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TREE-RING STUDIES IN THE SOMERSET LEVELS: A HAZEL HURDLE FROM FRANKS 1984.

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Summary

An assemblage of hazel (Corylus avellana) rods and sails from a single hurdle panel revealed only slight differences in their age and size. The rods were almost all 2-4 years old and around 10mm in diameter; the sails were marginally larger, averaging 11.4mm in diameter, and most were over five years old.

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TREE-RING STUDIES IN THE SOMERSET LEVELS: A HAZEL HURDLE FROM FRANKS 84

> Ruth A. Morgan February 1985

The excavation of a hazel(<u>Corylus avellana</u>) hurdle at Franks in 1984 enabled a further example of prehistoric hurdlemaking to be studied. It also added to the body of tree-ring analysed material from hurdles of Neolithic and Bronze Age date (see Morgan, 1977; Coles, Caseldine & Morgan, 1982; Coles, Orme, Caseldine & Morgan, 1985).

The hurdle, just over 2m long and almost 40cm wide, was woven of 22 rods around 12 sails (uprights) which were single, double or triple. The sail diameters gave no suggestion of one being slighter than the others and requiring reinforcement, but in each case one or two of the multiple sails were very young with only 3 or 4 growth rings while the other was 7 years old. The single sails had 5 - 9 growth rings.

The sails averaged 5.25 years in age and 11,4mm in diameter (Table). The age range was wide but diameters clustered in the 7-12mm range (Fig. 1). Sail 12 was split across the pith like a tiny plank.

Each rod across the hurdle was sampled; the 22 stems averaged 3.4 years old and were clearly concentrated at 2-4 years (Fig. 1). Diameters averaged 9.3mm and again were clustered in the 7-10mm range, slightly smaller than the sails though with considerable overlap. Though size and age influenced the choice of function to some extent, they were not critical.

## References:

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Coles, J.M., Caseldine, A.E. & Morgan, R.A. 1982 The Eclipse track 1980. <u>Somerset Levels Papers</u> 8 26-39.

- Coles, J.M., Orme, B.J., Caseldine, A.E. & Morgan, R.A. 1985 A Neolithic jigsaw: the Honeygore complex. <u>Somerset</u> <u>Levels Papers</u> 11 51-61.
- Morgan, R.A. 1977 Tree-ring studies in the Somerset Levels: the hurdle tracks on Ashcott Heath (Rowland's) and Walton Heath <u>Somerset Levels Papers</u> 3 61-65.

Table. Summary of the ages and sizes of hazel stems from the Franks 84 hurdle.

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	No of stems	Age Average	Range	Diame Average	ter Range
Rods	22	3.4	2-8	9•3	6-14
Sails	12	5.25	3-9	11.4	8-19
All	34	4.2	2-9	10	6-19

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Fig. 1 Age and size range of the rods and sails from the Franks 84 hazel hurdle.



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Fig. 2 Distribution of the rods (crosses) and sails (circles) from the Franks 84 hazel hurdle.

