

Farmers, farming practices and farming tools

Organisers: Rosie Bishop and Kenny Brophy

NSG meeting Monday 16th November (note the date!)

Call for papers

Farming is often regarded as the key factor which defines a community as ‘being Neolithic’ and yet remains relatively under-researched and theorised as a practice and way of life in Britain and Ireland. This stands in contrast with some other parts of Europe where these aspects of Neolithic lifeways have received far more attention. It is now 10 years since the NSG last covered these issues in a conference in 2016 (*Neolithic Food and Farming Systems* and associated publication), and there have been several key methodological innovations, discoveries and metadata syntheses of primary evidence of farming undertaken in the last decade that have the potential to considerably change our understanding.

More broadly, we are also interested in contributions that explore the social nature of farming and the ontological status of ‘being a farmer’ or ‘becoming a farmer’, and in understanding the longer-term social and environmental consequences of the introduction of farming, both positive and negative. We are coming to realise that far from being indicative of a winner-takes-all positive development, the advent of farming was accompanied by a series of social and health problems, as well as causing detrimental environmental impacts. To what extent do we have evidence that these were a problem early on, and can we identify strategies that the first farmers used to mitigate against these? How did early farmers cope with climate change? Finally, to what extent have we resolved the conundrum explored so memorably in the 1980s and 1990s as to whether farming was about the economy, ideology ...or both?

Papers are invited that will cover any aspect of farming and agriculture in the Neolithic of Britain and Ireland, as well as fresh research from the rest of Europe to contextualise these approaches.

Papers might cover these areas:

- Metanalyses of farming evidence (archaeobotanical, zooarchaeological, artefacts, etc)
- The material culture and/or archaeobotanical evidence of cultivation strategies- ploughing, sowing, growing and harvesting crops



- Animal husbandry practices
- 'Secondary products'
- Diet and grazing patterns of domesticates
- Middening and soil improvement strategies
- Farming, risk management strategies and resilience
- Theoretical approaches for understanding what it means to be a farmer
- Social, environmental and health impacts of farming
- Landscapes of farming
- New scientific approaches and their impact e.g. sedaDNA
- Key recent discoveries from excavations including development-led

Please send abstracts of 250 words to Kenny Brophy (kenny.brophy@glasgow.ac.uk) by 31 July 2026. You can propose either a 20-minute **paper**, to be delivered in person in London, or a **poster** that will be displayed in the lecture hall and online during the conference. Pre-recorded lectures may be a possibility if you cannot make it to London so please do indicate this when you contact us.

We especially welcome contributions from early career researchers and PhD candidates with fresh perspectives and evidence on these issues.

The conference will be held in Burlington House, London and remotely on Teams, on Monday 16th November 2026.