Barbarians Prehistory
from the Mesolithic to the Iron Age

Hilary term 2021, every other Friday, 4–5pm on Teams

Week 2: 29 January. Dr Matt Knight, National Museums Scotland

What's a nice axe like you doing in a hoard like this? Investigating the significance of earlier objects in Bronze Age contexts

Earlier objects are frequently encountered in Bronze Age contexts. Whilst approaches to 'heirlooms' in burials have attracted much attention over the past two decades, earlier objects buried in hoards and settlements have received less attention. How should we interpret such finds? Do they represent generational heirlooms? Or simply residual discoveries? This talk will bring together case studies from across Britain to explore what insights we might gain into how Bronze Age society viewed and treated objects of their past. (Image: ©NMS)

Week 4: 12 February. Prof Philipp W. Stockhammer, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München & Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, Jena

Rethinking Prehistory: Bioarchaeological perspectives on the transition from Stone to Bronze Age in Southern Germany

Bioarchaeological research – especially archaeogenetics – has often focused on supra-regional and long-term developments especially with regard to the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC in Eurasia. However, these current perspectives can neither explain the complexity of these supra-regional developments nor their impact on local communities. In my lecture, I will present latest insights from the integration of a broad range of archaeological and scientific analyses within a micro-region, namely the valley of the river Lech south of present-day Augsburg in Southern Germany during the 3rd and early 2nd millennia BC. The archaeological evaluation of more than 400 burials, about 200 radiocarbon dates, about 150 isotopic (Sr, C, N) analyses and the genomic analysis of 104 individuals have generated a novel basis for writing an integrative prehistory on a local level. We are not only able to decipher the complexity of local marital rules as well as sex- and age-based patterns of mobility and different modes of fostering, but we now finally understand the formation of burial groups on cemeteries, inheritance rules of hamlets and the relation between material objects in graves and the position of the deceased individual within the pedigree of the hamlet's inhabitants. Moreover, the co-presence of biologically related and unrelated individuals in every farmstead implies a socially stratified complex household in the Central European Bronze Age.

Week 6: 26 February. Dr Carl Persson, Blekinge Museum / Carl Persson Fornforskaren AB

Ljungaviken: some preliminary results from the excavation of a South Swedish Mesolithic settlement with more than 50 huts (and a dog)

In Ljungaviken, at Sölvesborg in Southern Sweden, over 50 well-preserved Mesolithic huts have been found within a limited area, under thick layers of sand and gyttja from the Littorina transgression. The huts were situated at close distance to each other but did not overlap visibly. In some of the huts, bone material was preserved. Outside one of the huts the remains of a dog was found. The site is preliminarily dated to approximately 6400 BC. This lecture will present preliminary results of this settlement excavation.

Week 8: 12 March. Dr Mette Løvschal, University of Århus

Landscapes of exhaustion: The governance of disturbance in late prehistoric grazing regimes

Lowland heath provides a particularly interesting image of the Anthropocene, being regarded historically as exhausted, poor and infertile wasteland. Anthropogenic heathlands emerged more than 4000 years ago across Northern Europe, when small-scale communities began massive forest clearances and maintained the arising heathlands by grazing and regular burning. In this presentation, I explore the multispecies collaboratives and forms of governance emerging from these landscapes thriving on disturbance, and the kinds of human and non-human interdependence, increasingly entrapping themselves in a certain heathland logic.

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