

---

# Britain in or out of Europe during the late Mesolithic?

Thomas Lawrence<sup>\*†1</sup>, Mike Donnelly<sup>‡1</sup>, Liz Kennard<sup>1</sup>, Caroline Sdy<sup>1</sup>, and Rose Grant

<sup>1</sup>Oxford Archaeology (OA) – Janus House Osney Mead Oxford, OX2 0ES, United Kingdom

## Abstract

Lacking well-dated 5th millennium Mesolithic evidence and based on a consensus that late Mesolithic Britain was isolated from the continent, discussion of the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition has focused on the centuries around 4000BC. This discourse has over-simplified complex neolithisation processes. New, high-quality evidence from 460,000 lithics found at the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road helps redress this. Here, well-dated microliths (5500-4300BC) may have continental affiliations. This, alongside other sites, including the Isles of Scilly and Horsham, offers exciting opportunities to contribute to debates on an isolated late Mesolithic. As a result, this work may also provide alternative explanations of the new evidence proposing European influences on British Neolithic DNA. Instead of an isolated island, we propose that, through this evidence, late Mesolithic Britain was culturally connected to the continent and, therefore, the Mesolithic-Neolithic Transition of Britain was a longer, more complex and nuanced process than previously thought.

**Keywords:** Mesolithic, Neolithic Transition, Microliths, Lithics

---

\*Speaker

†Corresponding author: [tom.lawrence@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:tom.lawrence@oxfordarch.co.uk)

‡Corresponding author: [m.donnelley@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:m.donnelley@oxfordarch.co.uk)