

# Connecting With Our Ancestors



Pic.1. My initial finds.  
We've all been there!

**W**hile writing my previous article, memories floated back to me of my childhood love of science fiction films. The one that really started me thinking about ancient civilisations was the 1960 version of H.G. Wells' "Time Machine". I'm sure many of you have seen the film where Rod Taylor travels far into the future to the land of the Eloi, a people who do not appear to have a government nor laws.

Even though H.G. Wells' had taken us into the future it was clear that he was, in a way, taking us full circle back to our roots. I had read in countless books and journals about the people who had once inhabited our land. However, my scientific training at university had taught me to be aware that sometimes theories and claims are no more than fantastic imaginations dressed as science. As a scientist, I needed evidence. I could not accept all the views I had read until I had the chance to see the evidence with my own eyes.

My minimal understanding of physics and engineering would not be enough to build a time machine like the one in H.G. Wells' novel. However, I knew that if I was given the chance to touch and feel a real object from the ancient past, then there was a chance I could connect with the object. Once connected, the object could whisk me back in time and through it I could see for myself a vision of who I was and where I had come from.

I reasoned that releasing these objects from the ground might help me connect to the past. My aim was to bring reality to a view that I was a product of people who at one point or another had struggled with – and survived – all kinds of hard times. Throughout time we have relied on the goodwill of nature for our existence. However, it can turn against us and as recent events have shown, natural catastrophes, and food shortages resulting from poor harvests, can devastate communities.

We are alive in present times because our ancestors won those battles against adversity; now I wanted to get to know

these survivors better and somehow release their memories from the "under-world".

However, as time went by I began to wonder whether I was ever going to find any of their amazing artefacts, many of which I had seen in this magazine. All I had for my efforts when I became involved in metal detecting were modern buttons, ring pulls and bottle tops.

I had read and heard many times of the out-of-body experience, which propels the finder back in time as they proceed to unearth an object which had been lying quietly and patiently in the soil for hundreds and often thousands of years. An object lost to the earth, living in darkness but still witness to the constant human cycle of prosperity, poverty, famine, war and back to peace, prosperity and happiness – all taking place just inches above it.

This poor creature longed to be found, and I longed to find it and bring it from the darkness into the light. It needed just one swing above and my detector would give it the voice it needed to alert me of its existence and moments later it would see the sunshine again.

The trouble, though, was that I was in the wrong field and I was miles away. Actually, that's an exaggeration – I was just across the road tramping about aimlessly. But for or all my efforts I might as well have been detecting on the moon.

It was on one of these fruitless days that I decided to try and find out whether my local library might contain any information which could point me in the direction of the fourth dimension – time! At first, there didn't seem to be much; but then I stumbled upon the **Victoria County History** for that county. I took one volume down from the shelf and right there in the contents was a list of all the sites and finds reported at the time of publication.

Even though the book was published many years ago, it was a mine of information. In their wisdom the authors had summarised the archaeology and history of the particular county in a list with map references. Without delay I copied down all the sites in the list and, as soon as I

got home, I entered them into my computer. The sites listed became the nuts and bolts of my own time machine – my ARCHI database.

As the winter started to draw in and after the seeds in most of my fields had come to life and germinated, my attention turned to gathering together the sites detailed in all the other copies of the **Victoria County History**. Before long my list of where our ancient ancestors had chosen to live and work had run into thousands.

However, even though my portal to the past was taking form, the view was still covered by a kind of mist which obscured the detail I needed in order to see for myself the world our ancestors inhabited.

I had thought that things would be clearer as I learned more about the past. But this "information overload" actually made it even more difficult. I had to find some way of filtering out the sites near to where I was fieldwalking from the many thousands of sites I had listed in my database. To try and find order in the chaos, I started to draw diagrams of the way the sites were scattered and draw and measure lines between the towns and villages I had permission to detect and the particular sites.

It was then that I had my Eureka moment. Maybe I was overtired or maybe my eyes were playing tricks on me, but amongst those lines triangles seemed to be forming. Why was I now thinking back to my schooldays? I could see myself sitting in yet another boring and dull maths lesson. In my mind's eye I was sitting there twiddling my thumbs and wondering why my time was being wasted on useless symbols and formula.

How wrong I was. Pythagoras had seen those triangles 2,500 years ago and now I understood the significance of his discovery. He, or rather my maths teacher, had shown me the answer to my problem. I could program Pythagoras' theorem into my computer and within an instant the computer could work out which sites were near to me, and only give me a list of those sites! In doing so, I was now able to focus on just those