

## ANNUAL REPORT: UK-PENYCLODDIAU 2015 FIELD SCHOOL

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*IFR students on a working site tour*

### **Background**

Located in the UK, the 2015 University of Liverpool Archaeology Field School took place between July 19<sup>th</sup> and August 15<sup>th</sup>. This year saw the fourth season of excavation and survey at Penycloddiau hillfort, Flintshire (North Wales) by the Department of Archaeology, Classics, and Egyptology, at the University of Liverpool. The Liverpool department continues to rank within the UK Top 5 for international archaeology research (REF2014, RAE 2008) – coming top in the UK for staff research outputs in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework.

The Liverpool team is working in partnership with Cadw (Welsh Assembly Government), Denbighshire County Council, and the University of Oxford excavations at neighboring Bodfari hillfort. Our investigations aim to characterize the chronology and function of the Clwydian contour forts, via targeted excavation at the previously un-investigated site of Penycloddiau; and update current understanding of the nature/chronology of later prehistoric settlement in North Wales, in line with current research frameworks both for Wales and the UK.

At 21 hectares, Penycloddiau hillfort is one of the largest pre-Roman Iron Age sites in the UK. Previous work suggests that similar large contour enclosures may be a very early type (c. 1000-500 BCE) – as such, our excavations aim to help date the origins of the hillfort in western Britain.

### **Research accomplishments**

Our 2015 research aims were to:

- Continue work in Area 1, focusing on rampart collapse deposits and locating the ditch.
- Continue to discovering the nature of the house platform, and sample for C-14 dating.

This year we achieved the following: 1) excavation of the early rampart collapse events; 2) we discovered that the rampart had two phases of construction – and some form of lime capping; 3) we located the ditch – discovering that it had a reverted edge, contemporary with an

associated metaled surface, and suggesting an external walkway between the outer face of the inner rampart and the ditch; 4) we proceeded with 100% excavation of the house platform.

Next season we will continue with the excavation of potential floor/occupation deposits on the house platform and obtain a section through the bank material, to characterize and date construction/occupation. In Area 1, we will finish removing the remaining initial prehistoric collapse deposits from the inner rampart, and achieve a complete section through the ditch.

### ***Student contributions/involvement in research***

With modern damage and late post-Medieval collapse recorded in previous seasons, this year's students worked hard to excavate prehistoric rampart collapse. Our students are very much at the trowel's edge, working alongside staff to elucidate the stratigraphic sequence. This year, students made exceptional progress identifying a later re-facing to the external revetment of the hillfort's inner rampart, whilst gradually exposing the original rampart structure.

Work on the house platform on the interior of the hillfort saw students continuing to excavate the final post-occupation deposits, exposing what seems to have been the stance of a relatively small roundhouse structure. Currently, we think the platform may have housed an organic-walled house – upland archaeology such as this is typically very fragile due to processes of decay/erosion and students did very well to identify and sample the remarkably thin deposits.

Students also took part in the geophysical survey of the hillfort's 19 hectare interior, and took part in our programme of heritage communication – giving site tours to visitors and guests, a big contribution towards helping the project to keep establishing strong links with local community.

### ***Dissemination***

A comprehensive interim report documenting this year's excavations will be available from the University of Liverpool webpages by November 2015. We have a strong social media presence, with almost 900 likes on Facebook where our favourite photographs of the season have been uploaded. We have a feature about to be released in Archaeology Magazine. In Britain, excavation results will be discussed at the national Hillforts Study Group meeting in November and talks have already been invited by the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust and Denbighshire County Council. This year also saw the production of a series of cartoon strips communicating out the teaching and research goals of the project, by well-known John Swogger (Çatalhöyük).