

Words and research for sound piece

My words

Fieldwork notes

Kimmeridge Bay Friday 29 August 7.45pm

On the shore at sunset

Swim in the rain; sea surface punctuated by rain drops

Torrential rain; tent up in sodden ground

Water laps around rocks, meeting at Washing Ledge

Build up of summer seaweed, washed around in rock pools

Faded crescent moon

Rollers out to sea, wind up

A surfer stands with board watching.

Snorkel trail abandoned due to very strong winds

Rough seas, crashing waves

No easy beach access at Horbarrow Bay, shale wave platform cut by tectonic joints

Unremarkable low mudstone cliff with shale rock layers

Cliff topped with brambles, blackberries, barbed wire fence

And from here the skeletons fell;

Unearthed, following constant trickles of falling stones

The cliff gives up the skeletons held onto for 2000 long years

Herstory continues.

Kimmeridge Bay, east side 30 August 11 am

Bright morning

Waking under canvas and the body craves more sleep

Vague light-headedness follows me around the day

Living under a thin stretch of canvas – more in the outside, closer connection

Wind very high, strong gusts, white tops dancing on the sea

Hazy blue sky

Cloud covered Isle of Purbeck sits on the horizon

Sitting by the Marine Centre, photographs at the shore line

Eroded rocks nestle into each other

Thinking of painting and mixing colours

Yellow ochre, dark slate greys, wet shiny brights

‘Morning’ to the slipway swimmers

Sea reaching cliffs at the west side of Bay

Sits communing with rocks – water time

Smoothness of limestone seaworn edge

Sharp broken up edges revealing dark inside Kimmeridge Grey

Kimmeridge Woman story

Kimmeridge woman lives in the Iron Age landscape – not so different from today's

Her work is hard physical labour:

Squatting, hammering, rigorous and repetitive

Muscles strong but tired

From the Celtic Durotriges tribe - a matrilineal society with high status maternal ancestry and a prevalence of red hair

She dies young, not reaching 30

Her young child buried with her deep in the Kimmeridge clay

Bones preserved all those two thousand years.

And by the seas eroding waves, beating and crashing she is naturally excavated:
unearthed from the cliffs that once held her.

Herstory continues.

A totem to Kimmeridge

Three pronged branch erected upright in the rocks
Draped on seaweed, faded to washy yellow
Caught in the wind blowing like split ended hair
Witnessing, celebrating, honouring stories of place.

Geology at Kimmeridge

Words from Ian West geologist;
Post neolithic, perhaps only a couple of thousand years old
Faulted and plunging anticline
Intertidal ledges on the wavecut platform
Fissured and friable clay leave streaks down the cliff
Bitumous shale dark and brownish grey is sparsely shelly
Double dolomite bed with a central shale parting
Subsurface expansion megapolygons
Many extensional faults which trend NNE SSW
Stone bands are conspicuous – *washing ledge stone band formed by a resistant dolomite bed*
The Gaultier Gap stream flows fast in heavy rain
Water blows up the cliff
Waterfall descends from projecting bitumous shale
Rock falls take place
Small shale fragments falling in the dust tail
Impact debris bouncing up
In seconds without warning

Source:

<https://wessexcoastgeology.soton.ac.uk/Kimmeridge-Bay.htm>

Consider updating Smithson note re: standing on this spot a million years ago:

Imagine yourself in Central Park one million years ago. You would be standing on a vast ice sheet, a 4,000-mile glacial wall, as much as 2,000 feet thick. Alone on the vast glacier, you would not sense its slow crushing, scraping, ripping movement as it advanced south, leaving great masses of rock debris in its wake. Under the frozen depths, where the carousel now stands, you would not notice the effect on the bedrock as the glacier dragged itself along.

Smithson R. (1973) Fredrick Law Olmstead and the Dialectical Landscapae, Artfourm Feb, in Flam J. ed (1996) Robert Smithson: The collected writings, London: University of California Press, p157.

Poem

Stone Love

For Tracey Emin

I married a tall, dark, handsome stone
in its lichen suit; secret, sacred, the ceremony
above the sea; where the stone had stood
for a million years, stoic, bridegroom,
till I came at last to the wedding-day.
Gulls laughed in a blue marquee of air.

Shroud for a dress, barefoot, me, my vows
my business and the stone's; but should you ever
press your face to a stone's cold, old, still, breast,
you'll find the words which wed me there
to the silence of stone, till death . . . slow art
of stone, staunchness of stone . . . do us part.

My hand on what I take from time and this world
and the stone's shadow there on the grass with mine.

By Carol Ann Duffy.

Kimmeridge Woman Discovery and Red-Haired myth

Women held keys to land and wealth in Celtic Britain

Bournemouth university –

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20g7j707g8o> Jan 2025

Exploring Durotrigian burials in Dorset

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-024-08409-6#citeas>

Cassidy, L.M., Russell, M., Smith, M. et al. Continental influx and pervasive matrilocality in Iron Age Britain. *Nature* 637, 1136–1142 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-08409-6>



Source: Ian Wests geology website

<https://wessexcoastgeology.soton.ac.uk/Kimmeridge-Bay.htm>

and Colyer S W (1940) *Unspoiled Dorset*, London: Ward, Lock & Co Ltd

Face to face with the past: BU student recreates face of Iron Age Dorset woman

In the year 2000, cliff erosion at Kimmeridge Bay unearthed the skeletal remains of a young woman who had died in the 1st century AD. The bones were taken to Bournemouth University for analysis and have remained in the university's archives ever since.

But now, Kimmeridge Woman, as she has been nicknamed, will be going on display at Wareham Museum – with visitors also having the chance to see what she might have looked like thanks to a reconstruction of her face created by a BU student.

MSc Bioarchaeology student Amber Manning used state-of-the-art technology and methods to recreate Kimmeridge Woman's face.

A virtual model of the skull was first created using a process called photogrammetry – a method where large numbers of photographs are taken from different angles to calculate the shape of an object.

This was then 3D printed by engineers at the university to create a life-size replica of the skull, which was used to build up layers of the muscles and tissue on the face, as well as Kimmeridge Woman's facial features.

"I've always loved sculpture and art and getting to see this woman come to life in front of me was amazing," said Amber, who graduated in 2023 and now works as a fieldwork archaeologist for Wessex Archaeology.

"It helps to bring back that humanity to her so once you've got her in front of you, it's a lot easier to feel empathy and imagine even more what her life could have been like."

She added: "A lot of work has been done to make these techniques as accurate as we can, but we acknowledge that there's a lot of artistic license that needs to be taken. However, she would likely be recognisable to people from her time if they were to see this reconstruction now."



The facial reconstruction of Kimmeridge Woman

The almost complete skeleton also gives an insight into what Kimmeridge Woman's life would have been like around 2,000 years ago.

Radiocarbon analysis confirmed that she lived sometime between the end of the 1st century BC and the middle of the 1st century AD, in late Iron Age or early Roman Britain.

The way her bones have fused together and the amount of wear on her teeth show that she died at a relatively young age and was likely in her mid to late 20s.

The skeleton also indicates that Kimmeridge Woman would have led a life of hard, physical labour.

“We can see signs in the bones of her legs that she spent quite a lot of time squatting, and the muscle attachments on her arm bones show she had quite robust muscles that are used to rigorous, repetitive activities, so it looks like she was involved in some sort of repetitive manual labour,” explained Dr Martin Smith, Associate Professor in Forensic and Biological Anthropology at BU.

Kimmeridge Woman is one of several individuals from the late Iron Age and Roman periods whose burials have been uncovered in Dorset.

It is likely that she lived during a period of great social change, either prior to the Roman Invasion or when Britain was absorbed into the Roman Empire.

The tribe residing in what is now Dorset at the time of Roman contact was referred to by Roman writers as the 'Durotriges'.

Dr Smith said: “We can see from the archaeology that there's a very clear, recognisable culture in this part of the world that more or less maps onto modern Dorset, where there is specific pottery these people were making, they were minting their own coins, and they had their own style of burial.”

Dr Smith and other colleagues from the university have also worked with a team of DNA specialists from Trinity College Dublin who confirmed that the Durotrigians of Dorset are a discrete population who were closely interrelated to each other, centred around the female line of descent.

Kimmeridge Woman, as well as information about the reconstruction and other archaeological excavations and discoveries at Kimmeridge, will be on display at Wareham Museum from 5th April 2025.

Dr Smith said: “These kinds of finds shouldn't sit in store cupboards - the past belongs to everyone and everyone should have an opportunity to engage with the lives that we can reconstruct sometimes. In this case, I think Kimmeridge Woman would recognise the landscape that we still live in and know where she was.”

Amber added: “For her to be going on display is a dream come true for me.

“The vast majority of facial reconstructions are done on men and it’s a repeat of history in general. We have opportunities with bones to learn more about these women’s lives, who have just been forgotten about for the most part.

“I very much wanted to look at people who were just ordinary women and to explore that, because I think there’s a beauty in ordinary people’s lives that we tend to overlook.”

<https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/news/2025-03-28/face-face-past-bu-student-recreates-face-iron-age-dorset-woman>



Photos source: <https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/news/2025-01-15/ancient-genomes-reveal-iron-age-society-centred-women>

Durotrigian Celtic tribe and red hair – google search 28/9/25

AI Overview

While specific descriptions are lacking, a Durotrigian red-haired female is a plausible concept, as genetic studies show that the prevalence of red hair was higher in pre-Roman Celtic populations, including the Durotriges who lived in modern Dorset and surrounding areas. Research on the ancient DNA of a Durotrigian cemetery indicates a likely matrilocal society, meaning men moved to their wives' families, and that more than two-thirds of individuals descended from a single maternal ancestor, suggesting strong female lineages.

Durotrigian Culture and Genetics

Location: The Durotriges were one of the Celtic tribes in Britain before the Roman invasion, inhabiting the area of modern Dorset, south Wiltshire, and parts of Somerset and Devon.

Matrilocal Society:

A genetic study of the Durotriges found that women tended to stay in their ancestral homes, while men migrated to join their wives' families, a practice known as matrilocality.

Female Lineage:

Over two-thirds of the analyzed Durotrigian individuals descended from the same maternal ancestor, suggesting that female lineage played a central role in the tribe's social structure.

High Status:

The discovery of high-status grave goods, particularly in female graves, and the findings from the DNA study point to the high status and central role of women in Durotrigian society.

Red Hair in Celtic Populations

Higher Prevalence:

Red hair is associated with Celtic and Anglo-Saxon ancestry, and genetic studies of pre-Roman Celtic Britain found higher frequencies of red hair.

Symbolism:

While ancient sources don't provide specific descriptions of Durotrigian women, red hair carried symbolic meaning in Celtic culture, associated with power, fiery temperament, and even danger.

Conclusion

While no specific description exists of a Durotrigian red-haired woman, based on the strong evidence of red hair in Celtic populations, the possibility of a Durotrigian woman with red hair is biologically plausible. The existing archaeological and genetic evidence also points to the high social status and importance of women in Durotrigian society.

Music

Mrs Marina Russell of Upwey Dorset 65 songs in 1907 collected by Hammond

One night as I lay on my bed, sung by Shirley Collins

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-ef2qLB1xU>

Exploring other folk/ traditional songs collected in Dorset as can find nothing that relates specifically to Kimmeridge.