

Barbarians Prehistory

from the Mesolithic to the Iron Age

Michaelmas term 2020, every other Friday, 4–5pm on Teams

Week 1: 16 October. Dr Melanie Giles, University of Manchester

Bog bodies: Face-to-face with the past

There is no more iconic face from European prehistory than that of Tollund Man – the Danish Iron Age bog body, whose remarkable features continue to inspire not just the archaeological but poetic imagination. In this seminar, I will peel back the peat to consider the reception of bog bodies over time: marvels and horrors, saints and sinners, before critically questioning the ethics of curating and displaying the well-preserved dead. I will also present the latest research on Manchester's own bog head: Worsley Man, whose death in the early Roman period poses a rather different set of questions about his identity and demise in the north of Britain. Finally, the seminar argues that a new engagement with the archaeology of the bog is needed as we look to these environments as one of the key solutions to carbon sequestration in the present day.



Week 3: 30 October. Dr Dani Hoffman, University of Bergen, Norway

Better than our neighbours? The Riedling enclosure and the later part of the Neolithic in central Europe

The later part of the central European Neolithic is often connected to narratives of increasing hierarchy. So-called prestige goods (copper, jade) are traded widely and are, often implicitly, connected to individual status. In this context, the Münchshöfen culture of Lower Bavaria (ca. 4400-4000 BC) has long stood out as a somewhat exotic phenomenon. Although its pottery shows clear connections to the east, there are hardly any known copper artefacts, and few other signs of incipient hierarchy (such as rich burials or diversified domestic architecture). In contrast, enclosures and structured deposits of humans, animal remains and objects are an increasingly important part of the material record. In this paper, I explore the biography of one well-studied site, the Riedling enclosure, to sketch possible alternatives to widespread hierarchisation models.



Week 5: 13 November. Katharina Rebay-Salisbury, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Life in a Bronze Age village: Studying motherhood and childrearing in late prehistoric Central Europe

Motherhood includes a range of cultural choices and practices in addition to the biological framework of sexual reproduction, which are subject to research within the ERC-Starting Grant funded project 'The value of mothers to society'. This presentation will present the latest findings from new analytical approaches such as tracing the stress of pregnancies and childbirth in female skeletons, applying organic residue analysis to understand what prehistoric baby bottles contained, and using peptide analysis in children's dental enamel to determine their sex.



Week 7: 27 November. Mike Pitts, Digging Deeper Ltd

Telling the past: Ten ways archaeology got it wrong (and counting)

In June the Economist considered the state of the world, and with one eye on the aftermath of the second world war, cautioned against "bumbling along": doing so "would be a waste of a crisis". In these extraordinary times cultural institutions and activities have an entirely uncertain future. Where will archaeology be? What role might archaeologists play in a new society – if any? Nothing can be taken for granted; everything is possible. It's easier to examine the past than predict the future, and a good way to start is to think about how archaeology lost the plot. What can we learn from our mistakes? Believe me, we made a few.

