The fifth (5th) Public Archaeology Twitter Conference, Friday 29 May 2020.

‘Public Archaeology in Lockdown’

CALL FOR PAPERS:

We’re all living different lives at the moment. It’s hard not to think to the future and try to imagine the changes this time might create in the short- and long-terms, for people, places, nations and the planet. There are a lot of huge questions being asked and one – some way down the list we’ll admit – is what this all means for heritage and archaeology. How might changes in how people move and behave, in education, in funding and in how we place ourselves between pasts and futures, impact public archaeology? What role does public archaeology and outreach have in a post-pandemic world? How are we filling, fixing or exploiting the gaps that have appeared all over society? How can we be public archaeologists from our sofas?

In #PATC5 we welcome papers on any suitable archaeological theme or subject area, including, and beyond, public archaeology. We are very happy to host fully-formed sessions, in case anyone wants the opportunity to participate in a digital archaeology conference in lieu of a session planned for a physical conference they can no longer attend.

We welcome all proposals and particularly welcome archaeologists practicing outside traditional archaeological spaces, ECRs and students, and actively encourage contributions from under-represented groups in the archaeological sector. We are more than happy to accept non-Anglophone papers. We also welcome all formats of presentation, as long as it can use the Twitter platform – comics, Powerpoint, films etc are all good!


We hold these conferences in order to continue our attempts to challenge the conference status quo in terms of communication, diversity and inclusivity. Conference attendance has many issues, such as funding and accessibility, so these formats can contribute information which can be used to make archaeology safer and more accessible within as well as outside the profession.

Conferences that cost hundreds of pounds to attend were no longer financially viable for most people pre-Covid-19, and in the time of lockdown, Twitter conferences are good places to build alternative conference communities. Conferences that charge large fees and discuss public and community archaeology are excluding the participants, communities and colleagues with whom we work who do not have access to travel and conference funds, those with caring responsibilities, those with disabilities, or simply those who do not have enough time to travel long distances. There needs to be an alternative. **The hashtag for the May 2020 event will be #PATC5.**
Morning everyone! I'm Katy and I'm going to tweet about #archaeology, #geology and #landscape. But mostly, about #sarsen stone in the county of Wiltshire, UK. Thank you to @lornarichardson and @James__Dixon for organising #PATC5 for accepting this paper 0/16

#DailySarsen, or, Walking hand-in-hand with human and non-human friends

This paper takes one of my recent #DailySarsen tweets and tells a story of the sarsen stone depicted in that previously-tweeted photo. Much of my public archaeology happens out-of-doors. The frightening reality of a serious communicable disease that has no vaccine means it will be some time before I can once more welcome people into Sarsen Country. My small efforts to recover a sense of Sarsen Country digitally, with #DailySarsen, have been welcomed by friends old and new. So here is an elaboration of one of the tweets; I hope people will enjoy the tale.
[1] During CV-19 lockdown and as long as distancing measures apply, my public archaeology landscape walks in #SarsenCountry are suspended. Groups trips for local/regional societies to visit places in Wiltshire (UK) where sarsen stones can be seen are off-limits #PATC5 #DailySarsen 1/

#DailySarsen

or

Walking hand-in-hand
with
human and non-human friends

Katy Whitaker
University of Reading / Historic England
@artefactual_KW
Sarsens are the large grey boulders making the familiar shapes of Stonehenge, and Avebury’s great circles. They’re in medieval church walls. They pave our streets and protect grass verges. Sites in southern England from Dorset to Norfolk make #SarsenCountry #PATC5 #DailySarsen 2/
Some locations are famous for their ‘sarsen spreads’. Here swathes of sarsen stones lie about on the surface. Dorset and Wiltshire both have a sarsen ‘Valley of Stones’. You can see them outside Ashdown House, Oxfordshire. They are lovely to explore #PATC5 #DailySarsen 3/
So #DailySarsen is my small attempt to try to make up for what is being missed: something made of sarsen stone every morning, shared on Twitter at 10am. Each tweet includes a photo with the item’s name and location. I answer any questions that might arise #PATC5 #DailySarsen 4/
By popular request my first #DailySarsen tweet was The Polissoir. High up on the Marlborough Downs, it's a neolithic axe sharpening stone. There are only a few like this in Britain, and this one's really outstanding. People often try to find it, but don't always succeed #PATC5 5/
I get asked to share its grid-reference, or take people to see it. Even though it’s close to the Ridgeway national trail it can be hard to spot in a landscape that’s full of recumbent grey boulders. I’ll take you up there, and tell you a little about it #PATC5 #DailySarsen 6/

(c) OpenStreetMap contributors CC-BY-SA 2.0
[7] Let's walk up Hackpen, passing by the Fiddlers Hill stone. We'll follow the Ridgeway south. Look out for broken bricks in the field beside the dew pond. They remind us that an estate brickworks flourished up here for a century where now a wheat field grows #PATCS #DailySarsen 7/
[8] The view westwards towards Avebury is marvellous, isn’t it?! You can just see the top of Silbury Hill from here, it’s that flat green mound that looks like a barrow on the hilltop in the middle distance. Now it’s time for us to turn off, to the left #PATC5 DailySarsen
Coming this way brings us to the northern edge of Fyfield Down. We are at a high point. Away to the south the chalk dip slope and the Valley of Stones wend down to the River Kennet. We can return home that way but for now look for the pointed standing stone #PATC5 #DailySarsen 9/

This tweet included a short video clip of the view, panning across the landscape from right to left. The bottom half of the image shows brown scrubby ground with boulders scattered across. There are trees on the horizon in the distance. The sky above is grey.
[10] What might be 'Aethelferthe’s stone’, mentioned in an early medieval charter, is your clue. Head for that upright sarsen with its pointed top. The Polissoir is just alongside it, close to the coconut-scented gorse bushes, part of a line of sleeping sarsens #PATC5 #DailySarsen 10/
Two chunks of sarsen stone, one cleanly split from the other, and a gap and a hollow in the earth where a third piece was removed. This is what you have come to touch: the glossy smooth surface of the stone, the dished hollow and the steep-sided grooves. #PATC5 #DailySarsen 11/
These are the marks left by hours and hours of grinding and polishing stone axe heads. There are numerous examples like this on sarsens in northern France. But most of the few English ones have only the dish and not the grooves. #PATC5 #DailySarsen

[12]
Peter Fowler's excavation found that the stone once stood upright. Maybe it was pushed over to make the grinding bench. The few finds gathered from the thin soil around it included one axe thinning flake. Imagine coming up here to sharpen an axe head.

You can hear an audio clip of a flint axe head being ground on a piece of sarsen [here](#).
About 5,000 years later the boulder was broken. A small group of quarrymen, never more than a dozen, worked Wiltshire’s sarsen spreads from around 1847 until the Second World War. Tons of stone went, smartly split into building blocks and street furniture #PATC5 #DailySarsen 14/
It’s a small miracle that the polissoir was left. Surely the sarsen cutters noticed those unusual shapes and the smoothed surface. Maybe they were told to leave well alone after very nearly quartering the sarsen and destroying its prehistoric remnants #PATCS #DailySarsen 15/
[16] I look forward to walking with you to the polissoir and all those sleeping sarsen stones once it’s safe to meet again, to visit, and keep one another’s company. In the meantime, you can follow #DailySarsen to participate in a digital moment somewhere in #SarsenCountry #PATC5 /end