



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

Blue Stonehenge

Duration: 0:03:21

START AUDIO

Male 1: It's over 5,000 years since Stonehenge was built and there's still much that is unknown about this world heritage site and the surrounding area. Highlight of this year's excavation has been the discovery of a lost stone circle, a mile from Stonehenge, on the west bank of the river Avon. This new discovery has been dubbed Blue Stonehenge after the hue of the around 25 stones from Wales, which once formed it.

At the excavation, project director, and world leading archaeologist Professor Mike Parker Pearson explained his views on the purpose of Blue Stonehenge.

Prof. Pearson: So it may be in a sense, that this is actually commemorating what happened all that time before. So that it's not so much built for rituals but it's a monument to memorialise something. So of course it could have the same kind of role as something like the cenotaph in Whitehall, which for most of the year nothing happens and then at specific times it becomes important. Of course in the case of this landscape, those two times are the solstices, of winter and mid-summer. And that's when you get to see people maybe making the trip to particular locations, at that particular date. Maybe they're living somewhere over in the Durrington area and coming down the river, along the sides of the river and then trekking up into Stonehenge, for the view rare visits I suspect they were ever making.

Male 1: Dr Kate Welham of Bournemouth University, then explained about the technical equipment that was used to aid the team in this new discovery.

Dr Welham: So you can get XYZ coordinates, so if they find as they did yesterday, that nice polished axe, we'll take a little spot – we call it a small-find, and then we get the east, north, up height and we pop it into the computer at the end of the day. And then on the GIS that I was telling you about, on the mapping programme, we can bring it up and find where it is in the trench and how that relates to the features, how that relates to the geophysics that was done two or three years ago. How it relates to historical mapping, you know all of that stuff.

Male: Yeah, yeah.

Dr Welham: So everything relates to each other.

Male 1: This year's excavation is part of the five year riverside project which was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and involved a team of archaeologists from five different universities. Radio carbon dating is currently being undertaken on the deer antler pick-axes that were used by the builders of the stone circle which will provide a precise date for the circle. These dates will reveal whether the circle was built at the same time that the other 56 Welsh blue stones were erected at Stonehenge itself.

Full details of the Blue Stonehenge discovery will be published in February.

END AUDIO