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## Dublin Core

### Title

Earlier Prehistoric Harbours in Ireland and Britain | Harbyrau Cynhanesyddol Cynharach yn Iwerddon a Phrydain

### Subject

Prehistoric Harbours

Ireland

Wales

### Creator

James L. Smith

### Publisher

Professor Richard Bradley

### Date

2023

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### Relation

<https://perma.cc/J7AL-QPYK>

### Format

Curatescape story

### Language

English

Welsh

### Coverage

53.1330342951402, -5.326891677347336

## Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

### Lede

Professor Richard Bradley provides a window into the nature of harbours and travel in the Irish Sea during prehistory, a subject which features in his new book, *Maritime Archaeology on Dry Land*.

### Lede (Welsh)

Mae Athro Richard Bradley yn cynnig ffenestr i natur harbyrau a theithio ar draws Môr Iwerddon yn ystod y cyfnod cynhanesyddol, ac mae hwn yn faes a ystyrir yn ei lyfr newydd, *Maritime Archaeology on Dry Land*.

### Story

This is a subject about which little is known, and only a retired academic would be rash enough to take it on. But there are interesting possibilities to consider. That is why I recently wrote a book called *Maritime Archaeology on Dry Land*. It was mainly concerned with the period between 4000 and 1500 BC – the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age – but the discussion also drew on later sources of information, extending from the first millennium BC to the Middle Ages.

The reference to Maritime Archaeology is straightforward enough, but how can it extend to dry land? My work studied the archaeology of the ancient coast where it survives above the modern sea level. Since the last ice age Britain and Ireland have been tilting. Freed from the weight of glaciers, northern areas have risen, but in the south the ancient shoreline is largely submerged. There is a wealth of archaeological material from the region of ‘isostatic uplift’, but in recent years it has attracted little attention.

Sea travel was obviously important in the prehistoric period. Britain and Ireland were settled by farmers from the European mainland bringing domesticated resources, and stone axes were made at quarries and mines very close to the shore. There are Early Bronze Age graves in the form of a boat, but the strongest evidence comes from a series of enclosed estuaries where enormous numbers of prehistoric artefacts have been found on the sand or gravel bars that protected areas of sheltered water. The same applied to some offshore islands, and studies of ancient coastlines show that they had already formed by the Neolithic period.

In Ireland the best examples are the Dundrum Sands and Dalkey Island; another was Merthyr Mawr in Wales. These places contain objects that had probably been introduced by sea, but others were obviously being made there. For instance, copper from Ireland was taken across the Scottish Highlands and worked on the Culbin Sands beside Findhorn Bay; flint arrowheads were produced at the same site. These places played a specialised role and were set apart from the settlements and monuments of the same period. In my book they are compared with the ‘landing places’ and ‘beach markets’ of the historical period.

This preference for shallow bays protected by natural spits lasted until the end of the Early Bronze Age. By then the significance of these places was changing. There is less evidence of special artefacts, and these locations were chosen as cemeteries before they went out of use.

There is more evidence from locations with better access to Continental metal, and the estuaries of major rivers like the Thames, the Severn and the Humber assumed a much greater role. So did exposed beaches like that at Whitepark Bay in the north of Ireland. Boats became increasingly robust and probably travelled further.

The first generation of prehistoric harbours lost its significance and has not attracted much attention until now.

### **Story (Welsh)**

Nid oes llawer yn hysbys am y pwnc hwn, a dim ond academydd wedi ymddeol fyddai'n ddigon byrbwyll i ymgymryd ag ef. Ond mae posibiladau diddorol i'w hystyried. Dyma pam yr ysgrifennais lyfr yn ddiweddar o'r enw *Maritime Archaeology on Dry Land*. Roedd yn ymwneud â'r cyfnod rhwng 4000 a 1500 CC yn bennaf – Oes Newydd y Cerrig a'r Oes Efydd Gynnar – ond bu'r drafodaeth yn manteisio ar ffynonellau gwybodaeth hwyrach hefyd, gan ymestyn o'r mileniwm cyntaf CC i'r Oesoedd Canol.

Mae'r cyfeiriad at Archeoleg Môr yn ddigon syml, ond sut y gall hyn ymestyn i dir sych? Roedd fy ngwaith yn astudio archeoleg yr arfordir hynafol lle y mae'n goroesi uwch ben lefel y môr modern. Ers Oes yr Iâ ddiwethaf, mae Prydain ac Iwerddon wedi bod yn gwyr. Wedi'u rhyddhau o bwysau rhewlifoedd, mae ardaloedd gogleddol wedi codi, ond yn y de, mae'r traethlin hynafol dan y dŵr i raddau helaeth. Ceir cyfoeth o ddeunydd archeolegol o ranbarth 'codiad isostatig', ond dros y blynyddoedd diwethaf, ni roddwyd fawr iawn o sylw iddo.

Wrth gwrs, arferai teithio ar y môr fod yn bwysig yn ystod y cyfnod cynhanesyddol. Anheddwyd Prydain ac Iwerddon gan ffermwyr o dir mawr Ewrop a ddaeth ag adnoddau amaethyddol gyda nhw, a gwnaethpwyd bwyell cerrig mewn chwareli a chloddfeydd yn agos iawn i'r arfordir. Ceir beddau o'r Oes Efydd Gynnar ar ffurf cwch, ond daw'r dystiolaeth gryfaf o gyfres o aberoedd amgaeedig lle y darganfuwyd niferoedd enfawr o arteffactau cynhanesyddol ar y barrau tywod neu graean a oedd yn diogelu ardaloedd o ddŵr cysgodol. Roedd yr un peth yn wir am rai ynisoedd ar y môr, ac mae astudiaethau o arfordiroedd hynafol yn dangos eu bod nhw eisoes wedi ffurfio erbyn y cyfnod Neolithig.

Yn Iwerddon, yr enghreifftiau gorau yw Traeth Dundrum ac Ynys Dalkey; un arall oedd Merthyr Mawr yng Nghymru. Mae'r manau hyn yn cynnwys gwrthrychau y mae'n debygol eu bod wedi cyrraedd yma ar y môr, ond roedd hi'n amlwg bod eraill yn cael eu gwneud yno. Er enghraifft, cludwyd copr o Iwerddon ar draws Ucheldiroedd yr Alban a chafodd ei drin ar Draeth Culbin ger Bae Findhorn; cynhyrchwyd pennau saethau fflint ar yr un safle. Roedd y manau hyn yn cyflawni rôl arbenigol ac roeddent ar wahân i'r aneddiadau a'r henebion a welwyd yn ystod yr un cyfnod. Yn fy llyfr i, fe'u cymharir gyda 'manau glanio' a 'marchnadoedd traeth' y cyfnod hanesyddol.

Gwelwyd y ffafriaeth hon o faeau bas wedi'u diogelu gan draethellau naturiol yn para tan ddiwedd yr Oes Efydd Gynnar. Erbyn hynny, roedd arwyddocâd y manau hyn yn newid. Ceir llai o dystiolaeth o arteffactau arbennig, a dewiswyd y lleoliadau hyn fel mynwentydd cyn iddynt stopio cael eu defnyddio. Ceir mwy o dystiolaeth o leoliadau yr oedd ganddynt fynediad gwell i fetel Cyfandirol, ac roedd aberoedd afonydd mawr fel y Tafwys, yr Hafren a'r Humber yn cyflawni rôl llawer mwy, yn yr un modd â thraethau agored fel yr un ym Mae Whitepark yng ngogledd Iwerddon. Datblygodd cychod i fod yn gynyddol gadarn ac mae'n debygol eu bod wedi teithio ymhellach.

Collodd cenhedlaeth gyntaf yr harbyrau cynhanesyddol eu harwyddocâd ac nid ydynt wedi cael fawr iawn o sylw tan nawr.

### **Factoid**

### **Related Resources**

### **Official Website**