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Biggar  
Archaeology  
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Bringing the past to the present

The background of the cover is a landscape photograph of rolling green hills under a cloudy sky. A small pond is visible in the middle ground. The foreground shows a grassy slope.

## Special Report

The recently discovered Mesolithic Sites  
of South Lanarkshire in South Central  
Scotland, and their context in Southern  
Scotland

# Mesolithic of South Lanarkshire

## Special Report

by Tam Ward, 2010

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# Abstract

This paper lists the latest discoveries of Mesolithic sites as a brief narrative in order to bring them to the attention of interested students of the subject. It recognises the importance of sharing information and also the inability of the authors Group to deal competently with the various assemblages of lithic and environmental material which has been gathered by them. It also proposes a way forward to improve on the data base of Mesolithic sites in Southern Scotland.

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# Introduction

It has long been suspected, that during their travels the Mesolithic people would have visited most parts of inland Scotland. Certainly evidence for their presence along the banks of the River Tweed has been known for a long time, indicating the use of river systems as a route through the landscape. New and recent evidence now allows a much better perspective to be proposed regarding hunter gatherer movements in south central Scotland, particularly in South Lanarkshire and in Peeblesshire. (Figs. 1&2)

The new information is gathering some momentum as sites are being discovered almost on an annual basis; the data is the result of development projects such as road works, open cast mining, and most especially the work of local amateur archaeologists.

Key place names are highlighted in **bold>Biggar**.

Radio carbon dates by Biggar Archaeology Group (BAG) are given in the text as un-calibrated with a full listing in Appendix I.



Fig.1



Fig.2

# The New Evidence

Radiolarian chert bands outcrop fairly regularly as solid geology but are more commonly seen as scree along the edge of the Southern Uplands Boundary Fault (British Geological Survey, 1967 & 1980).

Chert pebbles are found in significant numbers in the drift geology north of the Boundary Fault and also in stream bed gravels. It is often the presence of worked chert that betrays the existence of Mesolithic sites in this part of Scotland.

Several locations for radiolarian chert extraction have been identified by Robert Knox in Upper Tweeddale (Knox, 1986, 1989 & 1993); these were the first indicators of Mesolithic people seeking out the local raw materials for tool production in Southern Scotland. Excavation at one of the sites, **Wide Hope Shank** (Warren, 1998) confirmed their pre-historic origin.

Peeblesshire Archaeological Society (PAS) have recently discovered numerous scatters of predominantly chert and which appears to be Mesolithic in typology (Knox et al 1986 - 2007) other sites have also been located (Warren, 1998 *ibid*). Excavation at one site called '**The Poppies**' at **Manor Bridge** near Peebles (Warren, 1998 *ibid*) produced Mesolithic artefacts and C14 dates of  $9020 \pm 55$  and  $9190 \pm 45$  BP (Warren, 2003) making this location one of the earliest yet discovered in Scotland.

The latest Upper Tweeddale locations bring the distribution plan of sites in the SE of Scotland nearer to the **River Clyde**. It has been suggested that the link between east and west, i.e. the River Tweed and the River Clyde respectively was along the **Biggar Gap** (RCAHMS 1967); a flood plain which stretches between the two rivers and with the town of Biggar at the western end and the village of Broughton at the east side (Fig.3).

The broad flat valley is bounded on the north and south sides by hills and despite the Biggar Burn which runs its length and having been deepened and canalised to improve drainage, the valley is regularly seen flooded most winters. It is a singular and little known fact that



**Plate 1: View along the Biggar Gap from the chert quarry at Burnetland looking west.**

there is a permanent water channel which connects the River Clyde and the River Tweed, formed by the Biggar Water which discharges into the Tweed and having tributary burns and field drains which give all year round connection to the upper reaches of the Clyde, at Wolf Clyde. The lower OD levels along the north and south sides of the Gap between Biggar and Broughton are consistent at 200m and of the two rivers the elevation of the Tweed is only slightly lower.

The Biggar Gap has always been assumed to have formed a natural wetland barrier between north and south in ancient times; the only modern crossing apart from each end is at Causewayend near Biggar, the causeway being attributed to the Romans (RCAHMS, 1978) who built their road from Annandale through Biggar to Inveresk.

The Biggar Gap would therefore allow convenient and clearly visible passage from east to west along its elevated sides. Having said that, not a shred of archaeological evidence was found of Mesolithic activity, prior to the work of the Biggar Archaeology Group (BAG). Indeed their project; The Biggar Gap Project (Ward, forthcoming), which is a programme of arable fieldwalking has produced sparse results to date. Although an important Late Mesolithic chert quarrying site (below) has been investigated (Plate 1).



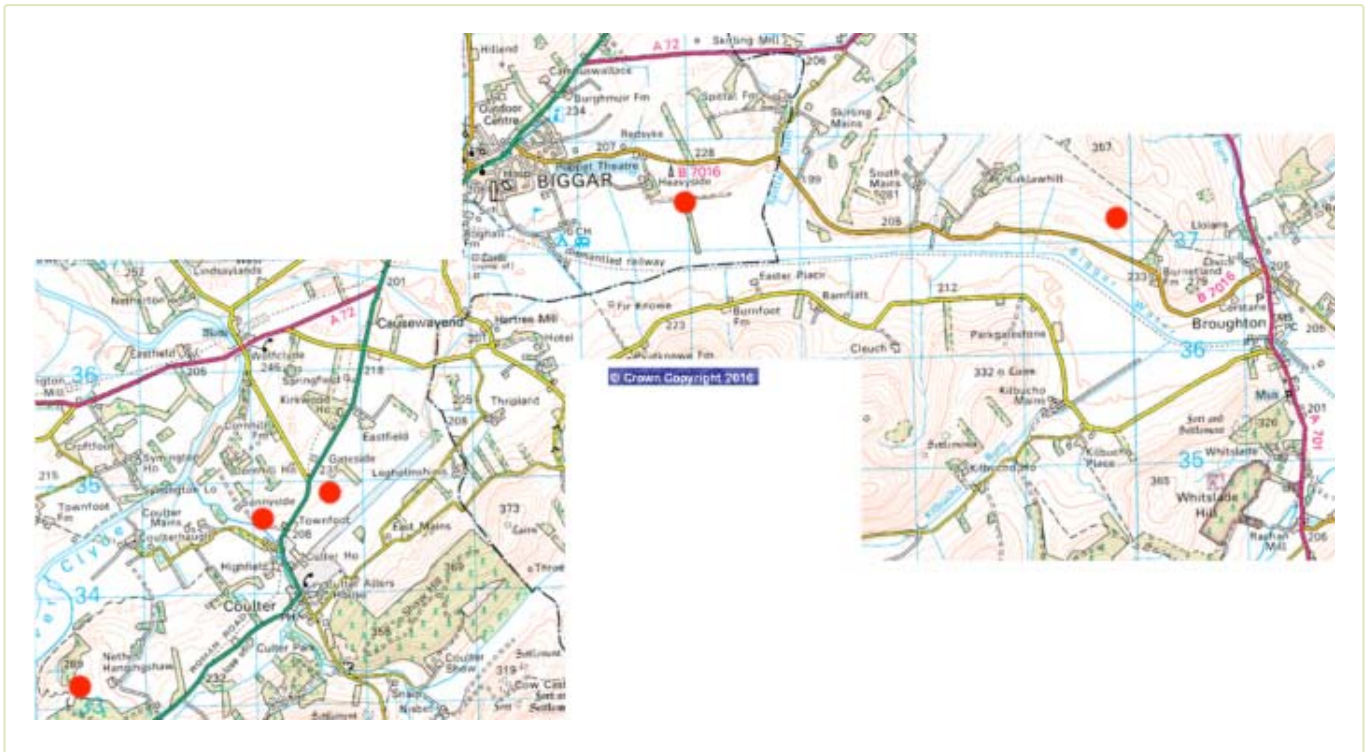


Fig 3:

During the course of survey work for their Tweed Project (Ward, 2004) a series of small quarry pits were located overlooking the Gap from **Burnetland Hill** (Fig 3) at the eastern end. These quarries lie immediately upslope from a group of Unenclosed Platform Settlements, which are recognised Bronze Age house sites (Terry, 1995). The enquiry into the chert quarries was to establish if they were associated with the three platforms below. In the event, excavation (Ward, 2009) showed that they are most likely to be Late Mesolithic in date by a radio carbon date of 5220+<sub>-35</sub>BP. The dated material, hazel wood charcoal, came from the base of one of the quarry pits, but it is possible that the quarries were used for an extended period of time after that date.

Near Biggar and also on the north side of the Gap, at **Heavyside Farm** (Fig 3), a rather sporadic scatter of chert, including some cores and scrapers has been retrieved from several fields. The best of this material was found near the northern edge (or shoreline?) of the Gap and may indicate camp sites located to take advantage of a wetland food resource.

The first site to be recorded in South Lanarkshire by local archaeologists was at **Corse Law** (Fig.4) (Clarke, 1989) 5km NE of Carnwath. Members of the Lanark and District Archaeological Society walked over forestry

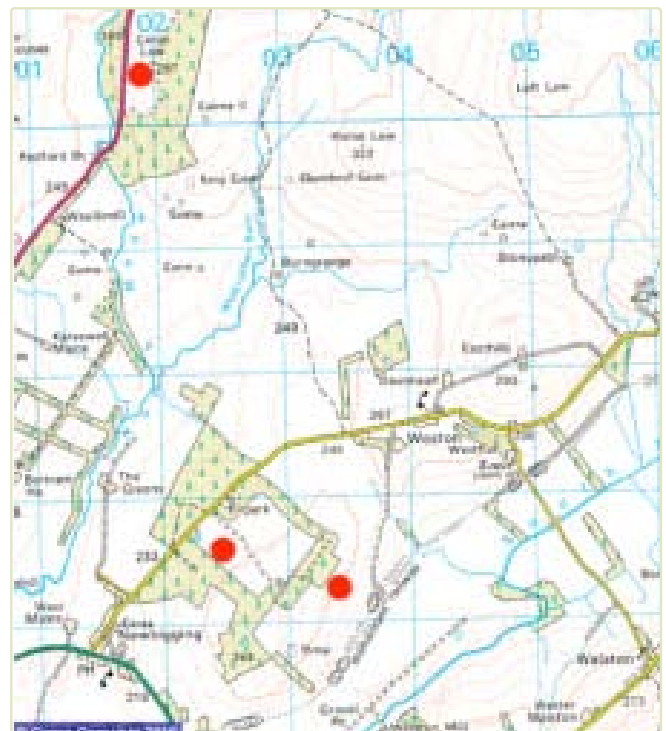


Fig 4:

plough furrows and found the tell tale signs of Late Mesolithic activity in the form of microliths and other lithics of the period. The site could be viewed as being 'conventional' in the sense that it overlooks and is adjacent to a river, the **North Medwin**.



**Plate 2: A small selection of Weston microliths**



**Plate 3**

The following sites were all discovered by the Biggar Archaeology Group (BAG) and their work continues with new sites being found regularly.

**Weston Farm** (Fig 4) lies 2.5km NE of the village of Newbigging and has produced a vast array of material (Ward, 1999), both flint and chert but with the latter dominating numerically. Microliths number in the hundreds here over fields which are elevated on a broad ridge between the **North** and **South Medwin** rivers. Some of the sites on the higher and more level ground are not within view of the rivers and these locations are devoid of water courses. Other sites lie on natural terraced areas on a hill slope overlooking the South Medwin towards the south east, but are a kilometre from the river, and again the locations are dry, although modern drainage may account for that.

Field gathering and excavations at Weston have produced numerous discrete assemblages of chert, but in one location where trial trenches were opened, pits containing carbonised hazel nut shell and 'floor' surfaces with compacted nut shell were radio carbon dated to  $6035 \pm 40$ BP and  $7920 \pm 40$ BP. The range of dates and the abundance and variety of artefacts, including a large quantity of microliths of both flint and chert, indicate that this was a place of regular use over an extended period of time in the Mesolithic (Plate 2).

Sites which lie between Howburn Farm and Brownsbank Farm (Fig 5) are located 7km NE of Biggar. This area forms the heart of another undertaking by

BAG; the Pre-History North of Biggar Project (Ward 1996, 2000, 2001) and which is a major ongoing arable fieldwalking exercise extending from Biggar and as far as Dolphinton village to the NE and Corse Law (above) in the NW. The Project has produced remarkable results, most especially for the Early and Late Neolithic periods, but also for the Mesolithic and, incredibly, for the Late Upper Palaeolithic (Ward, 2010).

Random objects and 'dispersed' scatters of Mesolithic material has been found in several fields, of several farms, but certainly the most exciting has been the discovery of an Late Upper Palaeolithic flint assemblage of artefacts at Howburn Farm (Saville, Ballin, Tipping & Ward, forthcoming). This remarkable and unique assemblage for Scotland is definitely fixed between the end of the last Ice Age and the period known as the Loch Lomond Re-advance, c11,500 – 12,000 years ago. Artefacts are described by the two specialists; Allan Saville and Torben Ballin as 'Late Hamburgian' and c14,000 years old.

The **Howburn** site lies on a terrace on the lower flank of a hill overlooking a relatively dry valley, although there is a small spring course near to the site itself. More work was done on this site in 2009 (Ward, 2010 *ibid*) and which further corroborated the Mesolithic presence in the field through more microliths and cores being found (Plate 3), these being primarily of the local radiolarian chert. In 2010 three further Mesolithic locations were found at Howburn by the presence of typological artefacts, mainly of the local chert.

**Biggarshields Mains** (Fig 5) has a scatter of Mesolithic chert only discovered in 2010; the fields here will be further investigated.

The fields around **Cornhill Farm** (Fig 3) near the village of Coulter abound in worked lithic (Ward, 2001), predominantly the locally available radiolarian chert but with some flint. Cores, scrapers and microliths of probable Late Mesolithic date are found scattered around the southern side of an elevated area of ground between the villages of Coulter and Biggar. The sites overlook the river Clyde on the west, the Coulter Water on the south while towards the east, the low lying flood plain may have been marsh land, and it connects to the Biggar Gap.

Only 2.5km to the SW of Cornhill at **Nether Hangingshaw Farm**, (Fig 3) and this time on the dry summit of a ridge overlooking the River Clyde to the

west from a distance of 0.5km, there is a similar but less extensive scatter of chert lithic (Ward, 2003) (Plate 4).

The final group of Mesolithic sites has been discovered, and in some cases excavated, as part of the **Daer Valley Project** (Ward, 1995, 2001, 2002 & 2002, 2004 & 2004, and 2010). (Fig. 6). Here the sites are found within two modern contexts; one being the catchment area of the Daer Reservoir which was inaugurated in 1956 by The Queen, and the other being within the areas of commercial forestry there and which were planted in the 1960's, with new schemes currently being developed.

Apart from random items and small assemblages from around the shores of the reservoir which is being investigated during periods of low water levels, four discrete areas of proven Mesolithic activity are being monitored and investigated.



Fig 5



Plate 4: Looking west into the Clyde Valley from Nether Hangingshaw

**Two sites discovered only 50m apart, open up a new perspective on the location of hunter gatherer camp sites.**

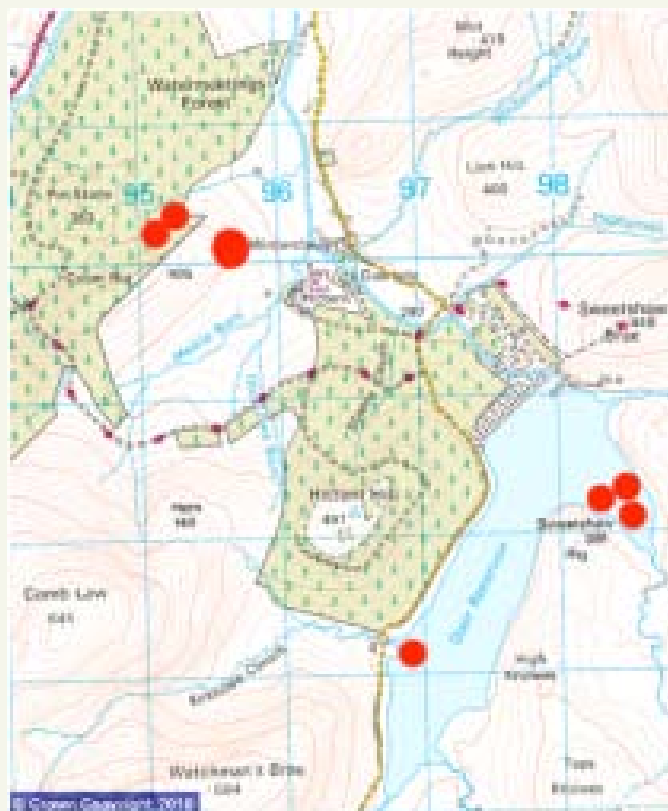


Fig 6





Plate 5: Excavating a forest area



Plate 6: Chert microliths



Plate 7: Flint microliths

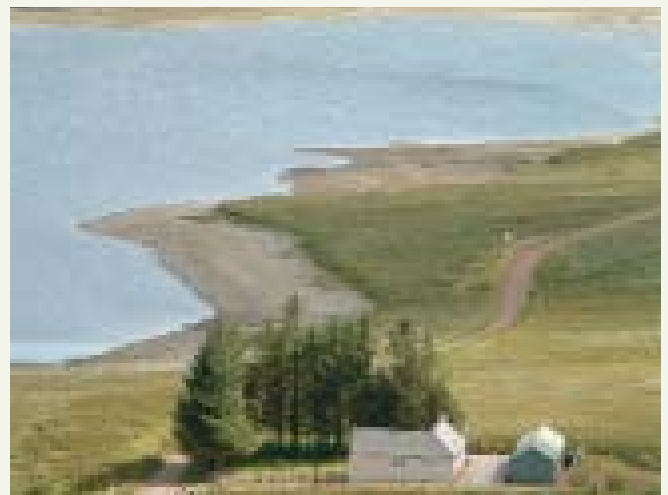


Plate 8: View of reservoir



Plate 9: Microliths and debitage from a single square metre, 2010



Plate 10: Important evidence of Mesolithic / Neolithic transition, 2010



Only one site {Site No 4} appears not to be under serious threat of erosion; however it has produced a surface scatter of chert microliths of the Late Mesolithic, no invasive work has been done here. A nearby site {Site No 2} has been excavated with a complete assemblage of predominantly chert material (Ward, 2001); including microliths and has been dated to 8055±75BP from birch charcoal in a single pit. Another site, again dominated by chert has been test pitted and while a representative sample of lithic has been retrieved, no dateable contexts were found in the limited work, although it appears to be Late Mesolithic by the microliths found there. The fourth area (actually the first and third to be found and investigated; Sites No 1 and 3) has produced a spectacular and complete assemblage of an unusual type of flint and an as yet unidentified rock type, both of which were used for microliths of apparent Late Mesolithic date on typological criteria. Dates of 5355±45BP, 6865±60BP, and 9075±80BP came from charcoal found in small pits

and scatters; however, the early date may be spurious for reasons which will be given in due course. There appeared to be two phases of use at the same location where each involved the same distinctive flint, but only at one where the unknown rock type was used. The assemblage is currently being examined by Alan Saville of the National Museums of Scotland. All of the sites within the reservoir are set back and upslope from the main river channel, although they do lie within close proximity to spring courses and in the case of the test pitted site, beside a larger tributary of the Daer Water, the Kirkhope Burn. Plate 8.

Other sites in the Daer Valley were found while inspecting commercial forestry areas which had been clear felled. The two sites (Ward, 2004) discovered only 50m apart, open up a new perspective on the location of hunter gatherer camp sites. Plates 5 and 6. They lie high on the north facing hill slope of Coom Rig at 340m OD, but with a view down to the Daer Water and the valley floor 1km away and to the east. Each small



site is dominated by chert but flint is present with Late Mesolithic microliths of both flint (Plate 7) and chert being present. Both locations were trashed by the forestry operations but it was nevertheless possible to retrieve nearly all of the lithic assemblages and also date the sites by charcoal from small pits which survived. The sites were dated to  $4930 \pm 35\text{BP}$  and  $5390 \pm 35\text{BP}$  and strongly indicate some attraction for returning to that spot on the hill, co-incidence is considered to be unlikely.

Discoveries made in 2010 (Plates 9 and 10) in a new forest area on the east side of Coom Rig are currently being investigated; numerous Mesolithic sites have been found and excavation is producing large assemblages of lithics of many different types and dateable features are being sampled. The sites all appear to be late Mesolithic on typological lithic. However the most intriguing aspect of these sites is the presence of Early Neolithic artefacts, such as scrapers, leaf arrows, pottery and pitchstone, such material has occurred on five sites at the time of writing and the suspicion is that on these locations the transition between the Mesolithic and the Early Neolithic is represented, if this proves to be so, then the importance of the location will be further enhanced.

What has become abundantly clear at Daer is that only a small number of the probable sites are being located in the forestry areas, because the existing discoveries are being made in a tiny proportion of the landscape and which has only been partially exposed, much of the ground is covered in peat and which has remained undisturbed during the forestry operations (Ward 2010).

## Sites discovered by others

The Glentaggart Mesolithic site near Glespin was discovered prior to open cast coal mining. A significant assemblage of mainly local chert artefacts was retrieved from a small excavation (Johnson, 2007). Like the sites in forestry and reservoir situations these sites will only be discovered due to the disturbance caused by the development. While features such as the one at Glentaggart will be investigated prior to the main industrial work, the great problem with Mesolithic sites is that they seldom leave tangible surface indicators to betray their presence. Therefore it is essential that detailed watching briefs are maintained on such places when the earth moving occurs and indeed afterwards when the land and spoil heaps have been weathered or washed by rain.

Glentaggart site lies near the Kennox water which is a tributary of the River Ayr, and shows that many more Mesolithic sites are likely to exist in what are now bleak moorlands, and which more or less rules in all types of areas in the future search for sites.

A fieldwalking and excavation project at Garvald Burn near Dolphinton, by Biggar, located a lithic scatter consisting of both flint and chert, with microliths and burins represented and of Late Mesolithic date (Barrowman, 2000); this appeared to be a camp site beside a former marshy area and is another example of an inland site removed from the main river systems. The Garvald site is only 5km NNE of Howburn/Brownsbank sites given above.

# The Mesolithic highways of Southern Scotland

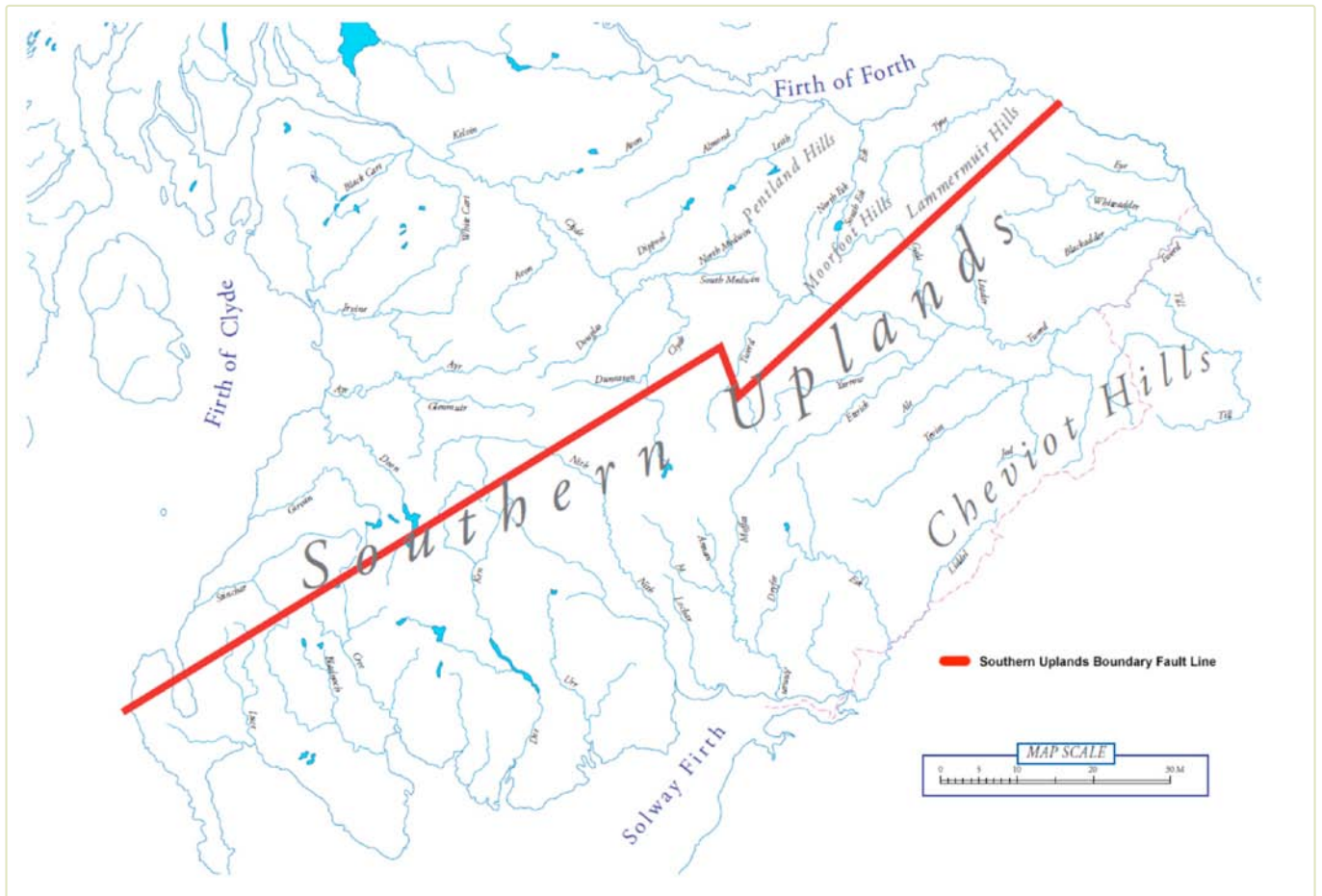


Fig 7

By reference to Fig. 7, it is easy to appreciate why rivers and their tributaries were adopted by people from earliest times as their routes throughout Southern Scotland. The uplands drainage pattern has always indicated the best passage through the hills, and this was first recognised historically by the Roman road builders and later in the 19th century by the railway and road engineers, the work of these route masters is still evident.

The sources of the river systems appear to reach out to each other as if to touch, and although bereft of a pictorial map, the early travellers would most likely have an intimate knowledge of the landscape which in some instances they revisited time and again; they would have recognised all manner of features such as hill shapes, woodlands, marshes and the flood plains,

building a mental topographical knowledge of the country. The evidence clearly shows that some spots were favoured and were returned to over extended periods of time, for example at Daer, Howburn, Cornhill and at Weston Farm.

It is also easy to appreciate the previous assumptions, albeit devoid of any former hard evidence that the Biggar Gap would have been the E/W link between the Rivers Tweed and Clyde. Through the work of BAG the hypothesis may soon be readily accepted on evidence as more and more Mesolithic sites are discovered.

It is suggested here that the watersheds between the tributary sources, in many cases will indicate the routes followed by hunter gatherers, something that may be tested by fieldwork.



## The Mesolithic map with the river names given in green.

Working from the west in an anti clockwise direction, the **Irvine** would easily connect to the **Avon** and possibly the **West Cart** forming a circular route between the lower reaches of the **Clyde** and the west coast.

The **Ayr** bifurcates into two main feeders; the **Ayr** on the north and the southerly **Glenmuir**. Respectively their sources are close to those of the **Douglas** and the **Duneaton** giving a choice of routes to the **Clyde** and the **Biggar Gap**. Routes to the south can then be made via the **Clyde** and **Tweed** and also to the north along the **Dipool** and **North Medwin** on the west side of the Pentland Hills and on the east side of the Pentlands by way of the **South Medwin**.

The Pentland range of volcanic hills form a distinctive ridge aligned NE/SW running between Biggar and Edinburgh and from most of their summits a view of the Firth of Forth can be seen. At the northern end of these hills the **Leith** and the two **Esks** guide the way to the sea.

Back to the south west and the **Doon**, **Girvan** and **Stinchar** lead into the heart of Galloway and to the south west end of the Southern Uplands. Connections to the south and south east to the Solway coast could have been via the **Cree**, **Dee**, **Ken**, **Urr** and the **Nith**, the latter of which could also lead over to the **Glenmuir** and the **Ayr**, giving a cross country route between the Firths of Clyde and Solway. The **Nith** and its tributary the **Cairn** lead into the heart of Galloway towards the west while tributaries; **Dalveen**, **Mennock** and **Crawick** bring the traveller towards the upper reaches of the **Clyde** via the **Portrail**, **Elvan** and **Glengonnar**, and **Duneaton** respectively.

One of the BAG's primary interests is in the **Annan**, leading north from the Solway, it forks in three main directions; on the west the tributaries of the **Kinniel**, **Ae** and **Capel** seemingly struggle up the slopes of the dominant Queensberry (hill) to connect with the **Daer**, similarly reaching up that hill but from the north. **Daer** of course reveals a new dimension to Mesolithic locations and studies, being in the heart of Southern Scotland with sites strewn around the Daer Reservoir and some of these high on the hillsides. The unique nature of some of the lithics from **Daer** offers a still

unresolved challenge as to their geological types and sources, and if this can be achieved, the exchange or travel routes may be known.

The **Annan** is the central fork and leads north into The Devil's Beef Tub from where it springs, here an abrupt barrier in the form of the steep sides of the glen meet the traveller, but if the more leisurely route along the hill side from Moffat is followed, as the A701 road does, then one comes to the summit which comfortably falls down to the north to find the source of the **Tweed**, the river which has always been known as a rich source in the search for Mesolithic Scotland. A short walk over the hill to the west brings one to the source of the **Clyde** at **Little Clyde**.

The **Moffat Water** leads to the NE and brings the traveller over the watershed to St Mary's Loch and the source of the **Yarrow**. On the way up and not far from the spectacular waterfall, the Grey Mare's Tail, is **Rottenbottom** where in a hill top peat hag, a pre-historic bow made from yew wood was found (Sheridan, 1994). At 4040-3640BC it is the oldest known bow in Britain.

The **Dryffe** is the eastern fork of the **Annan** and it reaches for the **Solway Esk** and those other feeders of the **Tweed**; the **Yarrow** and the **Ettrick**.

The **Liddel** comes very close to the source of the **Jed**, another **Tweed** feeder, while it also nears the source of the **North Tyne** which runs south in England.

We now leap from the Solway to the North Sea coast, the line of which does not appear to have changed so dramatically in the Holocene as that on the west side of the country.

The principal river is of course the **Tweed** which with its tributaries covers about 25% of Southern Scotland. The **Till**, the **Whiteadder** and the **Blackadder** could indicate shorter routes from the coast, perhaps ones which were visited more often than the inland places? Further up river the **Leader** and **Gala** reach into the Lammermuir and Moorfoot Hills respectively while the latter river could make a connection with the **North Esk**. The **Manor** leads from near the source of the **Talla** and the **Megget**, all of which discharge into the Tweed, but at confluence of the **Manor** and **Tweed** we have the recent evidence of Early and Late Mesolithic activity (Knox, Warren, *ibid*).

Finally the two main north reaching tributaries are the **Eddleston** and the **Lyne**, both leading to the **North Esk** while the **Lyne** runs straight into the Pentland Hills.

Further up the North Sea coast the **Eye** and the **Tyne** reaches into much of East Lothian, these again may have formed shorter excursions from the coast line.

The **South Esk** reaches south to meet the **Gala** while the **North Esk** comes from the westerly Pentland Hills which themselves offer various routes with long distance views in all directions, and meeting up with other river connections.

The **Leith** also comes from the south along the western side of the Pentlands which would always have been in view of the river.

The **Almond** is of course of significant importance, the earliest dated Mesolithic site in Scotland being beside its outflow to the Firth of Forth at Cramond. The river stretches south west through West Lothian towards the west while the **Forth Avon** similarly heads in that direction towards the **Clyde** bringing us nearly full circle.

Finally in the search for possible routes, the **North Calder** and the **Kelvin** join the **Clyde** after embracing Dumbarton and the Kilsyth Hills.

For the purposes of this study only the larger tributaries have been considered, however, even the briefest glance at a 1:50,000 OS map will show the over simplification given here of the drainage patterns over the country and therefore the possible travel routes which have been suggested. The people of the past would have had an intimate knowledge of the glens and cleuchs which can be counted in their hundreds as are the smaller feeders which are the sources of all burns and eventually the rivers. The ultimate network of watery veins through the landscape is seemingly endless and probably gave the Mesolithic travellers countless possibilities as to choice of route.

We now only have the most basic visual concept of what was seen over 6000 years ago and of course coast lines and river systems have also altered in that time. It is certain that the Mesolithic people would have favoured routes and stopping places dictated by factors no longer in existence, one thinks principally of the woodlands and the variable resource it offered.

Nevertheless, the routes suggested here could be tested to some extent by fieldwork, by examining exposures on the ground caused by animals such as moles, rabbits and sheep, river erosion, forestry, reservoirs and most importantly if it is available, in arable fields.

There is little doubt in the opinion of the writer that numerous other Mesolithic locations can be added to the principal sites given here, since the arable fieldwalking projects between these sites has also produced more random collections of lithic and apparently isolated objects, some of which are Mesolithic in date, based on typological objects. Most of the large collections of the BAG and which are held in Biggar Museum have not been inspected professionally and it is suspected they may produce significant results if they were analysed.

Co-incidentally at several of the BAG sites; Howburn, Brownsbank, Daer, Camps, Cornhill, Nether Hangingshaw, Weston and Corse Law, the later periods of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages were also found (Ward, *ibid*, various reports).

The evidence is therefore growing for the presence of these ancient transient people in southern Scotland. The more sites that are discovered, the better will be the understanding of their travel routes, and while rivers and their tributaries still hold good as likely places to find Mesolithic sites, it is becoming clearer that hunter gatherers were occupying sites removed from the banks of the rivers and moreover, in some cases, camped high on hill sides. This latter fact may indicate late autumn or even winter sites being occupied during frosty weather. Anyone who knows the southern hills at this period of the year is aware that sheep and cattle move up the slopes to avoid the temperature inversion principal, where cold air sinks to the valley floor, leaving the higher slopes at a slightly higher temperature, and devoid of the freezing mist which smothers the valley floors. Although in no way conclusive, it is a possibility that this was considered by the Mesolithic people when they camped higher up the valley sides.

The full realisation of the evidence which the BAG have gathered will only be achieved by expert analyses of the lithic assemblages they have retrieved from various sites. Unfortunately they do not have the expertise within their group to carry out such work, but they are convinced that if such a study could be accomplished, a whole new chapter in the story of Scotland's earliest inhabitants will be told.

Although often assumed in the past to be the case, there is now increasing evidence that Mesolithic people were using the river systems as their routes through the landscape of Southern Scotland.

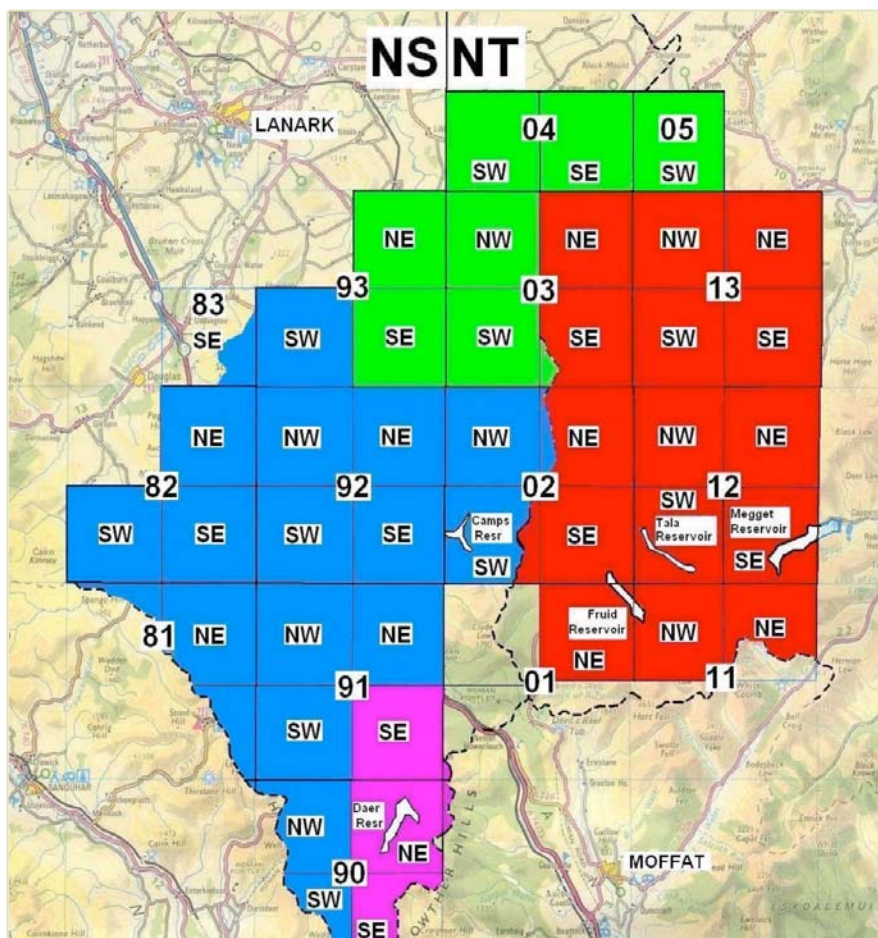
It should readily be appreciated that good opportunities exist for fieldworkers to enhance the distribution map of sites, adding greater detail to our understanding of travel routes and camps sites.

The bias of coastal or estuarine Mesolithic sites over inland ones in Scotland is not being removed fast enough to give a more balanced view on where the hunter gatherer communities operated. Only as recently as two decades ago this imbalance prevailed; "The Mesolithic sites of Scotland are predominantly

coastal" (Wickham-Jones, 1990) and in her work on Rhum Ms Jones recognised that coastal sites "are both more visible and more accessible to the present day populations who locate and record them".

Even closer in time the same sentiments were expressed in what is Scotland's current definitive work on the Mesolithic period in general, where "the relative paucity of evidence" is cited, and in the map to accompany that statement, there is a single location; Daer (a BAG project) given for South Lanarkshire and again, "Much of the evidence for the Mesolithic in Scotland comes from coastal locations" (Saville, 2004).

Here then lies another problem, and part of the reason for this Paper; unpublished sources are seldom cited in academic works and therefore tend 'not to exist' until they are. The work of BAG in the last two decades has considerably enhanced the data base on the subject and indeed is producing unique strands of evidence on it, but this information is going nowhere beyond the unpublished interim reports produced by the writer, and these are merely factual accounts of what has been found with no real research on what it means.



**Fig 8: The Biggar Surveys**  
**Green** The Biggar Gap and Pre-history North of Biggar Projects.  
**Blue** The Upper Clyde Survey  
**Magenta** The Daer Valley Survey  
**Red** The Upper Tweed and Megget Surveys



Obviously the problems of operating an independent group of voluntary archaeologists is highlighted by this fact, the main resource of such a group are the people themselves and in the case of BAG this is almost exclusively directed towards fieldwork, where competent discovery, survey and excavation can be achieved but bereft of resources and specialism's for post excavation work. Having said that, BAG does enjoy much co-operation and assistance from the profession, in both paid and voluntary contributions.

It could easily be argued that the apparent elusiveness of Mesolithic evidence in inland Scotland simply reflects an absence of fieldwork, and even what has been achieved has been sporadic, opportunistic and often conducted by a few individuals in specific parts of the country.

What is now needed to carry the recent impetus forward are more fieldworkers to conduct systematic searches. Working from the known, but still scant distribution map, localities could be targeted with the most obvious places to look being ploughed fields and other areas being ploughed such as upland re-pasturing. Reservoirs and most especially forestry areas have now been demonstrated by BAG to be productive areas to search.

The BAG is endeavouring to do this, but their adopted area of activity (Fig 8), which is large, represents a relatively small part of Southern Scotland. Furthermore the fact that they are entirely a voluntary group working with minimal resources, including people, means that each year opportunities are lost to inspect good hunting grounds (pun intended), most especially in forestry areas where perhaps the best circumstances present themselves for the discovery of such sites. One aspect of this paper is to attempt to draw a sympathetic view from others on this frustrating business of heritage under threat.

Therefore, a more co-ordinated approach would be necessary if a serious attempt to put hunter gatherers increasingly on the map is to be considered.

The most important resource in such a scheme, and not necessarily the most expensive – is people. The primary thrust of such a project would be fieldwork which could be conducted by a voluntary force such as BAG, University students, Young Archaeology Clubs, and by professional archaeologists. The possibilities are easy to appreciate if such groups could be mustered, specialising in their own geographic areas and becoming expert in them, while all feeding into the overall scheme.

Appropriate excavation should also be considered, especially in those places where sites are under threat or already damaged.

The secondary aspect of course would certainly involve professional experts to deal with the classification and analyses of lithic assemblages and environmental samples and in this there would be an opportunity for specialists to engender at least some of this technical knowledge in others.

This paper therefore proposes such a project and invites interested readers to contact the writer with views on how best such a scheme may be devised.

The Southern Uplands of Scotland cover a large area now interspersed with Mesolithic and indeed many other pre-historic sites and monuments. The survey work by BAG between Clyde and Tweed, in magnifying the numbers of known sites by a considerable factor, shows that there is a fantastic opportunity available in the rest of the southern landscape, to discover many more un-recorded sites and to re-write the pre-historic story of Scotland.

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# Appendix I

Details of radio carbon dates by BAG and given in the text.

**SUERC-17872 (GU-16472) Howburn Farm. Charcoal: Betula (Birch)**

1855± 35BP    Calibrated AD 70 (95.4%) AD 240

**SUERC-17876 (GU-16473) Burnetland Hill. Charcoal: Corylus (Hazel)**

5220± 35BP    Calibrated 4080BC (85.2%) 3960BC

**SUERC-6463 (GU-13036) Daer Site No 85. Charcoal: Corylus (Hazel)**

4930± 35BP    Calibrated 3780BC (95.4%) 3640BC

**SUERC-6829 (GU-13035R) Daer Site No 84. Charcoal: Corylus (Hazel)**

5390± 35BP    Calibrated 4340BC (76.3%) 4070BC

**AA-43004 (GU-9356) Daer Reservoir Site No 3. Charcoal: Corylus (Hazel)**

5355+\_45BP    Calibrated 1sigma BC 4318-4050, cal BP 6267-5999

**AA-30354 Daer Reservoir Site No 1. Charcoal: Pomoideae (Fruit tree type)**

9075+\_80BP    Calibrated 1 sigma BC8095 (8080) 8026BC

**AA-47770 (GU-9755) Daer Reservoir Site No 1. Charcoal: Corylus (Hazel)**

6865+\_60BP    Calibrated 5880BC (95.4%) 5630BC

**AA-30355 Daer Reservoir Site No 2. Charcoal: Betula (Birch)**

8055+\_75BP    Calibrated 1sigma 7044BC (7030) 6779BC

**SUERC-3562 (GU-12117) Weston Farm. Charcoal: Corylus (Hazel Nut Shell)**

6035+\_40BP    Calibrated 5050BC (95.4%) 4800BC

**SUERC-6467 (GU-13037) Weston Farm. Charcoal: Corylus (Hazel)**

7920+\_40BP    Calibrated 7030BC (95.4%) 6650BC

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