



Past Participate CIC

Report on Funding to the Trustees of the Nineveh Trust

January 2025

Summary

Thanks to the support of the Nineveh Trust, we were able to supply an additional skilled supervisor (Jim Rylatt, left below) to Professor Parker Pearson's project *Sourcing the Stonehenge bluestones: a ceremonial centre in west Wales, its ecology and land use* through the month of September 2024. This enabled a total of 38 volunteers (+13) to experience archaeological activities on this excavation, where community engagement is an important component of the activities. Fifteen university students were also trained in excavation skills.



Jim Rylatt supervising university students during excavation of a quarry source at Garn Ddu Fach for Stonehenge's bluestones

Financial summary

Funding requested: £5,000 to pay for:

Archaeological excavation supervisor for 4 weeks to train local volunteers:	£3,378
Analysis of carbonised wood and plant remains for ecological reconstruction:	£1,622

How the £2500 allocated funding was spent:

Archaeological excavation supervisor for 4 weeks to train local volunteers	£2,500
Past Participate matched funding	£878

Community involvement and public impact: health, welfare and education

Community engagement is a major aspect of this project, attracting 38 local volunteers in this field season, working alongside undergraduate students from UCL and the University of Southampton. The volunteers benefitted from the training offered to them and to the students. This included interpretive site summaries of findings and 'tool box' talks given by Jim Rylatt. Jim's expertise in the analysis of struck flint artefacts was also shared with the team. Jim also directed the excavation of a smaller, second site at the rock outcrop of Garn Ddu Fach, 3km from the main site that enabled the recruitment of an additional 13 local volunteers through providing additional areas to excavate.

Project results

The main excavation focused on one of four henges clustered together near the village of Crosswell, Pembrokeshire. This henge was shown to have a long sequence of use, starting in the Late Mesolithic (6000-4000 BC) with use of a large hollow within which a Middle Neolithic house (3400-3000 BC) was later built. This was followed by the erection and dismantling of a stone circle, after which a circular ditch was dug. Finally, this ditch was re-cut in the Early Bronze Age around 1800 BC. The results are particularly exciting for archaeologists and volunteers alike because they raise the possibility that the Welsh bluestones at Stonehenge were first erected as a stone circle at Crosswell before being transported to Salisbury Plain.

The site at Crosswell is surrounded by nearby outcrops from which Stonehenge's bluestones were sourced. Garn Ddu Fach is one of these, identified as the source of Bluestone 62 at Stonehenge; excavation here revealed the likely cavity from which this stone was extracted, together with stone wedges and other quarrying tools.

Public benefit

The highly successful results of the excavations have been communicated to local groups and communities in west Wales. In addition to open days and drop-ins at the Crosswell excavations, a public lecture was held on 24 September and attracted 150 people to the Bluestone Brewery venue. At Pembrokeshire Archaeology Day on 9 November, a lecture on the excavation's discoveries was given to over 200 people. The project is also being filmed for a TV documentary to be aired once the fieldwork is completed after 2025.

Acknowledgements

We are immensely grateful for the support of the Nineveh Trust for their grant monies.



Jim Rylatt supervising on the Crosswell excavation



Jim Rylatt overseeing mechanical earthmoving while being filmed for the TV documentary



Some of the volunteers on the Crosswell excavation