.' (TAN 60/96)
- There should be a synthesis of information contained in the 'grey' literature produced as a result of archaeological planning work to bring it to a wider public and to facilitate an understanding of it.
- SMRs can be enhanced in order to have the ability to produce more refined information.
- Publication of unpublished excavations should be facilitated: This includes Moel y Gaer, Rhosesmor, Dinorben, Dale Promontory Fort and Strawberry Hill.
- Much of what is encompassed in the research agenda will require excavation to achieve answers.
- It is imperative that issues relating to how the aims of the research agenda will be achieved and resourced are addressed. Mechanisms should be put in place to fund this core archaeological work. Existing sources will not be adequate. Cadw's brief is primarily to enhance the schedule and organizations like HLF will not generally fund research work although they may fund awareness raising and public dissemination of information. The research agenda will also have implications for the training of practitioners.

Chronology

- Chronological frameworks need to be established across Wales
- C14 dating of stratigraphic sequences
- Dating of ceramic sequences where possible

Settlement

- In some areas hillforts are better understood than others. This imbalance should be addressed by the use of targeted projects. Recent work at Castell Henllys illustrates the value of this approach. Initially non-intrusive survey work, topographic, geophysical etc should be used to target excavation which could answer questions relating to function and chronological framework. Valuable results are being achieved from initial non-intrusive survey work defensive cropmarks sites in S Ceredigion and some of the hillforts of the Clwydian Range/Llantisilio Mountain.
- Very few undefended sites are known
- What is the relationship between defended and non-defended sites?
- Few Late Bronze age settlement sites have been identified. Examination of known Iron Age sites could aid this
- Links with the preceding BA should be studied

Land use

- Few field systems are known those that are should be further studied with the aim of dating and identifying form and exact function.
- Landscapes should be studied to identify features contemporary with known settlements and the organization of their surrounding areas.

Ritual and burial

- Evidence across Wales is largely absent we should look more closely at burial sites of the earlier periods

Natural Resources

- Research into both metal mining sites and identification of production sites is needed. Peter Crew's work here is exemplary but also indicates the time spans and resources needed to answer these questions.

Environment

- Much more environmental work should be carried out, both on site and off site to identify past landscapes.
- Sieving on sites should take place as routine, detailed analysis of material found should follow.
- Need to answer questions about food production, diet, use of organic materials, landscape etc

Material Culture

- Artefact studies have been neglected in the past this should be addressed. Artefacts provide important information about people's lifestyles and activities, particularly trade/exchange.
- Accepted view is that there is a lack of artefacts in this period however long-term excavations at Castell Henllys has shown that over time a large corpus of artefacts is amassed.
- Findspots of any new hoards or finds should be archaeologically investigated as a matter of course

Processes of Change

- We need to look at the interface between the Bronze Age and Iron Age and of the Iron Age and the Roman period. The study of Romano-British material culture and settlement can tell us about earlier societies. Place name evidence, language and myths and legends perhaps have a role to play here.

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