

## Update: September 2019

A riveting summary of the Ancient DNA Project by Professor Ian Armit (Bradford) was presented to the Prehistoric Society in the Autumn. Techniques for examining DNA have progressed so far that secure results are now possible from a huge range of ancient human remains. More results are emerging all the time. Essentially, it seems that the Neolithic population of these islands was replaced by Bronze Age newcomers. There is no evidence of any kind of warlike invasion, rather it seems that the Bronze Age folk, originating in the European steppe, carried a pneumonic plague virus, to which the people already here had no immunity. It looks as though settlers moved into a largely unpopulated landscape.

Locally, it appears that rather than a gradual change from mobile hunting to settled farming, as ideas and techniques spread, there is a new population with different beliefs and conceptions of the world. For iconic sites like Stonehenge, where there is evidence of continuous Neo/BA use, we now need to look at repurposing. This applies similarly to sites in Calderdale where the Neolithic is elusive but the Bronze Age presence is clear. Sorting out what was going on is our present preoccupation. We're involved with excavations of Mesolithic sites on the western side of the Pennine watershed and comparisons with material from 'our' east side are continuing. This has been left vague as there are 'treasure hunters' out there and unrecorded Mesolithic material does crop up on eBay...

We have been giving continuing support to a PhD student undertaking fieldwork in Wharfedale.

We await a disastrous drought to press on with the possible Mesolithic tent rings located at one of our local reservoirs. Essentially we need better-preserved examples for comparison and radio-carbon dating.

Other visits have included the annual Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Student Symposium, where doctoral students give progress reports. Details of the 12+ fascinating papers from across Europe, [see this website](#). Recent work at Victoria Cave above Settle was presented by Dr Phil Murphy (Leeds) at a meeting of Leeds Geological Association. The cave contains a unique succession of sediments such that 13 Ice Ages have now been distinguished, and relate our local climate to the global climate variations displayed in ice cores from Greenland. This succession of cave deposits was used in the C19 by Tiddeman to prove that ice ages were cyclical - ground-breaking stuff then; he was a near contemporary of Darwin. There are other caves with similar succession still to be examined.

Here in Calderdale there are sites that might reveal the activities of Upper Palaeolithic hunters following the movements of reindeer as the last ice age was ending. Sadly these lie on grouse moors where we are not welcome.