



Red Lady of Paviland Project



**Celebrating the 200th anniversary of the discovery of
Western Europe's Oldest ceremonial burial**

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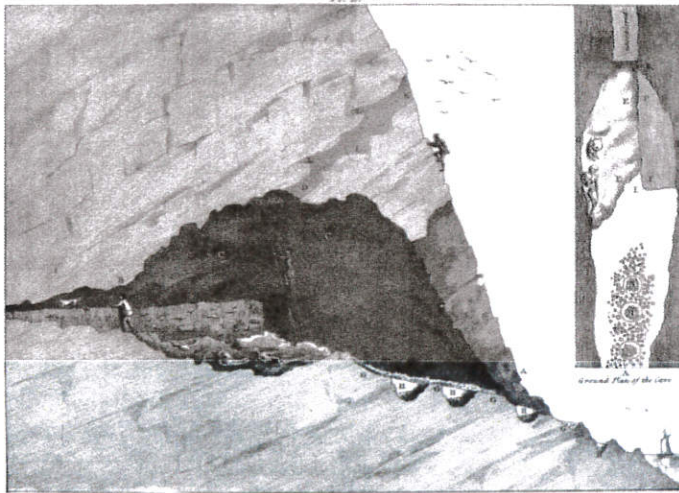
Information Centre:

Gower Heritage Centre, Parkmill, Gower SA3 2EH



Who was the Red “Lady” of Paviland?

The most famous archaeological find in Gower was made in 1823 by William Buckland, Oxford University's first Reader in Geology. Invited to visit the cave on the South Gower coast by Mary Talbot of the Penrice Estate who had noticed the burial site on her explorations of the coastline. The presence of red pigment on the bones, ivory beads and other ornaments led Buckland to conclude that the bones were of a woman, and the find quickly became known as the 'Red Lady of Paviland'.



Buckland also assumed that the 'Red Lady' was from the Roman period, around 2,000 years ago, as he still held biblical views that the remains must be from after the Noah's Flood as depicted in the Book of Genesis.

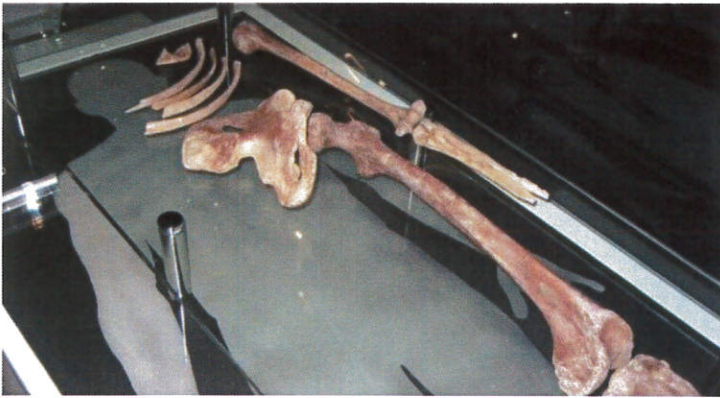
Subsequent studies revealed more about the age and significance of the site.

As early as 1912, W J Sollas, Professor of Geology and Palaeontology at Oxford, and President of the Geological Society realised that the bones were male and much older, as well as uncovering spectacular finds at the site like the mammoth ivory pendant pictured.



Pendant made with from a growth that formed in a mammoth tusk.

In 2008, scientists used improved radiocarbon-dating techniques, which showed that the bones are around 33–34,000 years old (from a less cold episode during the last glaciation), making the 'Red Lady' one of the oldest examples of a ceremonial burial in Western Europe. Stone tools and burned animal bones show that he could have been one of the hunters that used the cave over many thousands of years.



Replicas of the bones are displayed in Swansea Museum. The bones and many of the artifacts were taken to Oxford, as Wales was said to not have any suitable museums at the time. This situation is controversial, with many calling for the bones to be returned to Wales.

How he died remains a mystery, but the evidence indicates that he was buried ceremonially. The body was covered with carved ivory beads and painted with red ochre made from a rock pigment found at nearby Port Eynon Bay, artwork was also detected on fragments of mammal bone.

What is the Red Lady Project?



In response to the 200th anniversary of the discovery, Tourism Swansea Bay felt more work was needed to celebrate the story (or indeed stories) of this internationally important find. Generously funded by the UK Government's

Levelling Up Fund, we set up the Red Lady Project to explore innovative ways to celebrate the importance of this site and the prehistory of Gower.

Funded by UK Government  Wedi ei ariannu gan Llywodraeth y DU

The cave itself is not easily accessible; it can be quite dangerous. Fortunately, you do not need to actually visit the site to learn more about the Red Lady and experience some of the story.

Tourism Swansea Bay, in partnership with local businesses is putting together a number of different activities based in the Gower Heritage Centre cumulating with the Red Lady Festival at the Gower Heritage Centre 22nd June 2024. The event will include food, music, and stalls demonstrating prehistoric skills like flint knapping, foraging, prehistoric jewellery making, and red ochre painting.

Want to get involved?

If you would like to volunteer for the project, or would like more information on the Red Lady Festival activities at the Gower Heritage Centre (flint knapping, prehistoric jewellery making workshops), please contact us at

info@tourismswabseabay.co.uk

or see <https://www.gowerheritagecentre.co.uk/>



Enigmatic mammoth ivory rod fragments
– their purpose remains unknown.



Sami @WaywardPilgrimCrafts runs jewellery making workshops using prehistoric tools at the Gower Heritage Centre

To book prehistoric workshops,
contact Sami Bryant:

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