

LATE MESOLITHIC SETTLEMENT OF BRECHT-MOORDENAARSVEN : RESULTS OF 1982 CAMPAIGN

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During this summer, excavations resumed at the Late Mesolithic site of BM-2. The excavations were organized by the "Laboratorium voor Prehistorie, K.U.L.". Last year's field work (Lauwers & Gendel, 1982) only partially uncovered the site and was stopped at the top of the B₂-horizon, of which a detailed topographic map was made. A surface of 172 m² is now fully excavated and the limits of the artifact concentration are largely defined. Excavations have revealed an oval concentration of lithic artifacts and wood charcoal measuring about 12 x 7.5 m and oriented N-S (fig. 1). Its eastern boundary is clearly marked by an abrupt decline in artifact density, while the fall-off in artifact density along the western margin is more gradual. Erosion of the dune has truncated portions of the southern limit of the artifact concentration. As can be seen in figure 1, the distribution of artifacts corresponds quite closely with the depression observed in the top of the B₂ horizon. A possible anthropogenic origin for this feature requires further investigation. Artifact density is very high, with some meter squares yielding over 1500 artifacts. A total of more than 20,000 artifacts have been recovered from the site.

It is possible to distinguish distinctive artifact and tool clusters horizontally across the site. Only through a more detailed spatial and microwear analysis of the site will it be possible to determine if such clusters represent discrete areas of primary tool use, the location of maintenance activities (e.g. hafting and retooling, see Keeley, 1982), or disposal areas. A number of features were uncovered consisting largely of wood charcoal. Some of them occurred as shallow pits, dug into the sand without any trace of stone structure. Only a few fragments of burnt stone were scattered amidst the artifacts. It is striking that most of the features are located near the margins of the artifact concentration (fig. 1).

Retouched artifacts are abundant at the site and the high frequency of end-scrapers is noteworthy. Of the nearly 400 microliths recovered from the site some 40% are backed bladelets, 28% microlithic points, 20% trapezes, and 6% equally of triangles and points with surface retouch. Lithic raw materials consist of a large number of irregular flint cobbles, probably procured from nearby fluviatile gravels. Classic bladelet cores are nearly absent, although a mass of regular blades and bladelets was scattered across the site. Flaking debris in wommersom-quartzite was found in a few clear clusters.

Palynological samples were taken on the site as well as in the peaty layers from the nearby ven (A.V. Munaut, U.C.L.). Soil samples were taken in a dense pattern across the site for phosphate analysis and magnetic testing, the latter in order to identify and locate the presence of fire⁽¹⁾. A charcoal sample taken from a pit situated in the B₂ir horizon has been submitted for radiocarbon dating. Previous radiocarbon assays obtained in 1981 on wood charcoal situated at the base of the A₂ horizon yielded the following dates :

6,270 + 120 B.P. (Lv-1294D)

6,320 ± 120 B.P. (Lv-1295D)

The technological and typological variation between the sites of BM-1 and BM-2 have previously been noted (Lauwers & Gendel, 1982). The 1982 excavations have accentuated those differences, also reflected by the presence and distribution of features at BM-2. Whether or not the two lithic concentrations represent temporally (and presumably functionally) distinct occupations of the locality, or are in fact portions of a single settlement, cannot yet be ascertained. Furthermore the spatial configuration of artifacts and features at both sites, as opposed to the composition of the lithic assemblages, differ markedly from other excavated Late Mesolithic sites from the Kempen (Vermeersch et al., 1974; Huyge & Vermeersch, 1982). Thus, the results of our 1982 campaign have not only highlighted the variation among Late Mesolithic settlements of lowland Belgium, but illustrate the necessity of large-scale horizontal excavation in order to pursue fundamental questions about human behavior.

(1) We would like to express our thanks to Peter Woodman (Belfast Museum) for his advice in the selection and processing of soil samples for magnetic susceptibility studies.

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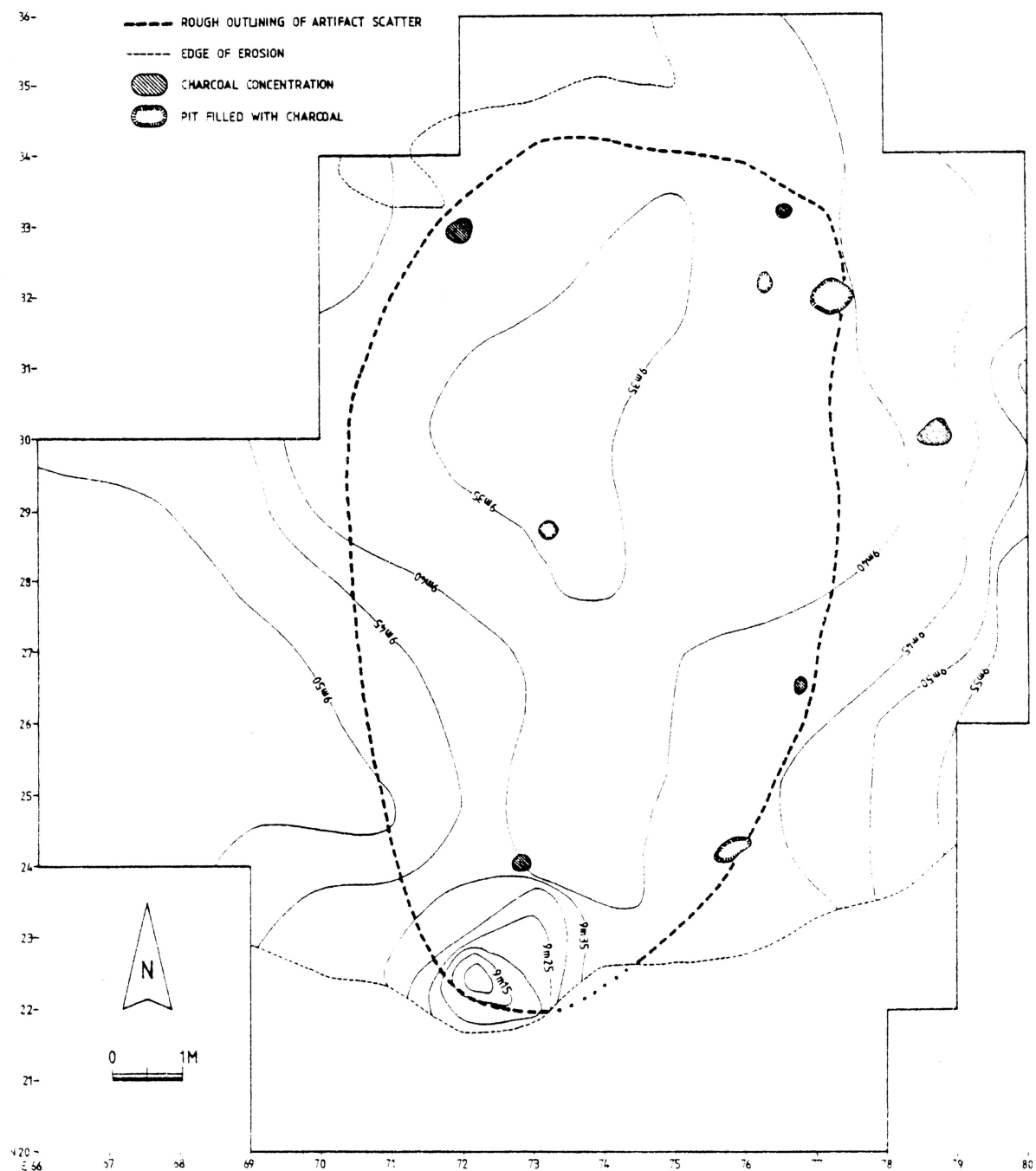


Fig.1. Site BM-2. Topographic map of top of B₂-horizon, with archaeological features indicated.