

# CABOT PARK, AVONMOUTH, BRISTOL: EXCAVATIONS ON LATER BRONZE AGE AND MEDIEVAL SITES AT KITES CORNER AND MOOREND FARM, 1999

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Following the evaluation works reported previously (Locock *et al.* 1998), the Cabot Park proposal was granted planning permission in April 1999. Implementation of the development will take place over a 5-year period, preceded by a programme of archaeological evaluation, survey and excavation. Two areas have been investigated: the medieval moated site of Moorend Farm (ASMR 9242) and the Later Bronze Age stone scatter at Kites Corner.

## *Kites Corner* (Figure 1)

The site at Kites Corner was fully exposed during the evaluation in 1998, in order to examine the site in plan (Locock *et al.* 1998, fig. 3), and was excavated in 1999. Two shallow central post-holes and a few stakeholes were the only evidence for structure. The material present was largely as suggested by the evaluation, although pottery was less common than at Little Googs. Burnt stone, charcoal and bone were also present, with a few small flint flakes.

The radiocarbon dates from the site have proved significantly earlier than the single date from 1998 (Table 1).

The charcoal (and burning of the stone) is evidence for extensive or repeated burning. Since the upper saltmarsh was devoid of trees, the fuel (which comprised shrub-type sticks rather than timber) must also have been transported from further inland (the pollen from the site contains few tree species typical of alder carr, suggesting that the woodland lay some distance away) (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Comparison of pollen and charcoal**

<u>Charcoal</u>	<u>Pollen</u>
Oak	High % herbs
Ash	High % spores
Elm	High % aquatic
cf Hawthorn	Small no. arboreal:
cf Blackthorn	pine, alder, limes, hazel
Hazel	
Alder	
Birch	
Holly	
Willow	

The pottery is simple and relatively undecorated (in contrast to the assemblages from bedrock settlement sites such as Thornwell (near Chepstow, Monmouthshire: Hughes 1996)). It has strong parallels with the pottery from Unit 4 at Brean Down (Somerset) and Combe Hay (Somerset), but is considered likely to have been made in the locality (Price and Watts 1980; Bell 1990). Certainly, clay, stone for temper, and evidence for burning are all present on the Cabot Park sites.

Among the animal bone present, cattle predominates, although deer is also found; there were very few sheep/goat. Fish bones were found in the sieved samples. In contrast, bedrock sites at the time yield little or no wild fauna at all, suggesting either that hunting was not a significant food source, or (more likely) that the pattern of butchery, consumption and discard associated with hunting is not reflected in assemblages from settlements. Thus the Cabot Park assemblage reflects a distinctly different pattern of meat consumption than was usual.

Despite the minimal structural evidence, the quantity and variety of materials present suggest something more than a temporary structure; rather, a seasonal camp might be proposed, used as base for foraging, cattle pasturing, and craft activities.

Perhaps the most critical question remains the reason for the presence of the burnt stones. In some ways the Cabot Park sites are similar to burnt mounds (situated close to water, stone and charcoal present in profusion, and limited evidence for structure), but

**Table 1 Radiocarbon dates**

<u>Lab. ref. no.</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Radiocarbon age</u>	<u>Calibrated two sigma</u>
Beta 129554	Surface of dense charcoal patch (462)	2610 +/- 70 BP	890-530 cal BC
Beta 134900	Dense charcoal patch (462)	2970 +/- 60 BP	1390-1000 cal BC
Beta 134901	Charcoal spread (351)	3350 +/- 60 BP	1760-1505 cal BC
Beta 134902	Upper gleyed layer (341)	2850 +/- 40 BP	1120-910 cal BC



Figure 1: Kite's Corner: the main scatter is in the foreground (marked by bagged finds).

there are also significant differences, particularly the large assemblage of pottery. Although the stone may have been used as part of cooking or to provide temper for pottery, the effort involved in transporting the stone seem disproportionate. It is possible that the stone and fuel is being used as part a salt-making process, albeit using a technique which does not involve *briquetage* vessels as found at Brean Down (Somerset) (Bell 1990) and Droitwich (Worcestershire) (Barfield 1991).

Extensive sampling was undertaken during the excavations at Kites Corner to check for enhanced salt levels in the soil, but none was found. The need for access to saltwater would, however, explain the location of the sites at the boundary between the dry areas and the saltmarsh, which otherwise seems unnecessarily close to the tidal waters.

#### *Moorend Farm* (Figure 2)

The moated farmstead at Moorend Farm is similar to that at Rockingham Farm; occupation, however, continued into the 20th century. Earlier evaluation was constrained by the standing buildings, but the site was excavated in 1999 in advance of the construction of industrial units for the *io* Group. The large platform was occupied in the 17th-18th century

by two separate farming units; the southern unit, closer to the Salt Rhine, retained structural evidence running back to the 12th century. The platform was defined by a series of ditches which were repeatedly re-cut throughout the medieval period.

The excavations produced a large assemblage of medieval pottery, and also two glass beads: a residual Early Iron Age example, of blue and white glass in an 'eye' pattern, similar to one reported from Whitton, Vale of Glamorgan (Price 1981, 160, no. 2; plate 18), and an 18th century 'trade bead', produced in the Bristol area for barter in Africa. Post-excavation work is in progress.

#### *Geophysical survey*

The Ancient Monuments Laboratory has undertaken geophysical survey on alluviated areas elsewhere in England, and wished to test the technique on the Severn Levels. It was therefore seeking an opportunity to survey an area which would be subsequently evaluated to allow 'ground truthing'. Burford Group PLC agreed to include the AML survey by Neil Linford within the timescale of the 1998 evaluation on the P4 footprint at Cabot Park (Little Googs and Kites Corner).

The evaluation demonstrated the presence of

two stabilised horizons (the 'main gley', 1.2m below ground level, and the 'BARAS layer', 2m below ground level). Topographic features associated with the 'main gley' included the stone scatter sites at Little Googs and Kites Corner and a large palaeochannel, 10m wide. There were also various modern features including field drains. The geophysical survey, using a fluxgate gradiometer, identified a series of anomalies, including the palaeochannel; it was therefore considered worthwhile to pursue the technique, and a specification was drawn up for a comparison of magnetometry methods on a single area (Locock 1998).

In 1999, Stratascan Ltd were commissioned to undertake the survey, using three techniques: FM36 fluxgate gradiometer: standard method; FM36 fluxgate gradiometer: averaged readings; and Smartmag Caesium-Vapour magnetometer SM 4G. All techniques were successful in locating buried features, and although the 'averaged reading' and Caesium-vapour methods were apparently more successful, the additional data may not justify the significant additional cost (Barker and Mercer 1999).

Further trials (undertaken by Stratascan as a research exercise) have demonstrated that ground

probing radar is unsuited to the alluvial deposits (Barker 1999).

Although the results are at present provisional, it does appear that magnetometry offers a non-intrusive method for locating archaeological features in the Severn Levels, and therefore may prove a valuable tool in the management of the wetland resource.

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*Figure 2: Moorend Farm: later medieval walling overlying the fills of three ditch recuts (being excavated left).*



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## IRON AGE AND LATER FEATURES AT GREENMOOR ARCH, (GWENT EUROPARK), NEWPORT

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Excavations were carried out for Morrison Developments Ltd in advance of the construction of a building for Wilkinsons, on part of the Gwent Euro Park site, east of Llanwern steelworks, on the Caldicot Level during August-September 1999 (Locock 1999) (ST 400 866).

The buried topography of the alluvial deposits had been mapped in 1994 by boreholes (Lawler 1994a; 1994b), following a similar exercise on the Barland's Farm site to the southeast (Walker *et al.* 1998), and evaluation was targeted on the highest parts of the late prehistoric peat shelf. A sample of the upper peat was submitted for radiocarbon dating (Beta 133532). The conventional radiocarbon age was 2310 +/- 70 bp. Calibration (using CALIB 3.0) yields a calendar date of 525-195 cal BC at 2 sigma (95% probability), showing that peat growth continued for several centuries after the inundation

Figure 1: Greenmoor Arch Building 2 under excavation.

