

# Powys' pillar of society

cairn surrounded by a fine kerb of large slate slabs and rounded boulders. The monument appeared to be Early Bronze Age in form, but no conclusive dating evidence was found.

The 2011 excavation therefore set out to look for dateable material and to understand the monument's structure. The target for the 2011 work was a surface depression on the western side of the mound that looked like the location of the antiquarian trench of 1773. In the event, clear indications of antiquarian work proved to be elusive, but the mound was found to comprise at least two phases of activity: a primary core of larger stones and a secondary addition made of smaller stones extracted from a relict river terrace. Concentrations of charcoal and some burnt bone mixed with the cairn material were found within the primary core, along with at least two cist-graves – one small cist identified in plan and another large cist revealed in the trench section.

Time and poor weather prevented the Project Eliseg team from excavating the trench down to the base of the monument, so a third season of excavation is planned to take place if permission is granted by Cadw and the landowners. In the meantime, radiocarbon dates will be obtained from the charcoal and bone samples recovered from the site. On the evidence so far, it would appear that this was not an entirely new mound in the early ninth century. Instead a prehistoric feature was adopted as a royal monument, commemorating faith and history at a time when Powys was beleaguered by stronger neighbours and faced its demise upon Concenn's death in AD 854.

*Further reading: see the Project Eliseg website <http://projecteliseg.org/> and the excavation video blog at Project Eliseg Media on Facebook.*

**BELOW** Unravelling the secrets of the Pillar of Eliseg.



PHOTO: Project Eliseg/Professor Howard Williams of the University of Chester

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## WORLD NEWS



### Riding 3,000 years into the Chinese past

Chinese archaeologists excavating a 3,000-year-old Zhou Dynasty tomb in Luoyang, Henan Province, have found the remains of five wooden chariots and 12 horses lined up as if for a funeral procession before burial in a large pit that stands alongside the vertical shaft in which the main tomb lies. The wooden coffin and the body of the deceased have left little physical trace, but the tomb's pottery, jade, metalwork, weaponry and inscriptions suggest that it was the grave of a mid-status official. Lying on their sides, the horses were slaughtered before burial and not entombed alive.

### Benghazi theft

News has recently leaked out of Libya that a collection of 7,700 gold, silver and bronze objects known as the Benghazi Treasure was stolen from the National Commercial Bank of Benghazi in May. Described as a 'well-organised job carried out by people who knew what they were looking for', the theft appears not to have been connected to the uprising against Muammar Gaddafi. The ancient treasures were recovered between 1917 and 1922 from the temple of Artemis, the goddess of hunting, in Cyrene (Shahat in present-day Libya) and included coins, jewellery and figurines dating back to 570 BC.

### Gladiator training school

Archaeologists in Austria have discovered the first gladiator training school outside Italy in the former Roman town of *Carnuntum*, today an archaeological park on the Danube. Found using ground penetrating radar equipment so sensitive that, according to Frank Humer, an archaeologist with Vienna's Ludwig-Boltzmann Institute, 'The wooden post that gladiators traditionally used as their mock opponent during training is still visible in the middle of the arena'. The school dates to the middle of the 1st century AD.

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