

New evidence suggests Scottish crannogs thousands of years older than thought

13 June 2019, by Bob Yirka

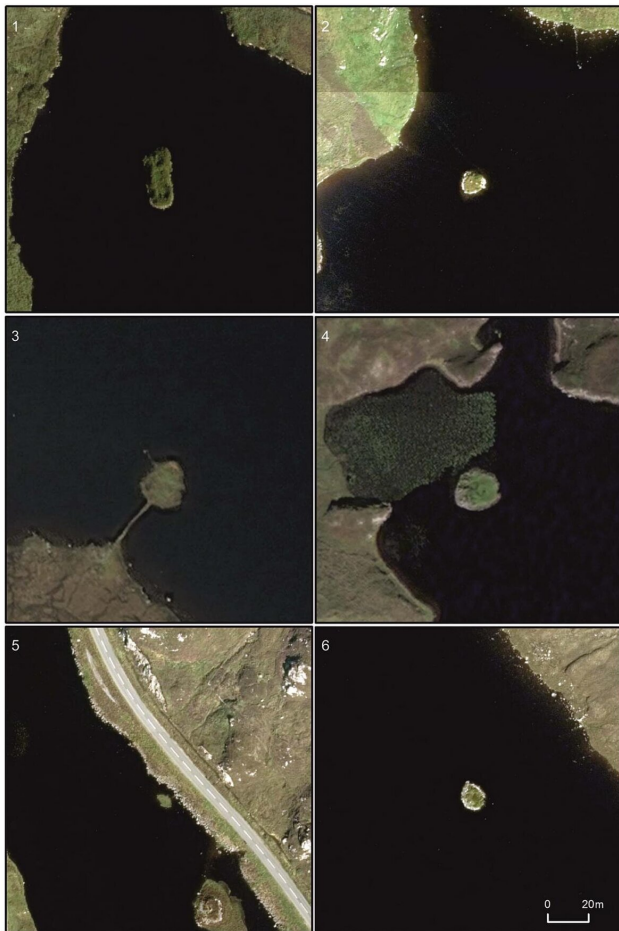


Credit: *Antiquity* (2019). DOI: 10.15184/aqy.2019.41

A pair of archaeologists, one with the University of Reading, the other the University of Southampton, has found evidence that suggests some crannogs in Scotland were built during the Neolithic period, several thousand years ago. The researchers, Duncan Garrow and Fraser Sturt, have written a paper about their findings published in *Antiquity*.

Crannogs are very small artificial islands built in rivers, lakes and streams in Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Most are no bigger than 10 to 30 meters in diameter. Researchers believe they were used as dwellings of some sort, likely accessible by footbridges. No one knows their purpose, though theories abound. Some of the crannogs have even been restored to what is believed to be their original architecture, with thatched roof coverings. Until recently, researchers believed that most, if not all of the Scottish crannogs were built during the Iron Age, though there had been little study of their origin. In this new effort, the researchers report finding evidence that suggests that at least some of the crannogs in Scotland are much older than has been thought—thousands of years older.

Garrow and Sturt report that back in 2011, Chris Murray, a former Royal Navy diver, was exploring the water around a crannog on Scotland's Outer Hebrides. He came across some [ceramic](#) on the water bed that appeared interesting. He brought samples to the local conservation officer at a nearby museum. Together, the two of them explored underwater areas near several other local crannogs and found more of the ceramic pieces. Eventually, the findings by the two amateur sleuths made their way to Garrow and Sturt, who undertook a formal study of both the crannogs and the ceramic pieces that the divers had found. They carried out [radiocarbon dating](#) on material found on the ceramic pieces and on wood pieces that were assumed to have been used on the crannog near them. They report that dating showed the crannogs to have been in use from 3640 to 3360 BC, placing their construction in the Neolithic period.



Aerial photographic comparison of the six islet sites known to have produced Neolithic material (all shown at the same scale): 1) Arnish; 2) Bhorgastail; 3) Eilean Domhnuill; 4) Lochan Duna (Ranish); 5) Loch an Dunain (Carloway); 6) Langabhat (images © of Getmapping PLC). Credit: *Antiquity* (2019). DOI: 10.15184/aqy.2019.41

More information: Duncan Garrow et al. Neolithic crannogs: rethinking settlement, monumentality and deposition in the Outer Hebrides and beyond, *Antiquity* (2019). DOI: [10.15184/aqy.2019.41](https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2019.41)

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APA citation: New evidence suggests Scottish crannogs thousands of years older than thought (2019, June 13) retrieved 22 November 2019 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-06-evidence-scottish-crannogs-thousands-years.html>

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