

# Out(side) of the Ground



Actualities

## Out(side) of the Ground : Actualities on archaeological excavations in South Morbihan

On the occasion of its 140th anniversary, the Carnac Prehistory Museum is presenting an exhibition entitled "Out(side) of the Ground" from 18<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The exhibition highlights the archaeological excavations in the Carnac region. The very first excavations were at the origin of the creation of the museum at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A selection of recent development-led excavations illustrates the vigour of current archaeological research.



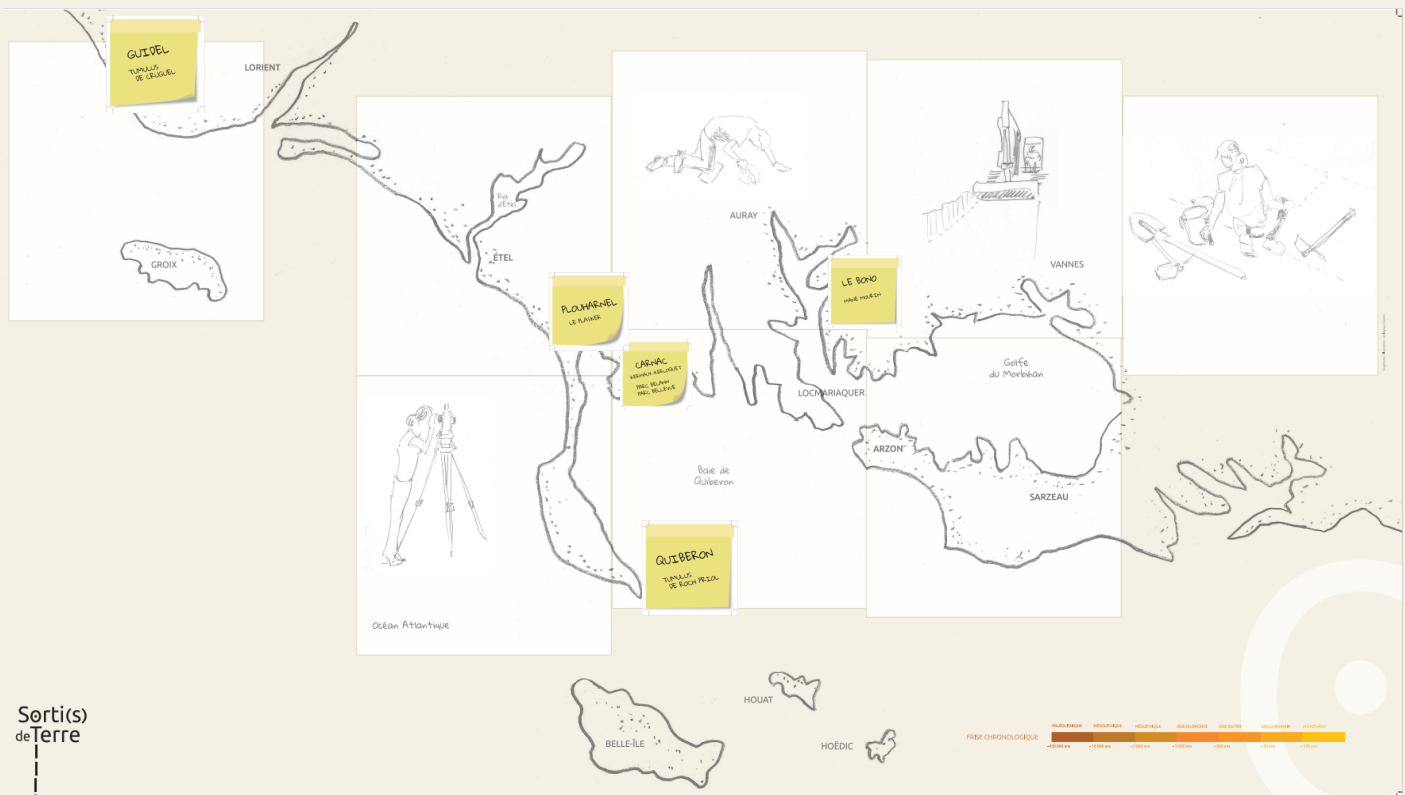
### The actors of archaeology

In archeology, excavation is divided into two main categories :  
"**development-led**" excavation and "**research**" excavation.

**Development-led excation** is an emergency procedure that takes place prior to town and country plannings. Its aim is to detect, conserve or safeguard elements of the archaeological heritage that may be damaged by the works. Development-led excavations are financed by private or public developers.

**Research excavation** is a research procedure to address specific scientific issues. These excavation programmes are generally carried out over a long period of time. The Ministry of Culture finances most of these research operations.

## Today's archaeological excavations



Sorti(s)  
de Terre



## Research excavation



## Development-led excavation



## The tools of today's archaeologist

**Even if he still wields a shovel, a trowel or a brush, three devices are now indispensable to the archaeologist:**



### **The mechanical shovel:**

It saves precious time for the stripping of large surfaces and to quickly carry out the necessary surveys.



### **Theodolite:**

It is a vertical and horizontal optical level that makes it possible to draw up a topographical plan of the excavation in progress and to indicate precisely the location and altitude of the objects uncovered.



### **Digital photographs:**

They allow the image of discovered archaeological structures and objects to be kept before they are removed or destroyed. Image processing and photogrammetric assemblies can also link elements that are difficult to move, or highlight traces that are difficult to see with the naked eye.



## The Plasker, Plouharnel

Archeodonum, 2020

**A development-led excavation operation, as part of the extension of the Plasker business Park to the north of the town of Plouharnel, has revealed various Neolithic remains: a cairn, a hearth and the sites of disappeared menhirs.**

To the southwest of the site is the cairn. This funerary monument housed the deceased in a quadrangular box in its centre. Unfortunately, no furniture or bone remains have been found.

To the west of the cairn, some twenty combustion structures were discovered, consisting of charcoal and heated stones.

Finally, among ten pits, three are over 2 metres in diameter! They contained stone blocks weighing up to 40kg. Archaeologists hypothesise that these were wedge stones used to hold upright steles. These stones are now missing and were probably reused for the construction of megalithic monuments.



**Watch the videos that illustrate the evolution of an excavation site.**



## **Tumulus of Roch Priol, Quiberon**

Departemental archeology service of Morbihan, 2014

**The extension project of a youth hostel in the street of "Roch Priol" in Quiberon leads to the discovery of an unusual case of reuse of a Neolithic monument.**

In the 19th century, the remains of a dolmen dating from the Middle Neolithic (c. 4200 - 3700 BC) were discovered by Félix Gaillard.

On the high point of the excavated part of the monument, a burial chest was found. It contained the disordered bony remains of an adult individual missing a left arm. The missing arm was found a few metres from the burial box. Radiocarbon dating gave an estimate of between the 7th and 9th century AD.

Thus, the displacement of the corpse in the Middle Ages in a prehistoric monument bears witness to the long-term use of architectures that are permanently inscribed in the landscape.



## **Mané Mourin, Le Bono**

INRAP, 2013

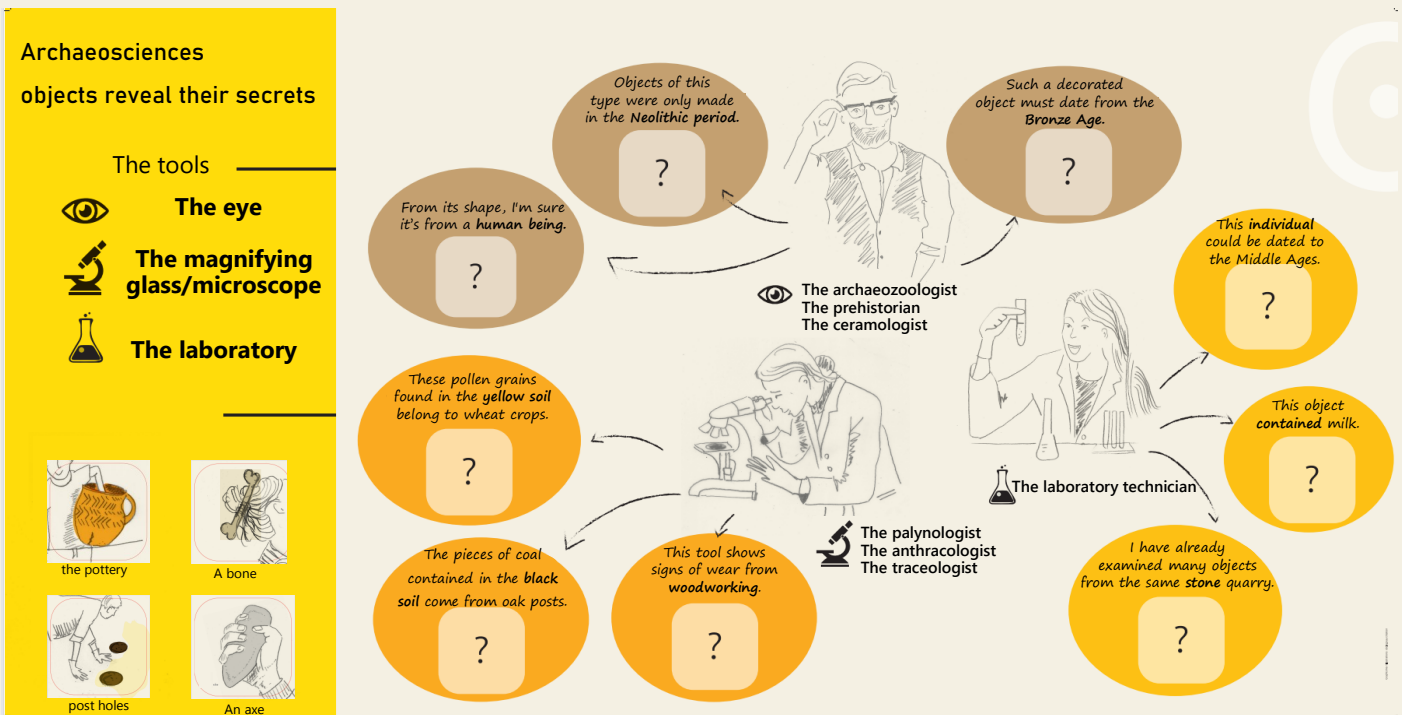
**A development-led excavation prior to the construction of housing mainly led to the discovery of a group of Bronze Age tombs of a new type.**

On an area of about 300m<sup>2</sup>, a funerary complex consisting of about ten tombs was discovered. Five of the graves are perfectly aligned. The discovery of a small vase at the bottom of one of the graves has made it possible to date the necropolis to the Early Bronze Age (c. 2000 B.C.).

This would have been a small family or community cemetery. Compared to the tumulus of the same period, which testify to the membership of an elite, the Bono necropolis allows us to understand the graves of another social category of the Early Bronze Age. It is therefore an unprecedented discovery.

# Archaeosciences, objects reveal their secrets

Each object corresponds to an archaeologist and his working method : the eye, the magnifying glass/microscope or the laboratory



## Belann Parc & Bellevue Parc, Carnac

Departemental archeology service of Morbihan, 2014 & Evéha 2015

**The development-led archaeological operations carried out at Parc Belann and Parc Bellevue prior to a social housing construction project have confirmed the occupation of the areas around the large funerary monuments during recent prehistory.**

Diagnostics have revealed the presence of remains within a radius of 500 metres around the Tumulus Saint-Michel, the most monumental megalithic tomb in Carnac, built c. 4700-4500 B.C.

At Parc Belann, a Bronze Age settlement was discovered on a high point opposite the tumulus.

During the excavation of the lower part of this site, a series of heated stone hearths from the Middle Neolithic (c.4700-3400 B.C.) were uncovered.

The Parc Bellevue saw the discovery of a late Neolithic deposit of a grinding wheel and mill, characteristic tools of the early farmers.

Domestic and ritual occupations therefore continued at Carnac long after the first megaliths were built.



## Kermaux-Kerloquet, Carnac

Departemental archeology service of Morbihan, 2021

**The diagnosis carried out to the north of the Kermario alignments, prior to the development of the footpath, highlighted the multiple occupations of the site.**

One of the objectives of the diagnosis was to compare the current topographic plan with the old plans drawn up by James Miln in 1873. James Miln was a Scottish scholar, he is the only researcher known to have excavated the Kermario alignments. The similarity between the two plans makes it possible to identify several blocks, now lying down, as being the remains of a dismantled line.

Traces of granite extraction have been found around the rocky outcrop, which testify to the local origin of the menhirs.

The operation also revealed the use of the site in the Bronze Age thanks to the discovery of a ceramic at the foot of the rocky outcrop.

Thus, the sector illustrates all the phases of operation, from the extraction of blocks to their destruction. It also bears witness to the fragility of these emblematic alignments of standing stones.



## Tumulus of Cruguel, Guidel

INRAP 2021

**A development-led excavation was carried out prior to the construction of a private house. The remains of a very damaged tumulus were studied in order to understand its organisation using new archaeological approaches.**

The Early Bronze Age (c.2100 - 1600 B.C.) tumulus had already been excavated in the 19th century. It measured 26 metres in diameter and 5.50 metres in height. The artificial mound made of stones, earth and clay was topped by a pyramidal pile of menhirs surmounted by a large block of granite laid flat. The tombstone contained three bronze daggers and fourteen flint arrowheads.

Although most of the monument was destroyed during the Second World War, the cross-sections made in 2021 have allowed new observations. The discovery of two large clay extraction pits revealed decorated ceramic furniture as well as a small burial chest. The central grave of the monument is dug to a depth of almost one metre.

Thanks to these new observations, photogrammetry and archaeoscience, the volume of the monument and all the stages of its construction can be reconstructed despite the historical disturbances that have affected it.



# Out(side) of the ground:

## Origins of the Museum



## Out(side) of the ground: Origins of the Museum

The Carnac Museum officially opened its doors in 1882, 140 years ago. An archaeologist, James Miln, was responsible for its creation. James Miln's objective was twofold: to preserve local archaeological discoveries on site, as close as possible to the sites, and to present them to all amateurs and visitors wishing to see and study them. This is the founding act of the present museum.



## The Miln Museum, A Cabinet of Curiosities

In the second half of the 19th century, the fashion for megaliths and the arrival of the railway transformed Carnac into a very attractive place for international tourism and amateur archaeologists.

The Scottish James Miln, attracted by the megalithic monuments, settled in Carnac in 1873. He undertook a series of excavations in the region and published the results between 1877 and 1881. James Miln died in 1881 and bequeathed his collection to the town of Carnac.

The first curator of the Museum was Félix Quinquarlet. He settled in Carnac around 1872. He was a scholar and an amateur naturalist and was a member of the Polymathic Society.

The first Carnac Museum brings together the collections of James Miln, Félix Quinquarlet (fauna, flora, geology) and ethnographic objects donated by local sailors. It was therefore more of a curiosity cabinet before becoming a museum.



## The Miln-Le Rouzic Museum, Prehistoric Archaeology

At the beginning of the 20th century, Zacharie Le Rouzic played a central role in the development of prehistoric archaeology in southern Morbihan. Appointed curator of the Miln Museum in 1920, he donated to the town of Carnac all the material from his numerous excavations.

Zacharie Le Rouzic comes from a modest background and left school at 13. He discovered archaeology as James Miln's clerk. Then, at the age of 18, he became the museum guard. He met many learned and wealthy personalities.

As he could not finance his own research, he appealed to the generosity of museum visitors. For example, his first patron Charles Keller financed the large-scale excavation of the Saint-Michel Tumulus (1900-1906).

Then, Marthe and Saint-Just Péquart financed and participated in the excavations of Zacharie Le Rouzic until 1925.

From 1895 to 1939, Zacharie Le Rouzic excavated, restored and had more than 130 sites in the Carnac region protected by the Historic Monuments. In 1928, he had the entire collection of the Museum classified as a Historic Monument.



## Scattered finds by amateur archaeologists

Until the middle of the 20th century, archaeology was a hobby for amateur scholars and collectors. Prior to 1941, archaeological sites were not protected by state legislation. Only architecture classified as a Historic Monument was protected. Excavations were mainly carried out by members of learned societies.

Between 1850 and 1870, the great tumulus of Carnac and Locmariaquer were explored by the "antiquarians" of the Vannes Polymathic Society. The material collected was deposited in the collections of the Polymathic Society.

At the same time, a British team composed of W.C. Lukis and H. Dryden also carried out excavations and surveys in the Carnac region. The furniture discovered then joined the British Museum in London.

Félix Gaillard explored numerous dolmens in the 1880s and 1890s. His discoveries were exhibited in his hotel in Plouharnel. But he had to sell his collections, which were integrated into the National Archaeology Museum near Paris, due to his debts.