

EXCAVATIONS AT PENYCLODDIAU HILLFORT, UK

Course ID: ARCH XL 159

July 16–August 12, 2017

DIRECTORS:

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INTRODUCTION

From its spectacular hillfort location, this field school will provide students with a solid understanding of the full range of practical skills involved in the archaeological process, to British professional standard.

The University of Liverpool's Department of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology is working in partnership with the University of Oxford's excavations at Bodafari Hillfort, to help us understand the character and history of hillforts along the Clwydian Range, and the prehistoric people of North Wales.

The Clwydian range is home to no less than six Iron Age hillforts. These are of two distinct types: large contour hillforts (averaging 14 ha) and smaller D-shaped hillforts (averaging 3 ha). Previous work in the region suggests that the large contour types – like Penycloddiau – may be the earlier of the two hillfort types. As a result, our research seeks to date the origins of the first hillforts in western Britain.

Through our excavations at Penycloddiau, we will discover when and why people first began to join together in our first large communities. Our research focuses on the architecture, and its meaning for the evolution of community organization, social change, and everyday life in pre-Roman Iron Age Britain.

At 21 hectares, Penycloddiau is one of the largest prehistoric monuments in the UK. It is located at 440 meters above sea level, and provides spectacular views over coastal western Britain.

Our excavation consists of two large open-area trenches:

A 36 m x 8 m trench across the hillfort earthworks (quarry scoop, inner rampart, ditch, and outer bank)

A 12 m x 12 m trench over a complete prehistoric house

Last season we excavated the hillfort ditch to natural, to a depth of 1.9 m, and recorded it in section. Meanwhile, at the crest of the outer-rampart, a collapsed palisade-type feature was excavated by IFR students: stone-packed, with a silt fill, the timbers had apparently decayed *in situ*. Elsewhere, we continued excavating/recording the collapse sequence from the hillfort's 2.5 m high inner-rampart.

On the prehistoric house platform, ceramic sherds were retrieved from the house's occupation deposit; we discovered that the house floor was of beaten-earth construction; and our initial assessment of the heavy residues suggests that a quantity of degraded low-quality ceramic was included in the floor itself. The floor was 100% sampled according to a radial, spatial design and will be processed next year.

Our 2017 season will see: completion of the house platform, including a section through the platform apron material; and full excavation through both inner and outer ramparts, to record construction sequences, gain samples for radiocarbon dating, and test for a pre-rampart phase.

Our student feedback is consistently positive about the nature and structure of the training/teaching that we provide, the helpfulness and approachability of our staff, and the quality of our food and accommodation. We have a four-year average student feedback score of 96%.

ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

Credit Units: Attending students will be awarded 12 quarter credit units (equivalent to 8 semester units) through our academic partner, UCLA Extension. UCLA is a top ranked research university and its archaeology program is ranked amongst the best in the country. All IFR field schools instructors and curricula are approved both by the corresponding academic department and the Academic Senate at UCLA. This field school provides a minimum of 192 direct instructional hours.

Transcripts: Transcripts are available through UCLA UnEX and instructions for ordering transcripts may be found at <http://bit.ly/2bD0Z3E>. Grades will be posted and transcript available usually within six weeks after the end of this field school. All IFR field schools are designated XL classes – courses that are equivalent to undergraduate courses offered by the UCLA regular session. All XL courses are transferable for unit and subject credit toward the Bachelor's Degree at all campuses of the UC and CSU systems. Classes numbered 100 to 199 are considered upper division (junior/senior). For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/2bjAqmy>.

UCLA students: Students can take classes through UCLA Extension to complete requirements. However certain considerations must be taken into account. For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/2BJWeHK>.

Credit Units Transfer: Most universities accept UCLA credit units – there are very few exceptions. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss the transferability of the credit units with school officials BEFORE attending the field school.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The aim of this field school is to provide students with a solid understanding of the full range of practical skills involved in the archaeological process; alongside a good grounding in both pre-Roman Iron Age studies and British archaeological theory. In order to achieve this, the course has two key objectives:

- 1) to provide students with practical skills training in archaeological field methods, including: single-context excavation and recording, principles of stratigraphy and formation processes, topographic survey and geophysics, finds identification and conservation, technical archaeological drawing (plans and sections), archaeological photography and finds illustration, environmental sampling and processing, drone/UAV recording, site health and safety, and heritage management issues.
- 2) to introduce students to the intellectual challenges presented by interpreting archaeology in the field, including: issues surrounding research and project design, understanding the development of archaeological interpretation over time, the continual readjustment of hypotheses and strategies in the field, heritage communication, and successfully working as part of a team.

The course will take place on the site of Penycloddiau, on the Clwydian range – 20 miles west of the Roman city of Chester – and at the dig accommodation in the village of Burwardsley in Cheshire. We are also pleased to announce that excavations will be taking place at the neighboring hillfort of Bodfari during the dates of the Penycloddiau field school – by the University of Oxford, under the direction of Professor Gary Lock – and we will be visiting this site, and also hosting a visit by the Oxford team.

Students will participate in the following research activities:

Excavation: Supervised training in excavation of an open-area section through the hillfort defenses.

Survey: Geophysical survey of the hillfort interior utilizing magnetic and earth resistance techniques.

Recording: Use of a leading single-context recording system, including context sheets and site drawings.

Finds Processing: The correct packaging, recording and processing of finds.

Laboratory: Lab tasks will include the processing of environmental samples.

The course begins on Sunday, July 16 and will meet every weekday and for a half-day on Saturdays until August 11. The official end date of this field school is August 12 when students can travel back home or inward travels in the UK and beyond. Introductory lectures and site tour during the initial two days of the project will provide the cultural and archaeological background to the fieldwork. A series of lectures, fieldtrips, visits to other excavations, and an organized reading program will allow detailed learning concerning the site-type, region and period.

DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Archaeological field work involves physical work in the outdoors. You should be aware that conditions in the field are very different from those you experience in your dorms, or college town. This program operates in an upland environment in Wales, UK. The weather shifts fast, from high heat to cold rain in the space of one day. The site is also susceptible to ticks and bees. As such, you are advised not to work in shorts and must bring long-sleeved tops, a sunhat, warm clothes, rain gear and work boots with ankle support.

If you have any medical concerns, please discuss them with your doctor and ensure you bring any medication. All other concerns, please discuss with the project director – as appropriate.

PREREQUISITES

None. This is hands-on, experiential learning and students will learn on-site how to conduct archaeological research. Archaeology involves physical work and exposure to the elements and thus, requires a measure of acceptance that this will not be the typical university learning environment. You will get sweaty, tired and have to work in the outdoors. Students are required to come equipped with sufficient excitement and adequate understanding that the archaeological endeavor requires real, hard work – in the hot sun or cold rain, on your feet, and sometimes with large tools.

GRADING MATRIX

- 50%:** Attend and participate each scheduled day – including lecture, field and laboratory work, as well as all organized fieldtrips.
- 30%:** Keep a field notebook that will be submitted and evaluated at the end of the course.
- 10%:** An exam taken at the end of the field school, testing students on the aims of the project, lecture content, organized reading, and on-site instruction.
- 10%:** Assessment by the supervisory team regarding skills uptake, at the end of the field school.

TRAVEL & MEETING POINT

Students should rendezvous outside the University of Liverpool's Department of Archaeology on Sunday July 16th at 12 noon. Whether you are arriving at Heathrow, Manchester, or Liverpool airports, you can take the train to Liverpool Lime Street train station (use this website to find out train times and book tickets: <http://www.thetrainline.com/>). The Department is just 0.5 miles from the train station at 12 Abercromby Square (no. 146 on the campus map: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/files/docs/maps/liverpool-university-campus-map.pdf>).

If your flight is delayed or you miss the groups designated meeting time, call or text project administrator. The cell phone number will be shared with all enrolled students. We will organize your safe transport to the dig accommodation.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

While some countries impose minimum passport validity for arriving passengers, there is no such requirement for the United Kingdom. US citizens seeking entry are required to present a valid passport. Students for this field school should enter the UK on a tourist visa.

Citizens of other countries, please visit the UK Embassy website at your home country for visa information.

ACCOMMODATION

Students will live in relative comfort in an outdoor center in the picturesque village of Burwardsley, Cheshire. We have a well-equipped kitchen, modest communal space, indoor toilets, showers, shared washing facilities, an outdoor seating area, and a campfire in the woods. Sleeping is in shared, single-sex bunk rooms. There is not a lot of room for storage and we request that you only bring one item of luggage, as space is restricted. Bedding is not provided, so please also bring a sleeping bag. There is lots of outdoor space for tents, and camping is recommended for those valuing their own privacy and personal space. There is a washing machine which will be available for use on our days off.

All meals will be communal and our dig chef can cater for vegetarian, vegan, and kosher diets, as well as wheat and lactose intolerance, and nut allergies. Breakfast and lunch are provided. Dinner will be served in the evenings at around 6.30 pm. There will be a rota for off-site communal-living tasks such as washing-up, preparing breakfast, cleaning, etc. We maintain a small dig library at the accommodation of texts on practical approaches to excavation/recording, survey, finds, and formation processes.

EQUIPMENT/TOOL KIT

- A pointed archaeology trowel. We recommend a WHS 4" trowel (http://www.pasthorizonstools.com/WHS_Archaeology_trowel_p/11104arch.htm)
- Work boots, with ample ankle support – students will not be allowed on site in sneakers.
- Sleeping bag
- Sun hat and long-sleeved shirts
- Sun glasses with UV protection
- Waterproof jacket and trousers
- Notebook/Diary

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (July 17-July 24):

Sunday	12.00-12.30: rendezvous at University of Liverpool Archaeology Department
	12.30-13.00: pack kit into vans

14.00-15.00: arrive at dig accommodation
15.00-17.00: set up camp
17.00-18.00: Lecture: 'Excavations at Penycloddiau'
18.00: group dinner + orientation talk
19.00-20.00 Lecture: 'Introduction to hillfort studies'

Monday 7.30: leave for site
8.30-10.30: take tools up to site and set up camp
10.30: tea/coffee break
10.45-12.30: site tour of Penycloddiau
12.30: lunch
13.00: health and safety demonstration
13.30: begin deturfing
15.00: tea/coffee break
16.30: leave site

Tuesday Deturfing and initial cleaning

Wednesday Off-site teaching day
Lectures: 1) 'Stratigraphy and formation processes'; 2) 'The excavation process'; 3) 'Archaeological photography'; 4) 'Recording and archaeological drawing'
Practicals: 1) 'Understanding matrices'; 2) 'Practice excavating'; 3) 'Understanding soil composition'; 4) 'Setting up for plan and section drawings'
Fieldtrip: Bodfari excavations (with a site tour by Professor Gary Lock)

Thursday Excavation

Friday Excavation

Saturday 8.30-12.30: Site open morning
13-16.30: *Fieldtrip:* Old Oswestry hillfort and the Cheshire ice cream farm

Sunday: Day off (includes voluntary day trip to the Welsh seaside resort of Rhyl)

Week 2-3 (July 25-August 7):

Daily schedule for the two weeks of field work Monday through Friday, half day Saturdays:

7.00-7:20: Breakfast
7.30-8.30: Travel to site
9.00-10.30: Excavation
10.30: Tea/coffee break
10.45-12.30 Excavation
12.30: Lunch
13.00-15.00: Excavation
15.00: Tea/coffee break
15.15-16.30: Excavation
16.30: Daily debriefing where different team members present findings of the day
17.00-18.00: Travel to dig house
18.00: Dinner
19.00-20.00: (occasionally) lab work – soil processing duties

In addition, each student will spend 2-3 days within this schedule working on the following off-site practical teaching activities: laying grids, leveling, and an introduction to topographic survey; finds identification and basic conservation; and archaeological illustration. There will also be an opportunity to work with our archaeological surveyor in the geophysical survey of the hillfort interior, gaining a practical knowledge of both magnetic and earth resistance techniques.

Saturday afternoon of Week 3 will involve a fieldtrip to the excavated hillfort of Moel y Gaer, Rhosesmor. We may also find time for a visit to the Roman amphitheater and Grosvenor museum at Chester, as well as Medieval castles at Beeston and Beaumaris/Conwy – weather dependent.

Week 4 (August 8-13):

Mon-Wed: Usual excavation schedule
Thurs: Backfilling/Reinstating
Friday: Camp takedown; return to Liverpool
Saturday: Travel home (or continued solo travel in Britain/Europe)

MANDATORY READINGS

Many of the readings listed below will be provided on the course's Moodle site, and hard copies of many of the books will also be available during the field school.

Barker, P. 1993. *Techniques of Archaeological Excavation*. London: Batsford. Pp. 16-35 (*How Archaeological Sites are Formed*)

Carver, M. 2009. *Archaeological Investigation*. London: Routledge. Pp.19-22 (*Archaeological Vocabulary*)

Cunliffe, B. 2004b. *Iron Age communities in Britain*, 4th edition. Pp. 347-364 (*Hillfort Defenses*)

Drewett, P. 1999. *Field Archaeology: An Introduction*. London: Routledge. Pp. 99-118(*Digging the Site*)

Guilbert, G.C. 1975. Moel y Gaer, 1973: An area excavation on the defenses. *Antiquity* 49, 109-117.

Haselgrove, C. 2009. *The Iron Age*. In J. Hunter and I.B.M. Ralston (eds) *The Archaeology of Britain*, 2nd edition, 149-174. London: Routledge.

Hill, J.D. 1989. Re-thinking the Iron Age. *Scottish Archaeological Review* 6, 16-24.

Mason, R.G. and Pope, R.E. 2016. *Excavation and survey at Penycloddiau hillfort, Flintshire: An interim report*. Liverpool: University of Liverpool.

Pope, R.E. 2008. Roundhouses: 3,000 years of prehistoric design. *Current Archaeology* 222, 14-21.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Archaeological Method

Lucas, G. 2001. *Critical Approaches to Fieldwork: Contemporary and Historical Archaeological Practice*. London: Routledge.

RCAHMS 2011. *A Practical Guide to Recording Archaeological Sites*. Edinburgh: RCAHMS. Available at: <http://www.swaag.org/pdf/SRP%20Site%20Recording.pdf>

Schiffer, M. 1987. *Formation Processes of the Archaeological Record*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Hillforts

Brown, I. 2004. *Discovering a Welsh Landscape: Archaeology in the Clwydian Range*. Oxford: Windgather. [pp. 68-82 only]

Cunliffe, B. 1983. *Danebury: Anatomy of an Iron Age Hillfort*. London: Batsford. [pp. 47-66: *The Fort Builders*]

Hughes, G. 1996. Old Oswestry hillfort: Excavations by W.J. Varley 1939-1940. *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 143, 46-91.

Iron Age Britain

Armit, I. 2015. *Iron Age Lives: The Archaeology of Britain and Ireland, 800 BC - AD 400*. Oxford: Routledge.

Cunliffe, B. 1995. *Iron Age Britain*. London: Batsford. [pp. 27-39: *Taming the Land*]

Haselgrove, C.C. and Pope, R.E. 2007. Characterising the Earlier Iron Age. In C.C. Haselgrove and R.E. Pope (eds) *The Earlier Iron Age in Britain and the near Continent*, 1-23. Oxford: Oxbow.

North Wales

Gale, F. 1991. The Iron Age. In J. Manley, S. Greuter, and F. Gale (eds) *The Archaeology of Clwyd*, 82-96. Clwyd County Council.

Manley, J. 1991. Small settlements. In J. Manley, S. Greuter, and F. Gale (eds) *The Archaeology of Clwyd*, 97-116. Clwyd County Council.

Waddington, K. 2013. *The Settlements of Northwest Wales*. University of Wales Press.

The Project

Grant, F.R. 2008. Human impact and landscape change at Moel Llys y Coed in the Clwydian Hills, North Wales: The Mesolithic-present day. *Archaeology in Wales* 28, 3-15.

Lock, G. and Pouncett, J. 2016. *Excavations at Bodfari hillfort, Flintshire: An interim report*. Oxford: University of Oxford.

Powell, E. 2015. Hillforts of the Iron Age. *Archaeology Magazine* Nov/Dec 2015, 54-63.