

A Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales  
Southeast Wales – Early Prehistoric  
22/12/2003

**Background and purpose**

- Known resource as represented in SMR quantified in GGAT Resource Audit
- Mixture of 'key sites' with good data (mainly excavations) and more basic identifications
- Aims to reveal strengths weakness and biases in current knowledge
- Try to identify key issues for future work

**NEOLITHIC**

*Strengths*

**Settlement**

Excavated enclosures at Coed-y-Cymdda and Beech Court Farm, Ewenny  
Excavated upland site at Cefn Glas  
Occupation site at Ogmere-By-Sea  
Sant-y-Nyll structure below cairn  
Trostreath hearth, finds

**Funerary and ritual**

Well-established distribution of chambered tombs  
Excavated evidence from many chambered tombs  
Dietary/skeletal work Goldcliff, Parc le Breos  
Also cave burials

**Artefacts**

Some provenance data from implement petrology group work  
Large number of single axe finds  
Smaller number of established flint scatters  
Limited precision for many reported finds

*Weaknesses*

**Settlement**

Lack of data about subsistence/transhumance  
Other settlement evidence found beneath later cairns: more than chance?

**Funerary and ritual sites**

Possible henge and causewayed enclosure only known from APs

**Artefacts**

Little material with firm contexts/sites  
Low resolution of provenance data

*Biases*

**Settlement**

Nature of settlement: permanent? Mobile/shifting?

## Neolithic and earlier Bronze Age

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Low visibility  
Limited economic/dietary evidence  
Little wetland evidence from Levels

### Funerary and ritual sites

Chambered tombs highly visible and characteristics: other types misdated?

Possibly further examples to be identified in uplands

### Artefacts

Emphasis on polished stone axes as readily identifiable  
Detailed understanding restricted to few sites

### Key issues

Nature of Neolithic settlement/land use  
Relationship between chambered tombs and other sites  
Skeletal and dietary evidence  
Upland/lowland differences (if any); use of marine resources and wetlands  
Sourcing and use of flint and other stone

## EARLY BRONZE AGE

### *Strengths*

#### Settlement

Peterstone palaeochannel post structure

#### Funerary and ritual

Very numerous cairns/ barrows ring cairns, currently being revisited  
Numerous cairn excavations producing human bone, pottery and metalwork  
Fewer stone circles, standing stones  
Burials and other activity in caves

#### Artefacts

Some EBA hoards  
Some flints from Levels

### *Weaknesses*

#### Settlement

No evidence apart from structures below cairn at Colts Hill  
Midden sites poorly dated and understood

#### Funerary and ritual

Equivocal evidence for date and function of cairnfields  
Lack of dating evidence for cairns: EBA date is assumed  
Few modern studies of skeletal material

#### Artefacts

Low precision of flint data

*Biases*

**Settlement**

Is it recognisable?

**Funerary and ritual**

'Classic' cairns excavated  
Few studies of cairns as groups

**Artefacts**

Metalwork over-represented due to metal detecting  
Undateable flint assemblages may be EBA

*Key issues*

Domestic sites: what? where?  
Single cairns/multiple/cairnfields: relationship and function  
Lack of chronology  
Link between landuse and environmental change in uplands  
Limited wetland evidence: animal hoof prints, charcoal within peat

**Outcomes**

Review of site types: what is 'settlement'? What is a causewayed enclosure?

SMR and other databases: nature of recording (period and site type)

SMR needs to reflect recent work to act as research tool (integration at data collection stage?)

Palaeoenvironmental analysis (site and general)

Review of archive material held in museums: potential for scientific analysis

Approach to landscape: field walking, remote sensing etc. rather than single-site excavation

Coordination of research activities

*Paper prepared by Martin Locock (GGAT)*