
UNLOCKING LA COTTE DE ST. BRELADE: MAKING JERSEY'S PLEISTOCENE HERITAGE ACCESSIBLE

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Résumé

The Palaeolithic site of La Cotte de St. Brelade on the island of Jersey, has remained dormant since the 1961-1978 excavations of C. B. M. McBurney. Archaeologists have paid little attention to the site assuming that all the surviving deposits lay behind a protective concrete wall. Since 2010 a field project drawn from major UK institutions has focused research on the La Cotte de St. Brelade archive and on deposits disturbed by tidal storm surges. This work has established that Middle Pleistocene deposits are preserved at the site outside of the protective wall but these are under severe threat from further storm damage and rising sea-levels. The early focus of work on other coastal sites around the Island under a broad 'Ice Age Island' banner has reframed local public and political attention on a heritage as a value of landscape rather than of discreet visitor attractions. This is an issue of great significance in a small island where all land use is highly contested and opens up the broader value of heritage in future tourism development.

A major engineering operation is soon to be undertaken to protect the surviving deposits and create a safe working environment for international multidisciplinary research teams. This is an expensive undertaking that is only possible because La Cotte de St. Brelade is considered as an integral part of Jersey's historic environment communication, education and tourism development strategies. Support for the project has been generated more than anything by the combination of international institutional brands and local scenic landscapes with research generated stories expressed through wide reaching broadcast media. In a jurisdiction where external relations and media profile are significant economic factors this has strongly aligned the project with community interests and created a strong framework for funding not only La Cotte itself but the associated management frameworks for heritage in the Island. This paper will focus on Jersey Heritage's approach to communicating the significance of the Pleistocene record within the broader cultural strategy for the island.

Mots-Clés: Pleistocene, Palaeolithic, management frameworks, research generated stories

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