
29th INTER-REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE NEOLITHIC
Villeneuve d'Ascq (North, France)
2-3 October 2009

**The Neolithic of the North of France in its European context :
settlement and economy in the 4th and 3rd millennia BC.**

Over the last ten years much new evidence has emerged for the Neolithic of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region, especially with the discovery of sites dating to the Middle and Final Neolithic periods. This is a direct result of the increase in rescue archaeology in the region. It now seems an appropriate time to assess all the new data, within the broader cultural and geographical context of north-western Europe.

The discovery of several causewayed enclosures has now filled the long-standing blank in the distribution map to the north of the Paris basin. Questions can be asked not only about the status of these enclosures in relationship to contemporary settlements, but also about the density of occupation of the region in the Middle Neolithic, from the later 5th millennium BC onwards. Ceramic and lithic finds show connections with Michelsberg, northern Chasséen and the Spiere group, reflecting the position of the region on the margins of these cultural entities. A related issue is the role of the region in the formation of the *Early Neolithic* of southern England at the beginning of the 4th millennium BC, and the probable contacts maintained subsequently on either side of the straits.

While there is still very little evidence for Late Neolithic settlement sites in the North of France, this is not the case with the Final Neolithic. Recently investigated sites have produced new information on houseplans and material culture. Combined with palaeoenvironmental data from the same sites, this evidence can now be used to try to reconstruct the economic and social life of 3rd millennium communities belonging to the Deûle-Escaut group. Identified as far as Western Flanders (Belgium), this group's relationship with other cultural entities in north-western Europe also requires further examination.

Illustrated by recent research, the conference will focus on settlement patterns and on site function and status. The question of the relationships between various cultural groups will also be addressed. Papers on these subjects should provide much scope for discussion between French, Belgian, Dutch, British and Irish archaeologists.