

# EXCAVATIONS AT PENYCLODDIAU HILLFORT, UK

**Course ID: ARCH 365B**

**July 15 – August 11, 2018**

## 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 the 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.

After excavating the hillfort ditch to natural in 2016, our 2017 season saw full excavation of the counterscarp bank, revealing two phases of ditch clearance activity: one associated with the initial cutting of the ditch, and another with the re-cut, from which we recovered a small mortar.

We also completed excavation of the house platform, revealing two large entrance postholes (c. 0.40 m wide/deep) for a southern-facing entrance (which may suggest Bronze Age occupation). The house platform also has two phases of occupation – and this year's post-ex will focus on bringing together the full, excavated sequence, and identifying appropriate contexts for radiocarbon dating.

Meanwhile, we proceeded with excavation of the hillfort's inner rampart. This revealed a layer of stone and earth construction beneath a lime capping. This in turn lay above a stone core, with the rampart faces built in slim, stone box-rampart style, each containing an earthen fill.

Our final season of excavation will consist of one large, open-area trench (14 m x 8 m) across the hillfort's large inner rampart.

Our 2018 season will involve: full excavation of the inner rampart – to record construction, and gain samples for radiocarbon dating; and excavation of the deep, stratified pre-rampart sequence – including a large linear feature with charcoal, potentially a Bronze Age precursor to the Iron Age rampart.

Year on year, our student feedback is strongly positive about the nature and structure of the training/teaching that we provide, the knowledge and approachability of our staff, and the quality of our food and accommodation. We have a five-year average student feedback score of 97%.

#### ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

**Credit Units:** Attending students will be awarded 8 semester credit units (equivalent to 12 quarter credit units) through our academic partner, Connecticut College. Connecticut College is a private, highly ranked liberal arts institution with a deep commitment to undergraduate education. Students will receive a letter grade for attending this field school (see grading assessment and matrix). This field school provides a minimum of 160 direct instructional hours. Students are encouraged to discuss the transferability of credit units with faculty and registrars at their home institutions prior to attending this field school.

**Transcripts:** An official copy of transcripts will be mailed to the permanent address listed by students on their online application. One additional transcript may be sent to the student's home institution at no additional cost. Additional transcripts may be ordered at any time through the National Student Clearinghouse: <http://bit.ly/2hvurkl>.

#### 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, finds identification and conservation, technical archaeological drawing (plans and sections), archaeological photography (including new techniques in photogrammetry), environmental sampling and processing, 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. We are also pleased to announce that excavations will also 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 to Penycloddiau by the University of Oxford team.

Students will participate in the following research activities:

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

**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 taking environmental samples, and charcoal samples for C-14 analysis.

The course begins on Sunday, July 15 and will meet every weekday and for a half-day on Saturdays until August 10. The official end date of this field school is August 11 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 good ankle support (make sure that these are 'worn-in' slightly in advance).

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 15<sup>th</sup> 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**

Accommodation will be in a local holiday cottage, or at a well-established camping/caravan park, just 12 minutes from site (4-star rating on TripAdvisor – facilities include hot showers, kitchen area, and access to a washing machines). Please bring a sleeping bag for bedding – and if you do wish to camp, a tent.

Meals will be communal, and we can cater for vegetarian diets. 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 food preparation, washing-up, etc.

### **EQUIPMENT/TOOL KIT**

- A pointed archaeology trowel. We recommend a WHS 4" trowel ([http://www.pasthorizonstools.com/WHS\\_Archaeology\\_trowel\\_p/11104arch.htm](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 15-July 22):**

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Sunday | 12.00-12.30: rendezvous at University of Liverpool Archaeology Department<br>12.30-13.30: Lecture: 'Excavations at Penycloddiau' and 'Introduction to hillfort studies'<br>13.30-14.00: Pack kit into van<br>14.00-15.00: travel to dig accommodation<br>15.00-18.00: set up home/camp<br>18.00: group dinner + orientation |
| Monday | 8.00: leave for site<br>9.00-10.30: take tools up to site and set up camp<br>10.30: tea/coffee break<br>10.45-12.30: site tour of Penycloddiau<br>12.30: lunch<br>13.00: health and safety demonstration<br>13.30: begin deturfing<br>15.00: tea/coffee break<br>16.30: leave site  |

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Tuesday   | Deturfing and initial cleaning  |
| Wednesday | Off-site teaching day<br><i>Lectures:</i> 1) 'Stratigraphy and formation processes'; 2) 'The excavation process'; 3) 'Archaeological photography'; 4) 'Recording and archaeological drawing'<br><i>Practicals:</i> 1) 'Understanding matrices'; 2) 'Practice excavating'; 3) 'Understanding soil composition'; 4) 'Setting up for plan and section drawings'<br><i>Fieldtrip:</i> Bodfari excavations (with a site tour by Professor Gary Lock) |
| Thursday  | Excavation  |
| Friday    | Excavation  |
| Saturday  | 8.30-12.30: Site open morning<br>13-16.30: <i>Fieldtrip:</i> Old Oswestry hillfort and the Cheshire ice cream farm  |
| Sunday:   | Day off (includes voluntary day trip to Anglesey)   |

### **Week 2-3 (July 23-August 5):**

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

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 7.30-8:00:   | Breakfast   |
| 8.00-9.00:   | 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                          |

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 6-11):**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 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 Dropbox folder, 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. [p.19-22: *Archaeological Vocabulary*]
- Cunliffe, B. 2004b. *Iron Age communities in Britain*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. [pp. 347-364: *Hillfort Defences*]
- 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*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. [available on the project webpages]
- 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. Grenter, and F. Gale (eds) *The Archaeology of Clwyd*, 82-96. Clwyd County Council.
- Manley, J. 1991. Small settlements. In J. Manley, S. Grenter, 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.