



MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

BENEATH HAY BLUFF AND SNODHILL CASTLE, HEREFORDSHIRE, UNITED KINGDOM

Course ID: ARCH 365BG

June 29-July 27, 2024

Academic Credits: 8 Semester Credit Units

FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTOR(S)

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OVERVIEW

The field school is composed of two distinct elements, and students will spend an equal period of time on the two areas of investigation, both within a short distance of the village of Dorstone, in the southwest of Herefordshire, on the border between England and Wales. Since 2010, the Beneath Hay Bluff Project (Directed by Julian Thomas and Keith Ray) has been investigating the character of prehistoric, and specifically Neolithic, activity in southwest Herefordshire. Snodhill Castle, by contrast, is a Norman castle, owned and cared for by the Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust. Excavations here are being directed by Tim Hoverd of Herefordshire Council.

This region has been somewhat neglected by prehistoric archaeology, in part owing to a lack of antiquarian investigations, but it is increasingly clear that it is distinguished by a rich and under-exploited prehistoric record. In seeking to address questions of monumentality, memory, place and material traditions, we have excavated at a number of sites, including the funerary round cairn at Olchon Court and the long mounds, buildings and causewayed enclosure of Dorstone Hill. The region is a rural one, with picturesque villages, castles, abbeys, rolling hills and lush river valleys: it is at once typically 'English' and bordering on rugged Welsh uplands. The field school provides a unique learning experience by drawing on the resources of both the University of Manchester and Herefordshire Archaeology, who contribute facilities, equipment and staff. All of our supervisory staff are professionals from the world of commercial archaeology, who bring a wealth of experience and know-how.

In detailing the character of Neolithic southwest Herefordshire, the following themes are of central importance to us:

- The chronology of the introduction and transformation of Neolithic innovations in Britain;
- The creation and maintenance of significant places: 'narratives of place';
- The development of monumental landscapes;
- The use of exotic materials (notably rock crystal) and the establishment of inter-regional contacts;
- The formation and maintenance of regional identities in prehistory;
- The place of prehistoric monuments in modern societies.

The Beneath Hay Bluff Project is now entering into a mature phase of investigation, which is seeking to broaden our work in southwest Herefordshire, and to characterise Neolithic activity across a broader timescale. Having identified a site of national importance at Dorstone Hill, we are now seeking to place this monumental complex into a wider context, by addressing a series of new sites, and seeking to engage our local community to a greater extent. While completing work at Dorstone Hill, we will be expanding our scope to investigate a number of other sites. These include the major megalithic tomb of Arthur's Stone.

Arthur's Stone is a Neolithic chambered tomb in southwest Herefordshire, dating to the period around 3600 BC, located on a hilltop between the valleys of the rivers Wye and Dore. Arthur's Stone is a scheduled monument in the care of English Heritage, and it has long fascinated both archaeologists and local people, but it remains poorly understood. It consists of a long cairn of small stones, within which is set a chamber composed of a massive capstone set on top of a series of uprights. The capstone is broken, and this may have happened during the construction of the monument, and dramatic aspect of the site provided the inspiration for the Stone Table in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*.

In 2021, an area was excavated immediately in front of the tomb, where pits or hearths might have been expected, but to our astonishment it was discovered that an earlier phase of the mound, composed of earth and timber, extended some distance beyond the known structure. Moreover, two lines of postholes were discovered, forming an avenue of upright timbers leading toward the monument from the Golden Valley. In 2022, further excavations demonstrated that the timber avenue had been replaced in stone, creating an imposing processional way leading toward the tomb. The 2022 season also revealed the beautifully constructed drystone wall that surrounds the stone cairn, and provided indications that the massive chamber had existed as a freestanding entity before the cairn had been constructed around it. In 2023, excavations were conducted in the immediate area of the massive 'capstone chamber', which demonstrated that the chamber had originally been a free-standing structure, within a ring-shaped cairn of irregular cobbly stones. Later, this was enclosed within the larger long cairn, composed of fine dry-stone walling. The lamellar stones used to build this later structure are likely to have come from a massive quarry in the field to the north of the monument, which we partially excavated in 2023. Overall, our investigations are demonstrating that Arthur's Stone had a long a complex history of construction and use, in which its outward appearance was repeatedly reconfigured.

Snodhill Castle is a ruined motte-and-bailey castle, about 1 mile south of the village of Dorstone in west Herefordshire, England. It is recognized as one of the major castles of the Welsh Marches. It was built in the 11th century to secure the border between Norman England and the Welsh Princes. This unique structure was rescued from collapse and loss in 2017 and is now being excavated and selectively restored by the Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust. The remains of a Royal Free Chapel were uncovered in 2021 when excavators found painted wall plaster. The excavation also revealed parts of a fine arch, stained glass and a small figure believed to have been part of a cross. Royal Free Chapels, also known as Royal Peculiars, were first set up in the 8th Century and would be used by travelling English monarchs. While about 40 are known to have existed, only nine existed inside castles, including Windsor Castle and The Tower of London.

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 highly ranked liberal arts institution with a deep commitment to undergraduate education. Students will receive a letter grade for attending this field school (see assessment, below). This field school provides a minimum of 360 hours of experiential education. Students are encouraged to discuss the transferability of credit units with faculty and registrars at their home institution 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 more transcript may be sent to the student's home institution at no cost. Additional transcripts may be ordered at any time through the [National Student Clearinghouse](#).

PREREQUISITES

There are no academic prerequisites. This program is hands-on, experiential learning and students will learn how to conduct archaeological research in a live field environment. What is required is enthusiasm, an open mind and a readiness to 'give it a go'.

NOTICE OF INHERENT RISK

Traveling and conducting field research can involve risk. The IFR engages in intensive review of each field school location and programming prior to approval. Once a program is accepted, the IFR reviews each program annually to make sure it still complies with all our standards and policies, including those pertaining to student safety. Participants should also take every reasonable step to reduce risk while on IFR programs, including following the safety advice and guidelines of your program director, being alert to your surroundings and conditions, letting someone know where you will be at all times, and assessing your personal security.

The IFR does not provide trip or travel cancellation insurance. We strongly encourage participants to consider purchasing this insurance, as unexpected events may prevent your participation or cause the program to be canceled. Insurance is a relatively small cost to protect your educational investment in an IFR program. When comparing trip cancellation insurance policies, make sure the policy covers the cost of both airfare and tuition.

We do our best to follow a schedule of activities, methods training, and programming as outlined in this syllabus. However, this schedule can be easily disrupted by unforeseen circumstances, including weather, revisions by local permitting agencies, or conditions onsite. While this schedule represents the intentions of the program, adaptability is an intrinsic part of all field research, and necessary alterations to the schedule may happen at any time.

If you have any medical concerns, please consult with your doctor. For all other concerns, please consult with the program director and staff.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC FIELD CONDITIONS

Herefordshire, and the UK in general, is a very safe environment in which to take part in archaeological fieldwork. There are few dangerous plants or animals, the chances of political unrest are vanishingly small, and crime or violence of any kind are extremely infrequent in such a rural setting. In June/July the weather is generally very good, though we occasionally have to take precautions against sunstroke. However, it can also sometimes be very rainy, and living under canvas this can be quite challenging. You should come prepared for such circumstances, with waterproof clothing and footwear.

This is also one of the larger projects that the IFR is involved with. There may be over 50 staff and students (including those from Manchester and Cardiff universities) on the two sites at any given time. The project has a friendly and easygoing atmosphere, and the different student communities mix and integrate well. Students make new friends, and are supported by staff trained to cope with social and mental health issues. However, if you have previously been on small fieldwork projects with only one leader and a few students, you should be prepared for a very different experience.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This field course aims to introduce students to the archaeology of Herefordshire and the borderland between England and Wales, to a series of current issues in the archaeology of Neolithic Britain, and to the techniques and methodologies employed in the study of prehistory in Britain, and in the investigation of medieval architecture. As a subsidiary issue, students will be introduced to the landscapes and archaeology of a picturesque rural area. Learning will therefore take a series of different forms: readings provided before the start of the field school; excavation and survey experience in the

field; lectures; informal teaching sessions in the field; trips to sites, monuments and museums. In the field, students can expect to take part in stratigraphic excavation, to record contexts and finds, to make use of both total station and GPS survey equipment, and to draw plans and sections. Student progress in the acquisition of skills in the field will be monitored through the use of a personal Archaeological Skills Passport.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the field school, students should:

- Have acquired a broad familiarity with the archaeology and landscapes of the southern borderland between England and Wales, from prehistory to the Medieval period;
- Be familiar with some of the key issues in the archaeology of Prehistoric Britain;
- Be familiar with the main excavation, survey and recording methodologies employed in British prehistoric archaeology;
- Have acquired a basic level of competence in a variety of archaeological field skills (including, for example: troweling, mattocking, shoveling, barrowing, test-pit excavation, feature excavation, section drawing, planning, total station survey, GPS survey, laying out a grid, soil sieving, feature photography, context recording, finds recording), and should understand their appropriate use;
- Have been introduced to a further series of methodologies conducted by specialist staff in the field (such as drone photography and photogrammetry, environmental sampling, geophysical survey, etc.);

ASSESSMENT

40% Active fieldwork participation

60% Assessed fieldwork report

STUDENT HEALTH

An IFR field school is designed to provide safe, positive, and constructive experiences for participating communities, students, and researchers. We are committed to protocols and practices that support the health and well-being of all involved in our field school projects, including the members of the community in which these projects take place.

We recommend that students adopt best-practices for arriving in a good state of health to protect themselves and their peers' readiness to set about the work of the field school. A thriving field camp environment is a constant exchange of energy, patience, effort, respect, and service. Arriving healthy is every student's first act of service — their first opportunity to behave in a way that respects the safety and wellness of one another.

IFR programs follow the health requirements and guidelines of local health authorities. You may also wish to consult recommendations from the US Centers for Disease Control at:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

VISA REQUIREMENTS

To enter the United Kingdom, all U.S. citizens who do not also hold UK citizenship must present a valid U.S. passport to enter and depart. Your passport must be valid for the entire duration of your planned stay. U.S. and Canadian citizens can stay in the UK for up to 6 months, but check this frequently because regulations change, often with little notice.

Citizens of other countries are asked to check the UK embassy website page at their home country for specific visa requirements.

TRAVEL (TO AND DURING THE PROGRAM)

Natural disasters, political changes, weather conditions and various other factors may force the cancellation or alteration of a field school. IFR recommends students only purchase airline tickets that are fully refundable and consider travel insurance in case a program or travel plans must change for any reason. General information for this program is below, but keep in mind we will discuss any updated travel information and regulations during the required program orientation, which could affect travel plans.

We will be meeting all participating students at Manchester Airport, and conveying them from there directly to the field camp in Dorstone village by minibus, roughly a three-hour drive. You should time your flight to arrive before 2:00 pm local time on Saturday 29th June. If you wish to make other arrangements (for instance, arriving early in the UK), we can arrange to meet you at Hereford railway station. In the very unlikely eventuality that you should be held at the airport for health reasons, you should contact us directly on a cell phone number that will be provided.

If you missed your connection or your flight is delayed, please call, text or email the field school director immediately. A local emergency mobile phone number will be provided to all enrolled students.

Both excavation sites are very close to the campsite. While either could be walked in under half an hour, we will convey all personnel to site by minibus each day.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Our campsite is the cricket field in Dorstone village, which we have exclusive use of during the fieldwork period. There is a pavilion with showers and toilets, and another building used as a kitchen. During the fieldwork period we also have a large marquee for dining and social space, and at the bottom of the field, beside the stream, there is a space for a campfire. We will request students to each occupy a separate tent, and to pitch their tents at least two metres apart (for reasons of fire safety). Launderettes are found in Hereford and Hay-on-Wye, and washing can be collected and sent in for a service wash during the week. You can also hand-wash clothes at the campsite.

Individual tents and sleeping mats will be provided for all IFR participants, but you will need to bring a sleeping bag.

Dorstone is a beautiful, traditional English village, with a fine pub (the Pandy Inn) that dates back to medieval times. Six miles away, across the Welsh border, is the small town of Hay on Wye, known for its

castle and its many bookshops, and home to an annual literary festival (it styles itself ‘Wales’ booktown’: <https://www.hay-on-wye.co.uk/>). Hereford is about sixteen miles distant, and the cathedral there holds the famous Mappa Mundi (a medieval map of the world) and a medieval chained library.

During fieldwork, our food is prepared by a cook employed by the project. There is a hot meal each evening, a variety of breakfast options, and a choice of sandwiches delivered to the site at lunchtime. We are happy to accommodate vegetarians, vegans, gluten-free, food allergies and intolerances, halal, kosher and other diets. One of the tasks of the day’s kitchen staff will be the rigorous cleaning of all food handling and preparation spaces.

EQUIPMENT LIST

- 4- or 5-inch mason’s drop-forged (*not* riveted) pointing trowel
- Waterproofs, *including* waterproof trousers
- Sun hat
- Sturdy footwear – boots, *not* trainers, ideally with steel toecaps
- Sleeping bag
- Mask
- Hand sanitizer
- Steel tape measure (3-meter; metric)
- Plate, bowl and mug
- Knife, fork and spoon
- Torch / Flashlight
- Personal medical supplies and medications
- Sunscreen
- Hard-bound notebook (recommended)
- Folding camp chair (recommended)

COURSE SCHEDULE

All IFR field schools begin with a safety orientation. This orientation addresses local and program protocols concerning student behavior, appropriate attire, local practices and sensibilities that may be unfamiliar, potential fauna and flora hazards, IFR harassment and discrimination policies, and the student Code of Conduct.

DORSTONE FIELDWORK TIMETABLE 2024

		<i>Activities</i>	<i>Readings</i>
Saturday 29	Travel	Arrive Dorstone c. 5:00 pm; campsite induction	
Sunday 30	Digging	Onsite safety induction	
Monday 1 July	Digging		
Tuesday 2	Digging	Lecture: Julian Thomas on the project so far	Ray and Thomas 2020; Overton, Ray and Thomas 2022
Wednesday 3	Digging	John Piprani: flint knapping workshop	
Thursday 4	Digging	IFR Lecture: Keith Ray – Introduction to the archaeology of Herefordshire	Ray 2007; Ray 2015

Friday 5	Digging	Workshop: Preparing for field research in archaeology: the key role of a formal Project Design	
Saturday 6	Day off	Visit: Black Mountains megalithic tombs	Britnell and Whittle 2021
Sunday 7	Digging		
Monday 8	Digging	Workshop: the recording system	Sandoval 2021
Tuesday 9	Digging	Lecture: Keith Ray	
Wednesday 10	Digging	John Piprani: flint knapping workshop	
Thursday 11	Digging	IFR Lecture: Julian Thomas – The Early Neolithic	Cummings 2017; Ray and Thomas 2018
Friday 12	Digging	Workshop: surveying	
Saturday 13	Day off	Visit: Hay-on-Wye and Longtown	
Sunday 14	Digging		
Monday 15	Trip	Trip: Offa's Dyke Centre	Bapty and Ray 2014 (Chapter 1)
Tuesday 16	Digging	Lecture: Nick Overton - The White and the Black; exotics at Dorstone Hill and Arthur's Stone in the wider British and Irish context	Overton et al. 2023
Wednesday 17	Digging	John Piprani: flint knapping workshop	
Thursday 18	Digging	IFR Lecture: Julian Thomas – The Late Neolithic	Cummings 2017; Ray and Thomas 2018
Friday 19	Digging	Workshop: careers in field archaeology	
Saturday 20	Day off	Visit: Caerleon Roman Fortress	
Sunday 21	Digging		
Monday 22	Digging	Workshop: archaeozoology	
Tuesday 23	Digging	Lecture: Julian Thomas on this year's discoveries	Hilts 2023; Ray et al. 2023
Wednesday 24	Digging	John Piprani: flint knapping workshop	
Thursday 25	Digging	IFR Lecture: Nick Overton – Radiocarbon dating and analysis	Bayliss et al. 2007
Friday 26	Digging		
Saturday 27	Travel	Return to Manchester Airport	

REQUIRED READINGS

PDF files of all mandatory readings will be provided to enrolled students. Students are encouraged to download and/or print readings prior to traveling. Course participants are expected to be prepared to engage the discussions led by facilitators, all of whom will be looking for compelling evidence that students have read and thought about the assigned readings prior to the scheduled day on which they are first discussed.

Bapty, I. and Ray, K. 2014 *Offa's Dyke: Landscape and Hegemony in Eighth Century Britain*. Oxford: Oxbow.

Bayliss, A., Bronk Ramsey, C., Van der Plicht, J., and Whittle, A. 2007 Bradshaw and Bayes: Towards a timetable for the Neolithic. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 17 (S1), 1-28.
doi:10.1017/S0959774307000145

Bowden, M., Lane, R. and Small, F., 2017 Snodhill Castle, Peterchurch, Herefordshire: Archaeological, Architectural and Aerial Survey and Investigation. Historic England.
<https://www.snodhillcastle.org/downloads/scarchaeologicarchitecturalaerialinvestigationsurvey.pdf>

Hilts, C. 2023 Arthur's Stone: a monumental mystery. *Current Archaeology* 404, 26-33.

Nash, G.H. 2009 Long or round? Evaluation programme and results at the Neolithic chambered monument of Arthur's Stone, Herefordshire. *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club* 56, 59-72.

Overton, N., Ray, K., and Thomas, J. 2022 Structural and sequential complexity in causewayed enclosures: implications from Dorstone Hill, Herefordshire. In: Last, J. (ed.) *Marking Place*, pp.43-60. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Overton, N.J., Healey, E., Rovira, I.G., Thomas, J., Birchenall, J., Challinor, D., Hoverd, T. and Ray, K. 2023 Not all that glitters is gold? Rock crystal in the early British Neolithic at Dorstone Hill, Herefordshire, and the wider British and Irish context. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 33(1), pp.55-74.

Ray, K. 2007 The Neolithic in the West Midlands: an overview. *The Undiscovered Country: the Earlier Prehistory of the West Midlands*, pp.51-78. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Ray, K., Thomas, J. 2020 Houses foundational: gathering histories at Dorstone Hill, Herefordshire. In: Barclay, A., Field, D. and Leary, J. (eds.) *Houses of the Dead*, pp.107-19. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Ray, K., Thomas, J., Overton, N., Griffiths, S., Hoverd, T., Allen, M.J., Barclay, A., Birchenall, J., Challinor, D., French, C. and Healey, E., 2023 Dorstone Hill: a Neolithic timescape. *Antiquity*, 97(394), pp.869-886.

Sandoval, G. 2021 Single-context recording, field interpretation and reflexivity: an analysis of primary data in context sheets. *Journal of Field Archaeology* 46:7, 496-512. DOI:
[10.1080/00934690.2021.1926700](https://doi.org/10.1080/00934690.2021.1926700)

Thomas, J. 2016 Expanding a Neolithic landscape: Dorstone Hill, Herefordshire. *Current Archaeology*, (321), pp.16-17.

Thomas, J., Overton, N. and Ray, K., 2022 Creating ancient identities: Arthur's Stone and Dorstone Hill. *British Archaeology*, 2022(3), pp.26-31.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Barker, P. 2003 *Techniques of Archaeological Excavation*. Routledge.

Britnell, W. and Whittle, A. 2021 *The First Stones: Penywyrlod, Gwernvale and the Black Mountains Neolithic Long Cairns of South-East Wales*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Cummings, V., 2017 *The Neolithic of Britain and Ireland*. Taylor & Francis.

Cummings, V. and Richards, C. 2021 *Monuments in the Making: Raising the Great Dolmens in Early Neolithic Northern Europe*. Windgather Press.

Harris, E.C. ed., 2014 *Practices of Archaeological Stratigraphy*. Elsevier.

Kinross, J., 2015 *Castles of the Marches*. Amberley Publishing Limited.

Ray, K.W., 2015 *The Archaeology of Herefordshire: An Exploration*. Logaston Press.

Ray, K. and Thomas, J., 2018 *Neolithic Britain: the Transformation of Social Worlds*. Oxford University Press.