

# Session Proposal

European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

Krakow, Poland

19<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> September 2006

**Organizer:** Dr. Andrzej Pydyn, Dr. Jon Henderson

**Theme:**

*Archaeology and Material Culture: Interpreting the Archaeological Record*

**Session Title:**

**‘Taking the waters’: European lake dwellings and ‘mainstream’  
archaeology**

**Abstract:**

The session will evaluate the current state of research on lake dwellings and lake-side settlements in Europe and attempt to identify the importance of this research to mainstream (terrestrial based) archaeology. Living over water has been a common settlement practice throughout Europe over many thousands of years yet it is a cultural practice we know remarkable little about. European lake settlements can, and have, taken many different forms. In some areas lake dwellings are sites which were deliberately built out in the water using organic materials to form artificial islands or platforms. In other areas, lake settlements often take the form of lakeside dwellings that have later become submerged and, as a result, feature little in the way of undisturbed in situ organic occupation layers. This session aims to examine the diversity of these forms throughout Europe (in terms of dating, taphonomy and use) and then move the discussion forward to examine what the study of lake dwellings can bring to archaeology from regional, national and European perspectives.

Rather than concentrating on the exceptional preservation of organic remains it is hoped that speakers will stress the contribution lake dwelling studies can, or should, make to broader perceptions and interpretations of the past. In particular contributors are asked to address matters such as:

- *agency* (what can the rich evidence preserved on lake dwellings tell us about the actions, activities and decisions of individuals and communities?)
- *landscape* (the ways that lake dwellers inhabited, understood and imagined their world, the roles of liminality and marginality)
- *environment* (how can the detailed information preserved by lake dwellings be usefully interrogated to pursue wider archaeological narratives?)
- *chronology* (if the resolution achievable on lake dwelling sites can address key archaeological problems such as dating the lengths of occupation at sites and periods of use and re-use, can these lessons be applied more widely?)
- *social identity* (as they preserve evidence of everyday activities carried out by various social groups through time, lake dwellings have a key but so far unexploited role to play in reconstructing past identities)

- *taphonomy* (the processes that influence the formation of lake dwelling sites and their cultural assemblages and how this affects archaeological interpretation)
- *material culture* (what can the rich evidence recovered from lake dwellings do to develop current theories on the biographies and life-cycles of objects and sites?)

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