Butser Ancient Farm Unveils 5,000-Year-Old Neolithic House Reconstruction:

Thursday 10 April, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hampshire, UK — Butser Ancient Farm, a pioneering site in experimental archaeology and education, has unveiled its latest reconstruction: a remarkable Stone Age building known as **Wyke Down**, based on a rare Neolithic structure discovered in 1996 at Cranborne Chase by renowned archaeologist **Martin Green**.

Estimated to be around **5,000 years old**, the original structure stood overlooking two henges and featured several unusual characteristics—including a floorplan associated with the **distinctive Grooved Ware culture**. Even more exceptional was the discovery of **surviving wall plaster**, complete with **wood imprints** from the original structure.

Now, thanks to a two-year project involving Butser's archaeologists and dedicated volunteers, the building has been meticulously reconstructed using materials and methods informed by **scientific analyses conducted by the University of Cambridge's Department of Archaeology**, including **Professor Charles French** and **Dr David Friesem**.

"To see a building like Wyke Down take shape before our eyes has been nothing short of magical," said **Therese Kearns**, Butser archaeologist. "We've drawn on detailed archaeological science, including microanalysis of ancient wall plaster, to recreate not just the structure, but the experience of what this space might have meant to the people who built it."

Analysis revealed the plaster was a **chalk-rich mixture with organic inclusions**, and some fragments showed **layered applications of whitewash** and **incised decorations**—leading Butser's team to speculate that the building may have been **high-status**, perhaps even serving as a **shrine or ceremonial structure**. No direct evidence of colour decoration was found, but researchers aren't ruling out the possibility.

"This build is a celebration of archaeology as a living, breathing discipline," said **Simon Jay**, Director of Butser Ancient Farm. "Everything we do at Butser is rooted in real archaeological evidence, and Wyke Down is our most ambitious Stone Age reconstruction to date. Thanks to the support of our community—through donations, memberships, school visits, and public days—we've been able to push experimental archaeology forward."

Pushing the boundaries of reconstruction, Wyke Down also features an innovative **roofing system**, developed to use **as little rope as possible**, reflecting the **time-consuming and resource-intensive nature of rope-making in the Stone Age**. Instead, builders experimented with **simple wooden joinery** informed by prehistoric woodworking finds, such as the wooden well discovered near **Eythra in Saxony**, as well as an innovative **woven roof system inspired by basketry**, allowing thatch to be pinned directly onto the roof without the need for lashings.

This cutting-edge experiment brings new insight into how prehistoric people may have balanced innovation, labour, and available resources.

Martin Green, who first excavated the site in 1996 and has been investigating the landscape of Cranborne Chase since childhood, was on-site for the opening.

"Martin's lifelong passion for the prehistoric landscape shines through in the exceptional care he has taken of the incredible evidence at Wyke Down," added Kearns. "We're thrilled to have honoured his discovery in such a tangible way."

The **official unveiling took place yesterday**, with builders, archaeologists, members of the public, and Martin Green himself in attendance. The entire build, including interviews with the Butser team and Martin Green, is available to watch on **Butser Plus**, the farm's streaming platform.

Wyke Down will be featured in upcoming events at Butser, including the **sold-out Beltain festival** and the **Summer Solstice weekend**.

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This project was made possible **entirely through community support**, including donations from the **Friends of Butser**, memberships on **Butser Plus**, and income from **school visits and public attendance**. As a **not-for-profit**, all funds go directly back into Butser's **research and educational work**.

Visit Butser Ancient Farm to step inside Wyke Down and explore prehistory like never before.

Or watch the full reconstruction series now at **ButserPlus.com**

Images available on request.

Notes to editors

Contact: Matilda Ferry-Swainson, matilda@butserancientfarm.co.uk, +44 (0)23 9259 8838

About: Butser Ancient Farm is an open air, experimental archaeology museum nestled in the picturesque Hampshire countryside. The farm offers visitors a unique opportunity to step back in time and experience the lives of our ancient ancestors through reconstructed buildings, authentic crafts, and immersive events.

Beginning as a research site 50 years ago, Butser Ancient Farm has become one of the South East's top visitor attractions welcoming visitors throughout the year including some 35,000 schoolchildren who learn about the lives of our ancient ancestors from the Stone Age through to the Anglo-Saxon periods. As a not-for-profit, independently run community interest company (CIC) they rely on the support of many organisations and individuals, as well as their own fundraising events, to make their research and education work possible. More about the farm can be found at www.butserancientfarm.co.uk

Company Contact:

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Butser Ancient Farm

T. 023 9259 8838
E. kristin@butserancientfarm.co.uk
W. https://www.butserancientfarm.co.uk/

Additional Contact(s):
Kristin Devey, Events Lead

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