

Thorne and Hatfield Moors Oral History Project

Interview with: Henry Chapman & Ben Gearey (part 2)

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Interviewer: Lynne Fox

Background

Henry Chapman is an archaeologist specialising in the computer modelling of prehistoric landscapes. He worked with the Humber Wetlands Project at Hull University and was the site manager on the excavation of the Neolithic trackway on Hatfield Moor in 2004. He currently works within the Hewlett Packard Visualisation & Special Technology Centre in the Archaeology Department at Birmingham University.

Ben Gearey is an environmental archaeologist who specialises in analysing pollen remains in order to investigate prehistoric landscapes, their changes over time and the role of humans within those landscapes. He works at Birmingham University and was part of the team (which also includes Nicky Whitehouse) excavating and interpreting the Neolithic trackway on Hatfield Moor.

Summary

Background to their involvement on Hatfield Moor excavation. Work at Sutton Common. English Heritage funded project to investigate the environmental evolution of Thorne & Hatfield Moors

How the finding of the Hatfield Moors trackway fitted into that investigation

What they saw when they first arrived on site

Mick Oliver's initial discovery (interpreted as a platform) and what was found by their later excavation (interpreted as a trackway connecting the platform to dry land)

Unique features of the discovery

Description of the excavated feature

What the landscape was like at the time the 'trackway' was built – the early stages of wetting

Dating of the site and the significance of the date of construction – circa 2900 – 2500 BC

Evidence of landscape change because of climate change – death of the forest

The dead tree stumps still visible on the Moors as 'bog oaks'

How the 'trackway' was dated

Evidence of prehistoric human activity in the immediate locality

Their conclusions and interpretation of the Hatfield Moor Site

Unique and of international importance

Of immense significance at a significant time in human history

Evidence throughout Europe of the construction of other significant monuments at this time

Comparison with Stonehenge & Avebury

Possibly a cultural response to environmental change

Possible changes in the economy – gradual change from hunter-gatherer to domestication of animals and agriculture

Discussion of fundamental changes in human society during the Neolithic period

What happened to the 'trackway' after construction – short period of use then buried under peat