

A Bronze Age wicker trackway near Utrecht (the Netherlands)

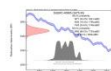
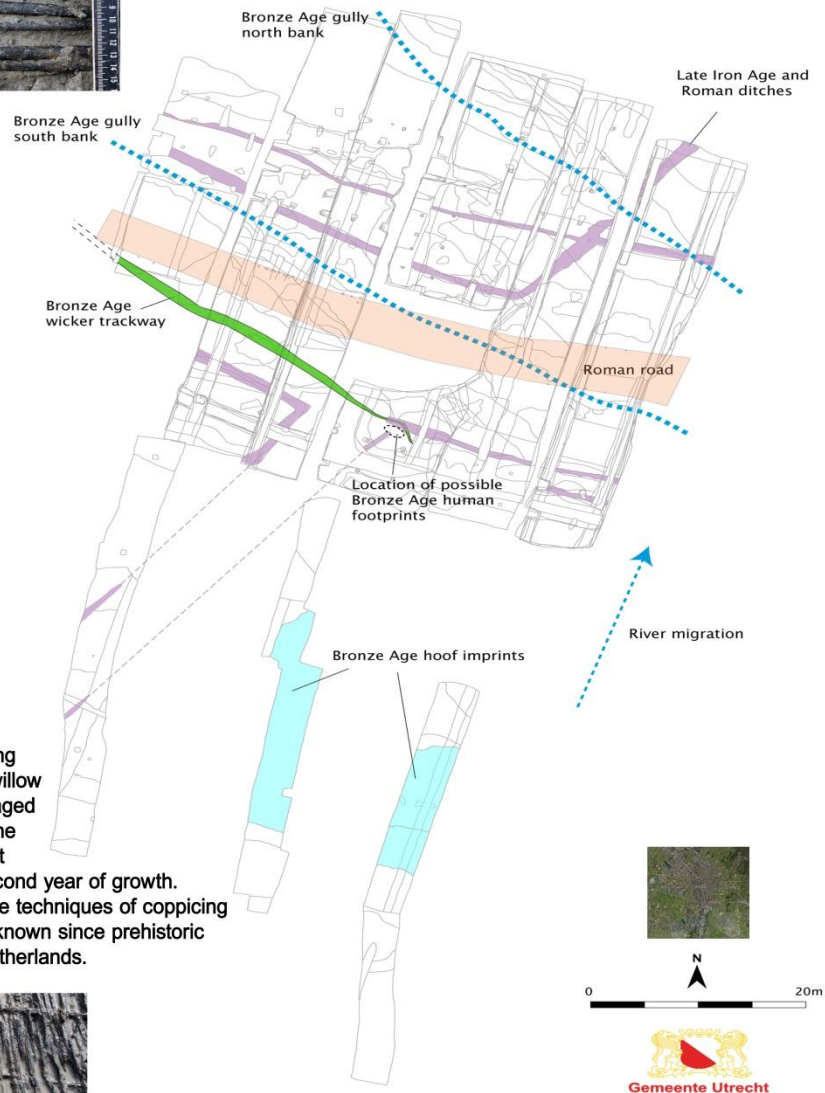
Silke Lange, archaeologist and wood specialist at Biax Consult Zaandam & Linda Dielemans, archaeologist of the municipality of Utrecht



Wicker trackways are not often found on the European mainland. That was why in 2011, municipal archaeologists were very surprised to discover one while excavating the Roman frontier road, known as *limes*, in a south quarter of Utrecht. More than 35 m of wicker, approximately 1 m wide, had remained well preserved.

Under the modern houses and streets the prehistoric track followed its way north. According to 14C-analysis it was constructed in the Middle Bronze Age, which makes it the oldest evidence of habitation known from the city of Utrecht.

Willow (*Salix*) branches of excellent quality; smooth, straight and almost all of the same diameter between 0,8 and 1,2 cm, were used to weave the hurdle. In the field A wood specialist from Biax Consult took samples from various parts of the structure.



Growth pattern and tree ring analysis showed that the willow branches came from managed wood. More than 90% of the branches (N=268) were cut in the late winter of the second year of growth. The results indicate that the techniques of coppicing and pollarding have been known since prehistoric times in this part of the Netherlands.

Above. The worked ends of some branches showed narrow toolmarks: cut with a narrow, bronze axe?



Ultrahigh resolution Gigapan images on <http://www.bumos.nl/hoograven>