



Carhaix Archæology

Jon Sebastien Touran, you are directing this site, what kind of site is it?

Sebastien This is a Copper Age site, so we tell (call) it in French Celtolithic, which means it,s at the end of the Neolithic period, and the beginning of the settlement where people try to make agriculture, élevage - you know like for the animals - at the end of the Neolithic period and the beginning of the Bronze Age period .

Jon As far as I know we don,t have the term Copper Age, I've not heard of that before, but how can you be sure then that this excavation here is Copper Age rather than Stone Age?

Sebastien Because one of the building here has been dating with an extract of charcoal, you know, where we doing ...

Jon Radio carbon dating?

Sebastien Radio carbon dating, and the dating was around 2,200 before Christ.

Jon Right.

Sebastien So it,s a specific period because the Copper Age is between, is known to be between 2,500 and 2000 before Christ.

Jon Okay. Now this next question will probably strike you as being very stupid, but the succession we have is Stone Age, Bronze Age and then Iron Age, but iron is much easier to find and it,s a much better material in many ways, so why was there a Bronze Age at all?

Sebastien Because the technique to...

Jon Extract?

Sebastien Not to extract but to transform what you extract, the materials into a real metal you can use is more complicated for iron than for copper and for the bronze.

Jon Ah, that explains why.

Sebastien The temperature used to transform the materials is more higher for iron than for ...

Jon That makes sense, thank you. Most of the finds you've made so far, they are pottery?

Sebastien Yeah, we've got little pieces of ... , it's, uh, some shards of pottery, some pieces of ...

Jon Arrowheads?

Sebastien Yeah, like arrowheads, and the places where they, where they break the seeds, you know, to do like bread, that sort of thing.

Jon A mill?

Sebastien Yeah, a mill.

Jon I thought, from what little I've read about Carhaix, this city here, that early traces went back to the third century BC, but this obviously is much older. So is this site going to rewrite history?

Sebastien Not really. It just shows that all the territory here like in Central Brittany and all the Brittany is a very old settlement all along the prehistory. The foundation of the city of Carhaix is known to be 300 before Christ, but there is always living people before that date ..., not a real village but....

Jon Yeah, just families living and farming in the area. Is this general area rich in copper and tin - which are the essential ingredients, if you like, for bronze?

Sebastien Yeah, yeah. Brittany is known to be a copper place, there is some extract places in copper. It's known for a long time, and England too is known to be a place where you find lots of mining, so they could extract not so far from here the materials.

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Jon Gabrielle Lameront you're an archæologist working here as well, what are you working on now?

Gabrielle Um, well actually I'm excavating a fireplace. We have several on site, having something to do with the buildings.

Jon Yes, okay. This little pot in front of us that contains bits of charcoal by the look of it.

Gabrielle Yes, well-preserved charcoal.

Jon And presumably you can actually date that stuff?

Gabrielle Actually yes, and this is the only element we have to have an idea of ...

Jon The only organic material.

Gabrielle Yeah.

Jon So what ... have you actually had them tested yet for age?

Gabrielle No, no. Everything is tested (tested) after ...

Jon Now you have actually worked with English archæologists in the past, haven't you? Do you think that there are any major differences in terms of methodology between archæology in England and France?

Gabrielle No there is no major difference. It's, uh, well, in everyday working there is some difference. The way to record things is a bit different, sometimes it takes longer in English archaeology. Well after it's different, different schools, I think. But, in general ...

Jon It's essentially the same. Does a Bronze Age site like this, which is obviously very old, present any particular problems?

Gabrielle No (laughs). No, with now archaeology we are getting a clearer idea of those periods, those times which are really ... well

actually it's a kind of puzzle, getting more and more clearer with archaeology.

Jon Okay. So from the evidence that you have here and other people have elsewhere, in Brittany especially, do you think it's possible to build a very clear picture of how the people lived - what they looked like, how they dressed?

Gabrielle How they dressed, no, because we don't have any tissues remaining ...

Jon Not in Brittany. But in Denmark, I think, those things exist?

Gabrielle Yeah, maybe in Denmark, but you know it's very different places ... there is different places with different people and what we have in Brittany is very different from what we have in Denmark or even from what we have in, around Paris...

Jon Right. Thank you.

