

Session Proposal

European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) 12th Annual Meeting

Krakow, Poland

19th to 24th September 2006

Organizers: Dr Nicki Whitehouse and Dr Rick Schulting

Theme:

Archaeology in the Modern World: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives

Session Title:

Continuity or Change? Working through Neolithic landscapes

Abstract:

There has been considerable debate in the recent literature, especially in the British Isles, over the nature of early Neolithic settlement and economy, with many essentially seeing continuity of hunting and gathering, and only a gradual shift to the use of domestic resources (Thomas 1996; 1999; 2003). In this scenario, the adoption of a Neolithic “economy” (defined by the use of agriculture and stock-raising) has been seen largely as a very gradual process, shifting and impermanent, a backdrop against which ritual activities are carried out and where mobility is embedded in the social fabric of Neolithic communities. Although not explicitly considered, the impact on the landscape of these communities presumably must have been very limited and focused on localised areas and clearings.

Others, however, have contested this view, arguing for a strong shift to domesticated resources coincident with the appearance of the Neolithic (Jones 2000; Schulting and Richards 2002; Richards *et al.* 2003). In Ireland and other areas of northern Britain, for instance, there is increasing evidence for permanent settlement during this period (Cooney, 2000) whilst, looking to the Continent, new research on crop husbandry practises at early Neolithic LBK settlement sites highlights the permanent and intensive nature of cultivation (Bogaard 2004) and by implication, settlement. Such a strong shift to domesticated resources would, presumably, register itself in the form of a more significant opening up of the landscape and the establishment of more permanent clearings.

In this session, we would like to examine the implications of these arguments and focus on the working use of these early Neolithic landscapes and associated subsistence diversity, by

moving away from the current emphasis (especially in Britain and Ireland) on the ritual landscape to focus on the routine landscape of daily life and the maintenance of households, whilst not ignoring the former. What was the appearance and significance of these Neolithic landscapes and the major activities carried out therein? What human-animal and human-environment relationships were developing? What was the relationship between the domestic and ritual landscape, and can such a division even be sustained? We also welcome papers which attempt to take a longer term perspective over this important period, especially those which include the preceding Mesolithic period or succeeding Late Neolithic and Bronze Age.

This session is being organised in conjunction with the Association for Environmental Archaeology (AEA) and is designed to bring together and foster greater debate between the more scientific aspects of archaeology and perspectives of interpretative, post-processural archaeology.

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