

# Wessex Archaeology

## open library launch

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**Wessex Archaeology's new Open Library is a free online resource making over 40 years of archaeological research available. The new digital resource shares 75 books, including out-of-print titles, as well as over 150 reports and counting. We launched this platform to share our colleagues' rich archaeological expertise and data with the public, and in so doing have removed such barriers as subscription fees.**

The resource has been designed to provide free access to everyone, with researchers' needs at its heart. Our Chief Executive, Dr Stu Eve, is keen for people to 'dip in and discover something new'. Driven by Wessex Archaeology's charitable aims, we hope that sharing knowledge will benefit all aspects of learning and research, as well as inspiring future generations of archaeologists. A diverse range of topics and archaeological disciplines feature in the library, including archaeological fieldwork, marine archaeology, geophysics, geoarchaeology, built heritage, and finds reports. The online research platform incorporates a print-on-demand service for those wanting to buy a physical publication, significantly reducing our carbon footprint and working towards our journey to become net zero by 2030.

Highlights from the Open Library include our publication on one of the richest graves of the Bell Beaker period ever found in Britain, which was uncovered only a few kilometres away from Stonehenge. *The Amesbury Archer and the Boscombe Men: Bell Beaker Burials at Boscombe Down* (Andrew Fitzpatrick, 2011) details osteological analysis, scientific testing and archaeological research, and paints a vivid picture of the lives of these prehistoric people. It's a discovery which Dr Matt Leivers (our authority on prehistoric sites) says 'revolutionised the way the Beaker period was understood, not only at Stonehenge, but across Europe'.

Another extraordinary dig that has been illuminated by our publications includes Cliffs End Farm in Kent. *Cliffs End Farm, Isle of Thanet, Kent: A mortuary and ritual site of the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon period* (Jacqueline McKinley, Matt Leivers, Jörn Schuster, Peter Marshall, Alistair Barclay and Nick Stoodley, 2014) details a fascinating series of human and animal remains recovered from the Late Bronze Age–Middle Iron Age mortuary feature. Our Principal Osteoarchaeologist Jacqueline McKinley believes these 'remarkable finds [indicate] a complex mosaic of

activities including curation, exposure, human sacrifice and the creation of tableaux comprised of complete and partial corpses'. Even more interestingly, English Heritage-funded isotope analyses revealed a varied geographic origin for those buried and suggest a fluidity in population movement, including peoples from Scandinavia.

In *The Archaeology of the Hornsea Project One Offshore Windfarm Cable Route: Agriculture, Settlement, Moats and Saltworking* (Ashley Tuck, 2023), our Research Manager, Ashley Tuck, details six Iron Age settlements located in the low-lying wetland of the Lincolnshire Middle Marsh, which were found during a dig along Ørsted's Hornsea One onshore cable route. The striking density of features relating to water management, including a complex array of drainage ditches, revealed the lengths these ancient people were prepared to go to in order to combat the rising sea levels. As Ashley explains, this was 'a tough, isolated environment where people struggled to subsist, largely untouched by Romanised culture and fashion. They fought almost obsessively to drain their settlements [...] In the case of one example, which parallels our present-day narrative of climate change, they could do little to prevent their homes being destroyed by the sea.'

The most recent addition to our online Open Library, *Joining the Dots: uniting Salisbury's past through holes in the ground* (Phil Harding, Lorraine Mephram and Lorraine Higbee, 2024) is the culmination of decades of archaeological research. Salisbury is renowned for its superb medieval cathedral and planned city centre layout which revolves around its market. Dr Phil Harding (archaeologist and Salisbury resident) has described it as 'the first full account of Salisbury using archaeological evidence [to bring to life] the fascinating lives of its former residents'. He adds, in a statement that reflects our feeling here at Wessex Archaeology, that 'it's been a great privilege [to] now make it available for all to enjoy'.



A piece of decorative stone found at Bath Abbey excavation. Credit: Wessex Archaeology



A field archaeologist at work at Bath Abbey excavation. Credit: Wessex Archaeology



Flint tools found in an Early Neolithic causewayed enclosure in Berkshire. Credit: Wessex Archaeology



Three copper knives found in the grave of the Amesbury Archer. Credit: Wessex Archaeology



Phil Harding speaks at an event for the Festival of Archaeology in Salisbury. Credit: Wessex Archaeology



**Elizabeth Darlington**

Elizabeth is a Research Officer at Wessex Archaeology. She has a particular interest in archaeological dissemination within museum environments and is currently researching her PhD at Bournemouth University, exploring how visualisation technologies can provide access to prehistoric landscapes.

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