
MONUMENTS AS PLACES

Once they had been built, how did monuments work? This lecture considers the ways in which the creation and operation of large monuments affect human perception. Monuments are the outward embodiment of some of the most basic beliefs in society, and they tend to mould the experience of those who use them. They constrain the movements of the people who visit them, and provide a kind of stage setting for the performance of ritual and ceremonial. In this sense they can play an active role in the process of social change. I shall illustrate the argument using the evidence of a variety of stone and earthwork alignments from the West Mediterranean to the British Isles. I shall also consider how the distinctions between monuments and the wider landscape were emphasised by decorative styles and by deposits of artefacts.



So far I have argued that the first appearance of monuments in prehistoric Europe involved quite new relationships between people and the natural world. I showed the importance of natural places in a mobile pattern of settlement and described how at various times they became assimilated into the broader pattern of monument building. Now I must take the argument further. I would like to consider two more questions: quite how the use of newly built monuments could influence human experience, and some of the ways in which people distinguished between the cultural space of those monuments and the world outside.

Mid Argyll provides an excellent point of departure. The area around Kilmartin contains a great array of monuments, as well as many important rock art sites. And yet on the ground we do not appreciate these monuments as so many separate constructions. There is an order to their distribution, and the whole is surely more than the sum of its separate parts. Standing stones, like those I discussed in the last lecture, are positioned in relation to topographical features, but they are also erected in relation to one another, so that they can form short alignments extending across the landscape. Sometimes those alignments are directed towards other features: prominent points in the terrain, or the movements of the sun and moon. The earthworks in this area also have their alignments, but of a different kind. The two entrances of the Ballymeanoch henge create a distinctive axis crossing the enclosure and running out into the wider landscape (RCAHMS 1988, 57). The Bronze Age cairns at Kilmartin establish yet another alignment running along the edge of the valley (*ibid* 14; illus 23).

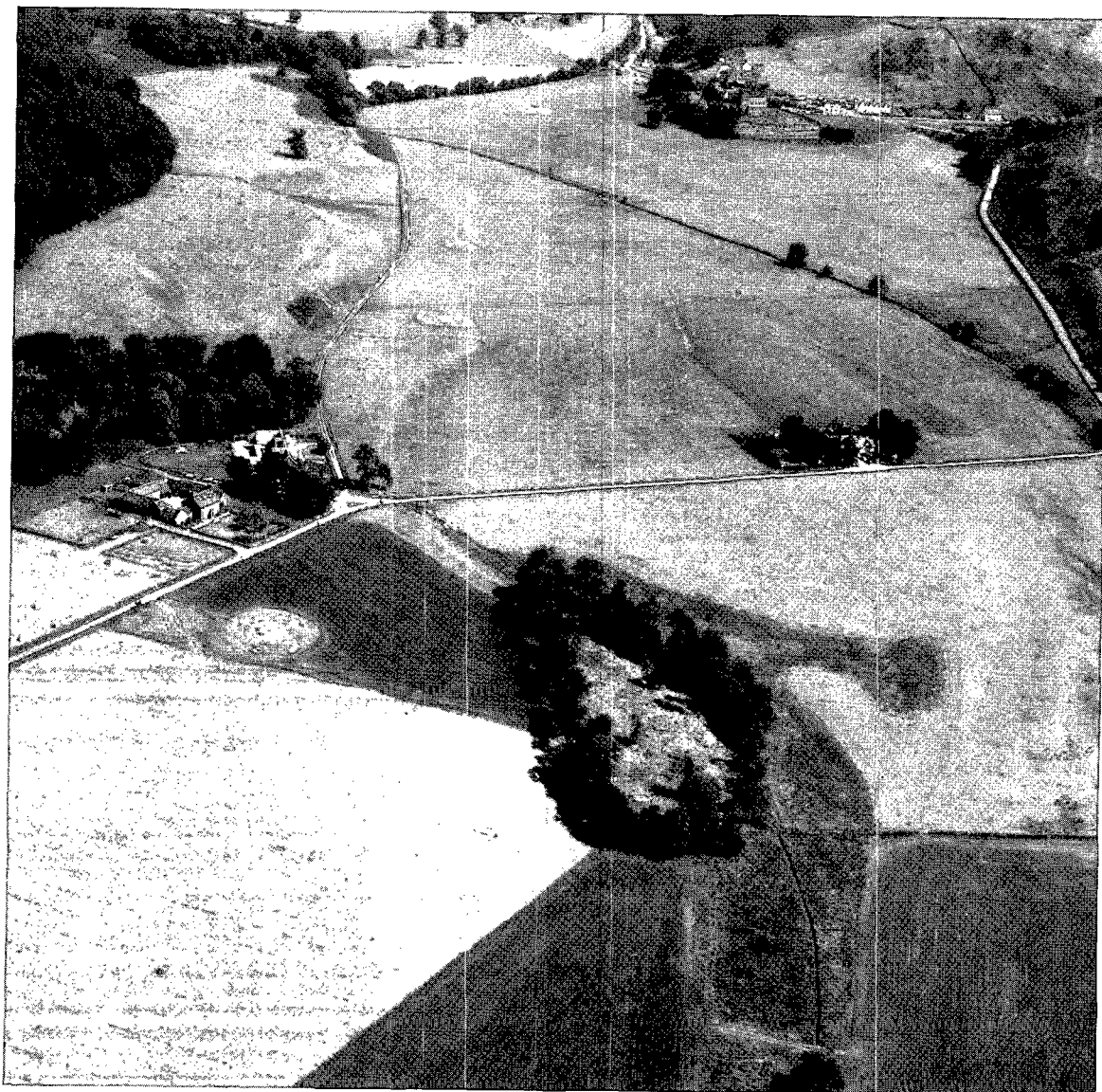
We take such arrangements for granted. Their existence is uncontroversial, even unproblematical. But that is because as archaeologists we all too often reject our immediate experience of such landscapes and break them down into their constituent parts, so that the unit of analysis becomes the individual monument. When



we do so, we reduce our options dramatically. There are fewer questions to ask – when was it built? what was it for? – and any broader structures are lost. Such a timid approach to the archaeology of monuments reflects badly on the subject as a whole.

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Air photograph
of the Bronze
Age linear
cemetery at
Kilmartin,
Argyll.
Photograph:
RCAHMS.

There is a site that exemplifies these problems precisely. This is the famous standing stone at Kintraw (RCAHMS 1988, 64-6; illus 24). Argument has raged about this complex (MacKie 1977, 81-92; Patrik 1981), just as it has extended to many of the stone alignments in the surrounding area (Ruggles 1984). Were they really directed at the movements of the sun and moon? Would the sightline have been obscured by prehistoric vegetation? Were Neolithic and Bronze Age people cap-

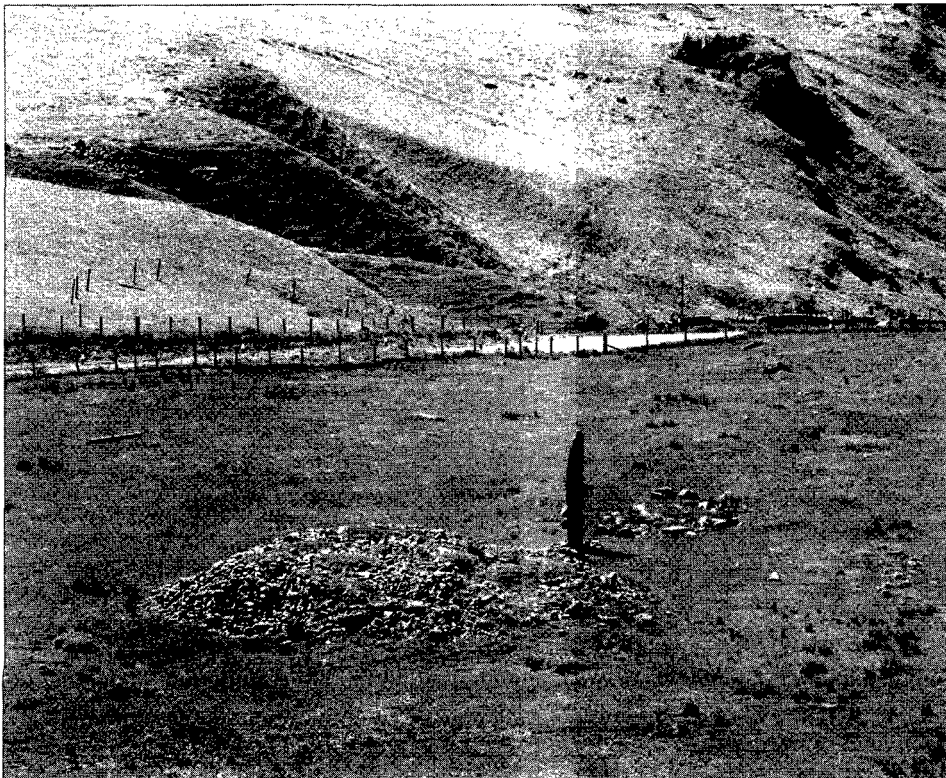


able of careful calculation? Were they undertaking scientific observations? These are legitimate questions but in some ways they are all too limited. If such interpretations are plausible – as sometimes they do seem to be – we overlook the fact that the operation of such complexes was first and foremost an experience. That is what visitors to Stonehenge on midsummer morning recognise and what its excavator seems to forget. Individual experience is at the heart of how monuments are used, and it is why monuments can be considered as a distinctive type of place.

In order to keep the argument within bounds, I shall confine myself to this one general category: the alignment or avenue. Again I shall introduce examples over a wide geographical area. Some are in Scotland, some in France, whilst others are in the Mediterranean, but when I talk about the relationship between monuments and the landscape outside them, I must focus on a much smaller area. The discussion will draw on the evidence of megaliths and enclosures, and in this case we shall consider material exclusively from the British Isles. The closing section of this lecture will build on what I have said already, by returning to the wider significance of rock art.



What happens when a place becomes a monument? We have seen how it may be drawn into the world of human culture and change some of its links with the natural

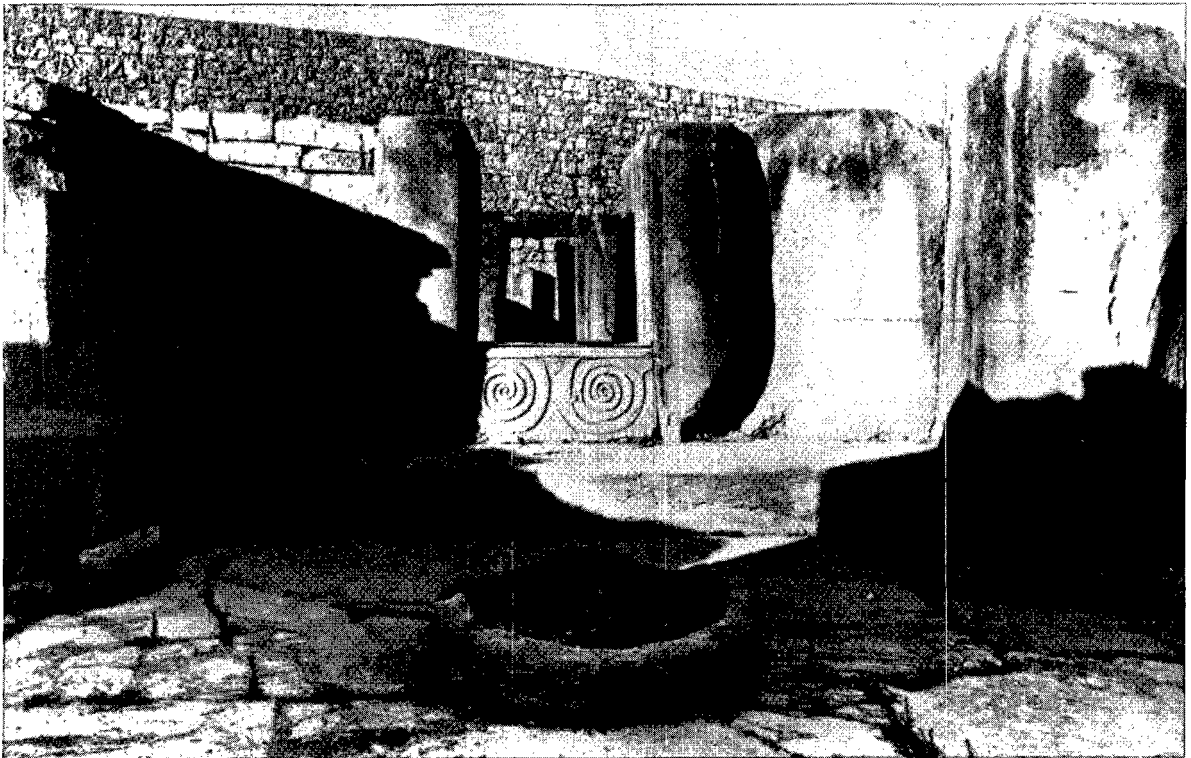


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The standing stone
and other
monuments at
Kintraw, Argyll.
Photograph:
RCAHMS.

landscape. When we say that something is monumental, we imply that it is built on a very large scale. No doubt that is part of the answer, but in practice that change of scale is often combined with a certain formality in its layout; without that, typology would be an impossible exercise. Monuments impose order on the places in which they are built, and it is that new sense of order, as much as anything else, that we must consider now (cf Thomas, J 1991, ch 3).

Monuments orchestrate human experience. Their size is so important because it is one of the ways in which this is achieved; sheer size determines certain patterns of movement in and around a monument and rules out other options. As we shall see, this particular property of monuments, what WH Auden (1940) called 'the language of size', also means that particular information can only be obtained in a prescribed sequence. Monuments formalise a pattern of movement among those who are allowed inside them, and their features are as likely to conceal certain elements as they are to reveal them. A good example is provided by the Neolithic temples of Malta (Bonnanno *et al* 1990; illus 25). We might think of them as monuments that are designed to show off certain features, including their massive sculptures, but the basic configuration of successive courts and niches is equally well designed to restrict particular knowledge to those who are entitled to receive it. The buildings are not just a series of monumental backcloths; they are also a sequence of screens. To take the sequence at Hal Saflieni, in its earliest phase there were seven areas of enclosed space, but only two distinct thresholds to be crossed. It was a fairly shallow

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The Neolithic
temple of Tarxien,
Malta (from
Zammit 1930).

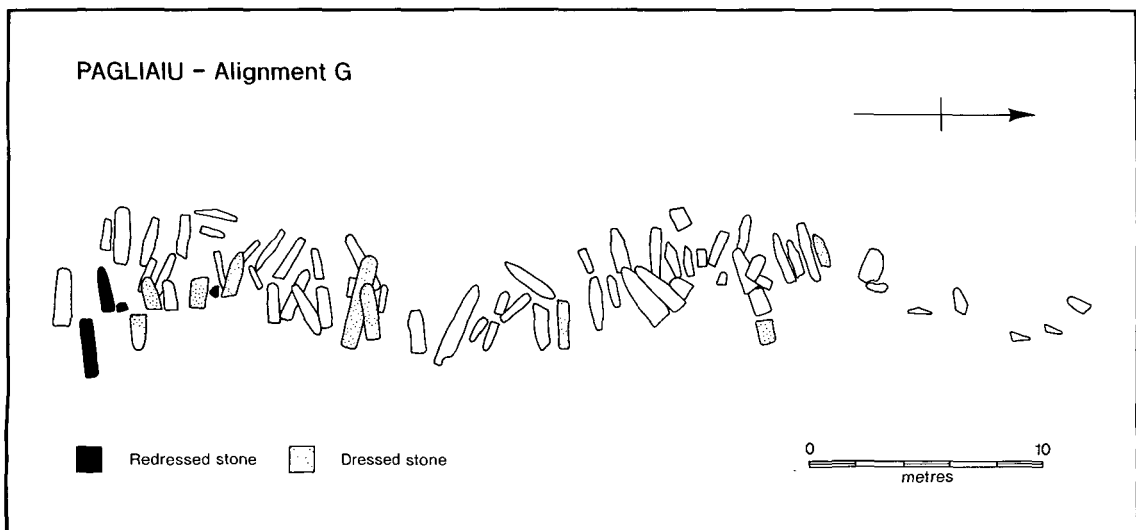


structure. By the latest phase at this site the number of enclosed spaces had risen to fifty four and there were no fewer than eleven levels of access: eleven thresholds at which entry could now be denied (*ibid*). Monuments may offer a sequence of experiences to some people and exclude other people completely.

Because the participants are obliged to move around in order to view the entire construction, it is possible to manage their experience in several ways. Everything cannot be viewed at the same time, or from a single vantage point. A monument like Hal Saflieni may help to establish the sequence in which different experiences take place. It may also determine that different people have the same experience but from different perspectives: some closer and others further away. In this sense monumental architecture has much in common with the formality of ritual, and, like public rituals, it may have a critical role in inculcating the conventions on which social behaviour depends. But in the case of the largest monuments this process gains an added potency for those who have been involved in the very creation of these buildings. We know of many prehistoric monuments which made exorbitant demands on labour; the fact that they did so may have added considerably to their power to influence human conduct. As Ian Hodder suggests, the process of construction itself helped to create a sense of group identity (1989, 264–5).

The movement of the participants plays an increasing part in more extensive monuments, but it is also significant because one of the ways in which rituals are committed to memory is through the movement of the body (Connerton 1989). This is just as important to the creation of tradition as the correct forms of words. One reason for emphasising the importance of avenues and alignments is that their very scale, the distances over which they were built, makes the movement of the participants almost inevitable: they can only pass **along** such an alignment. The pattern is at its simplest here, and that makes our own task in recreating the working of these sites a little easier.

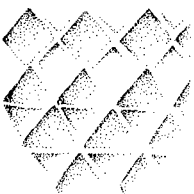
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The fallen stones of the Pagliaiu alignment before restoration (after Grosjean 1972). Several of the stones (shown stippled) were shaped to resemble human forms and some (shown in black) were carved a second time to represent armed warriors.



Towards the end of the last lecture I talked about the remarkable anthropomorphic menhirs of Corsica. These are very poorly dated and we do not know when their construction began, but some of the stone alignments on the island provide a simple example of how such monuments might work (Grosjean 1967). Alignments are very common and a number of them lead up to megalithic tombs, perhaps of some antiquity. Not all the menhirs in stone alignments are carved. As the observer passes along the main alignment at Pagliaiu (Grosjean 1972), not only do the stones get taller, they take on decorative attributes until they can be identified as human figures (illus 26). Three of the statues on this site can be recognised as warriors with their weapons. The anthropomorphic statues in Corsica may be taller than most, and those provided with weapons are the tallest of all. By moving along that axis the participant is increasingly overshadowed. The presence of stone built tombs at the some of these locations means that they are also made aware of the presence of the dead. Yet at the same time these figures form a kind of barrier blocking movement across the landscape. They follow a north-south axis, and the figures can face the same way, as if to confront the onlooker. That is a more complex arrangement than we saw around the crag at Filitosa. In this case, the alignment not only establishes a place as significant; it extends the significance of that place into three dimensions. In doing so, it lays down in greater detail how it is meant to be experienced.



We can see this even more clearly if we think about other prehistoric alignments. Quite a number draw on natural features of the landscape, so that cursuses may run up to rivers, and stone rows can be aligned on hilltops. This is not an original observation, but in this context it is still important because it illustrates yet another way in which natural places might be drawn into a different kind of world. This is emphasised when we recognise that deliberately built monuments could be used in identical fashion, as if they were accorded much the same significance as those natural elements of the landscape. Thus, instead of running up to viewpoints, stone rows might be aligned on cairns or menhirs; instead of running towards rivers, cursuses can be aligned on enclosures or mounds. For example, at Carnac the great stone alignments incorporate the positions of at least two pre-existing long mounds of the type discussed in my first lecture (Giot *et al* 1979, 415–25). One of these was accompanied by a decorated menhir associated with a hoard of axe blades; this stone was also incorporated into the new alignment. In much the same way, the Dorset Cursus forms a link between a series of freestanding long barrows (Barrett *et al* 1991, 36–53). The same arrangement is widespread. We have already seen how some of the Corsican stone alignments run up to megalithic tombs.



To some extent such alignments create a link between different classes of monument, and between them and unaltered features of the natural landscape. But not all these effects could be viewed at the same time. In order to read these signs it would be necessary to pass along the body of the monument. These different links are created by the movement of the participants, and in the case of an avenue or alignment this could only be in one of two directions: any other options are excluded by the very nature of the monument. The result is a kind of stage-managing of experience.

I shall take the Dorset Cursus as an example (Barrett *et al* 1991, 365–8). This is defined by two parallel banks and ditches, nearly 100 metres apart, running straight across country for 10 km. In moving along the interior of this monument the participant passed through a series of experiences, and did so in a prescribed order. Let us suppose that he or she was moving from north to south, and to keep the argument within bounds, let us also restrict our account to the earliest phase of this monument. To begin with, the northern end of the cursus was difficult to find because it lay some way down the flank of a conspicuous ridge. When it had been located, it would soon become clear that this was done for a reason, for by offsetting the terminal from the crest of the hill, a long barrow three kilometres to the south appeared as a skyline feature. The cursus was aimed directly at that mound, which was incorporated in its path (illus 27). The alignment is very striking and its entire course as far as the barrow could only be seen from the terminal, an important point as the earthwork appears to have been built across a partly wooded landscape. But as the participants moved along the cursus their immediate objective, the long barrow, was lost to view, for it was concealed by the flank of the hill on which it was built. When it reappeared, it did so as a considerable mound blocking the path along the centre of the cursus. It also screened the other half of the monument. This could be seen for the first time from **behind** the long barrow, running across a broad valley and terminating on a second prominent ridge. Again that ridge was occupied by barrows of the same type. The terminal of the cursus itself took an unusual form, as if to echo the profile and alignment of those mounds. This would be rather easier to achieve as we know that this part of the complex was built in an area of grassland. In order to reach that terminal, and in doing so to

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Computer reconstruction of one section of the Dorset Cursus looking south from its original northern terminal. The monument is directed towards a long barrow on the far skyline. Photograph: Thames Television.

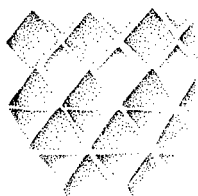


pass from one pair of long barrows to another, it was necessary to ford a river. In this way the builders of the Cursus contrived a series of experiences for those who used the monument and determined the sequence in which they were encountered.

Much the same logic is behind alignments built on very different scales. At Carnac people would have been able to move along the stone rows, observing how these took their basic axis from much older monuments to the dead. As they approached the western end of the alignment at Le Ménéac, moving uphill as they did so, they could see how it was directed towards an enormous stone-walled enclosure and how the stones defining the avenue itself became more massive (Thom & Thom 1978, ch 6). The approach to this enclosure was designed to overawe. Even on a far smaller scale similar effects could be created by the stone rows of highland Britain. Some of these also ran uphill so that the terminal, or the vista beyond it, was concealed from view. Others ran across the positions of cairns or cists, and in certain cases obstacles seem to have been placed in the centre of these rows, as if to make movement still more problematical (Emmett 1979).

Not only did the distinctive layout of alignments and avenues orchestrate the experience of the participants, defining its general character and determining its sequence, their very configuration involved a further element of stage-management. I mentioned the increasing size of the stones towards the western end of the Le Ménéac alignment. This would have provided an increasing feeling of containment before the final enclosure was reached; to a lesser extent the same applies to its eastern terminal. Similar effects could be achieved by very simple means, but would have added materially to the experience of the participants. For example, in some of the shorter stone rows in the British Isles the heights of the uprights are graded in the same way as we saw in my Corsican examples. It was generally the tallest stone that was the only one to be decorated (Thom *et al* 1990, 387–90). This gains added significance when we realise that some of these stone rows followed basic astronomical alignments. I shall return to this point.

In the case of avenues leading towards monuments similar effects may have been important. As John Barrett suggests, the striking kink in the avenue leading into Avebury could have been intended to conceal the interior of the monument until the last possible moment (Barrett *in press*), and like other enclosures of this type, its bank was built on a larger scale on either side of the entrance, thus adding to the same effect. Inside Durrington Walls we find a similar phenomenon, and here the avenue of posts leading to the Southern Circle is blocked by a wooden facade (Wainwright & Longworth 1971, fig 17). We can also consider the Stonehenge avenue (RCHME 1979, 11–13). Its chronology is rather uncertain, but I am not convinced that it was built over a long period. It starts at the River Avon and runs for nearly 1.5 kilometres before Stonehenge can be seen at all. Then it extends for another 750 metres before its final change of direction. Only the last 500 metres of that earthwork (under 20% of its total length) were directed towards the entrance of the enclosure. The same effect is seen in some of the larger cursuses. In this case the banks that close off the ends of these monuments might be built on a much greater scale than the remainder of the earthwork, and on some sites no entrance was provided through this barrier. The increased scale of these terminals might



have had two effects. As we have seen already, they could have imitated the characteristic form of the long barrows found in the landscape around them, but they could also have closed off any view along the axis of these monuments from those not entitled to enter the interior: in that sense they were also a screen. On a far smaller scale, and probably at a later date, the ends of the Dartmoor stone rows could be provided with similar obstacles (Emmett 1979).



An alignment not only determines the order in which information is provided; it also links places and phenomena that might otherwise exist in isolation. That isolation can be both geographical and intellectual. I can best illustrate this point by returning to a few sites that I have mentioned already. The Dorset Cursus links up a series of mortuary monuments that had originally been built in isolation, and probably over an appreciable period of time. Exactly the same applies to the Carnac alignments which also forge a link between hitherto independent mortuary monuments and menhirs. In some cases the time scale may have been rather longer. Not only does the surviving avenue at Avebury connect the Sanctuary to the main henge monument; it also connects a location with a very long history of human activity, Overton Hill, to a new construction where such evidence is largely lacking (Thomas, J 1991, 162–75). Francis Pryor goes even further in discussing the way in which the Maxey cursus connects the causewayed enclosure at Etton with a later henge. He suggests that this expresses the transfer of significance from one ceremonial site to another (Pryor in press). It creates a direct association between these separate places and the activities taking place there, and in doing so it also builds a link between the past and the present.

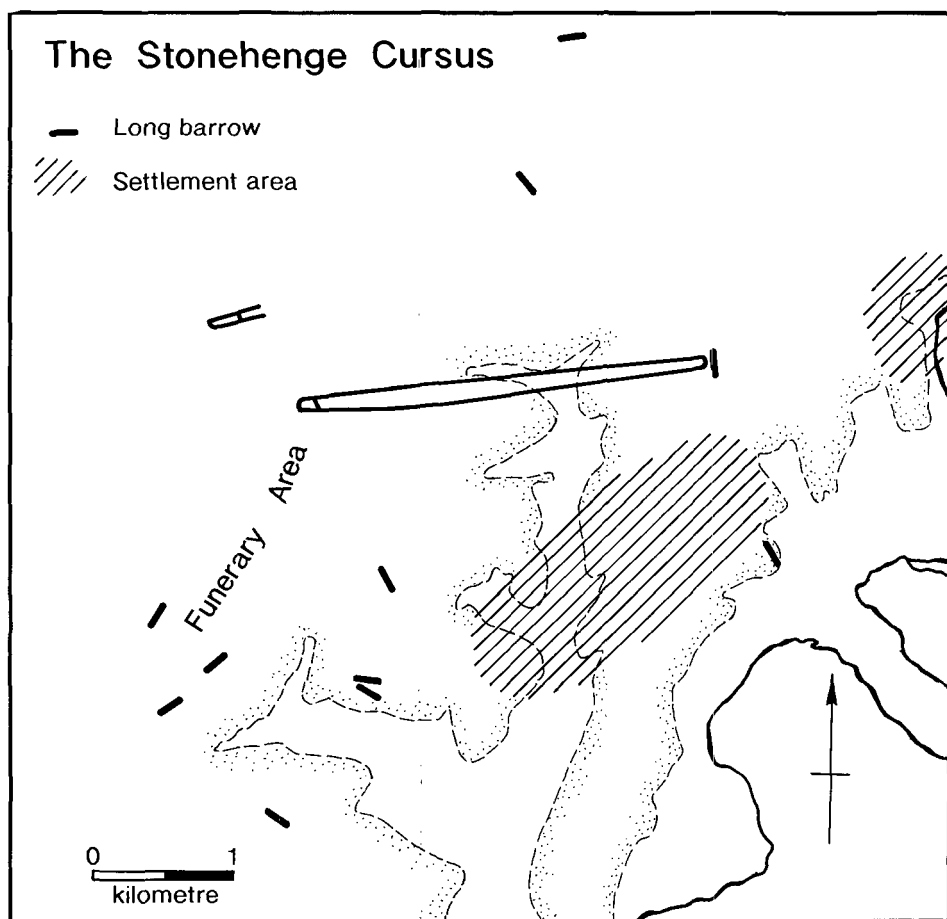
The same applies to two sites in the Stonehenge environs. The Greater Cursus runs from the edge of a zone above the River Avon associated with evidence of Earlier Neolithic settlement into another area in which we find the main concentration of long barrows (Richards, J 1990, 93–6). In this sense it joins the living to the dead. It also follows an alignment which might provide a powerful symbolism. Looking eastwards from the zone of mortuary monuments an observer would have seen the equinoctial sunrise over the opposite terminal of the cursus: that is to say, in the area associated with the settlements of the living. Six months later an observer in the settlement zone would see the sun set over the area reserved for monuments to the dead (illus 28). We can take a rather similar approach to the Stonehenge avenue, whatever its place in the sequence on that site. It joins this idiosyncratic enclosure to the Avon valley, where some of the largest henges had been built, and runs across a ridge which had formed the focus for a series of specialised deposits (*ibid*, 109–23). Along its route it also passes through a major cemetery. It emphasises the connection between phenomena of several different kinds and again it makes a link between the visible remains of different periods. Since so much of that activity left prominent earthwork monuments, it would be difficult to remain innocent of at least some of these associations. It is in this way, then, that monumental alignments of very different kinds may help to create a sense of timeless order. That synthesis may go against the archaeological evidence of sequence, but it lies at the heart of our conception of ritual.



On the other hand, there is a more detailed level of analysis at which it is not appropriate to consider all alignments in the same way. This is partly determined by chronology and geography, but it is also demanded by the details of their construction. I have already mentioned the increasing feeling of closure towards one end of the Carnac alignments, but the fact remains that this cannot be compared exactly with the sense of closure experienced inside the terminal of one of the larger cursuses. Some of the most massive alignments, such as those at Carnac or Avebury, are entirely permeable constructions (illus 29). At Avebury there is even a gap in one of the lines of uprights where the avenue crosses an earlier focus of activity (Smith 1965, 185–7). Such distinctions may have been important to those who built these monuments, and this could be why the earthwork avenue at Stonehenge apparently replaced an alignment of stones (Pitts 1984, 90–7).



The implications of this contrast are important. A continuous earthwork barrier, such as the Dorset Cursus or the Stonehenge avenue, could not easily be breached. It made a very clear distinction between those who might be allowed inside the



28
Outline plan of the
Stonehenge Cursus
(after Richards, J
1990) emphasising
the zones of
domestic activity
and funerary
monuments
towards its east and
west terminals
respectively.

monument and those who were excluded. Yet there is also some evidence for this distinction at Avebury where geophysical survey suggests that the greatest concentration of human traffic was along the outside of the West Kennet avenue (Ucko *et al* 1991, 186–94). Perhaps the creation of an earthwork at Stonehenge helped to formalise this distinction. At Le Ménec, on the other hand, the rather chaotic course of the outer stones of the alignment (Thom & Thom 1978, fig 6.3a) might be explained in another way (Julian Thomas pers comm). Could this arrangement have been intended to lead some of the participants **past** the great walled enclosure that forms the terminal cromlech? In that case the separate rows of stones would help to enforce a distinction between those who were permitted to enter the enclosure and those who were left outside.

The layout of alignments makes it easier to enforce distinctions of this kind. We have already seen some of the ways in which they can allow different levels of participation. This point is worth taking further. The most basic feature of any alignment, as distinct from a circular enclosure, is that it is long and narrow: everyone cannot move down it together. As John Barrett says, some people will have to go first, and others will be last. This is an important point as it provides a mechanism for grading the different participants (Barrett in press). The Dorset Cursus, for instance, is the largest earthwork of its kind. It may be 10 kilometres long but it is only 100 metres wide. There is an immediate contrast between the size of any group who could move along this earthwork together and the number of people required to build it in the first place. The Carnac alignments are of about the same

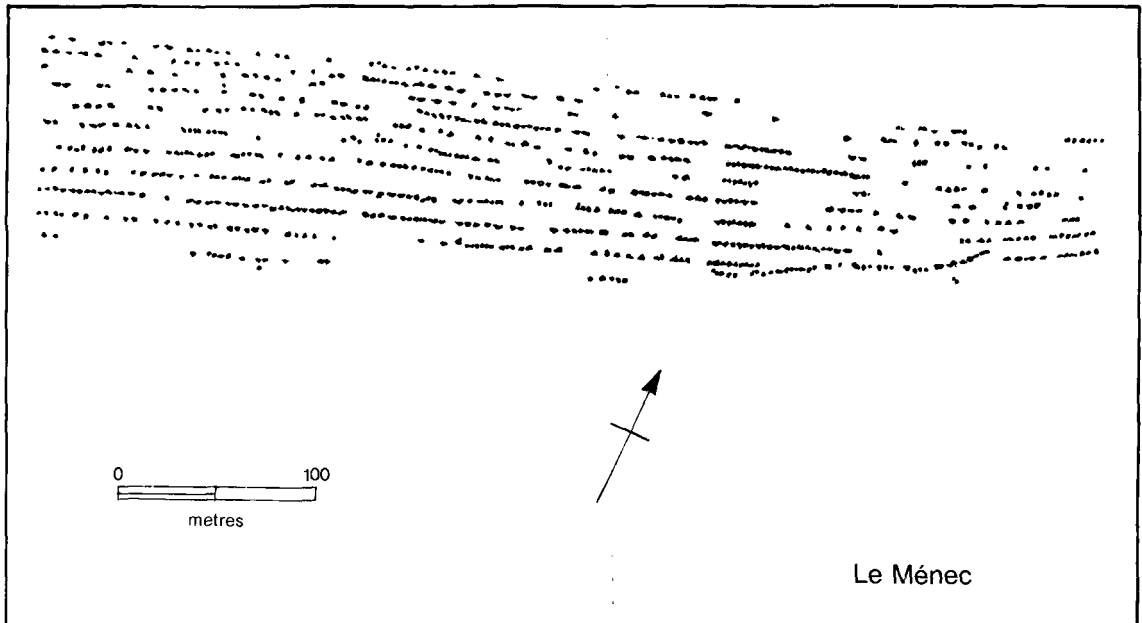
29
The Kermario alignment at Carnac, looking towards the west. Photograph: Aubrey Burl.



width, yet they run for four kilometres. The Stonehenge avenue is only 30 metres wide. Practical considerations dictate that if many people moved along them they would have had to form an orderly procession.

In fact some of these distinctions may have been significant even when the monuments were built. Indeed, that process could have helped to establish the power of these conventions. Again the evidence from Carnac is very revealing (illus 30). Detailed analysis of the ground-plan of the alignments shows that they consist of numerous short rows of stone, each of them of roughly the same size. They indicate a pattern of segmentary construction which is most unlikely to be the result of modern renovation, not least because this pattern was unrecognised until Alexander Thom undertook his detailed survey of the site (Thom & Thom 1978, ch 6, ch 7). Many of these short rows can be identified from slight idiosyncrasies in the alignment and spacing of the stones, as if each segment was the contribution of a single group, whose major limitation was the size of the largest stone that they could manoeuvre into place. There is only limited evidence for close control over this process. By contrast, we have seen how the alignments were constructed from much larger materials towards their terminals. The cromlechs that close them off have a far more regular ground-plan. Not only would this have required greater organisation, the physical labour of building the terminals must have entailed a larger labour force, working with more coordination. Similar distinctions can be seen in the fabric of cursuses. The side ditches were simple constructions, but a few of the earthwork terminals again made greater demands. In the case of the Dorset Cursus there is even the complicating factor that the long sides of the monument were built in different ways. One was a significant earthwork with a sharply cut ditch and a revetted bank. The other was rather slighter. It followed a more sinuous course and was interrupted by causeways of unexcavated chalk. The con-

30
Detailed plan
of part of the
Le Ménéac
alignment at
Carnac,
emphasising its
construction in
short
segments.
(After Thom
& Thom
1978).



trast has been noted at several locations, but the major earthwork is not always the same one; they seem to have changed places at least twice (Barrett *et al* 1991, 47). This may be related to the pattern of movement around the landscape as a whole. The intention could have been to locate the major barrier where it would confront more people.



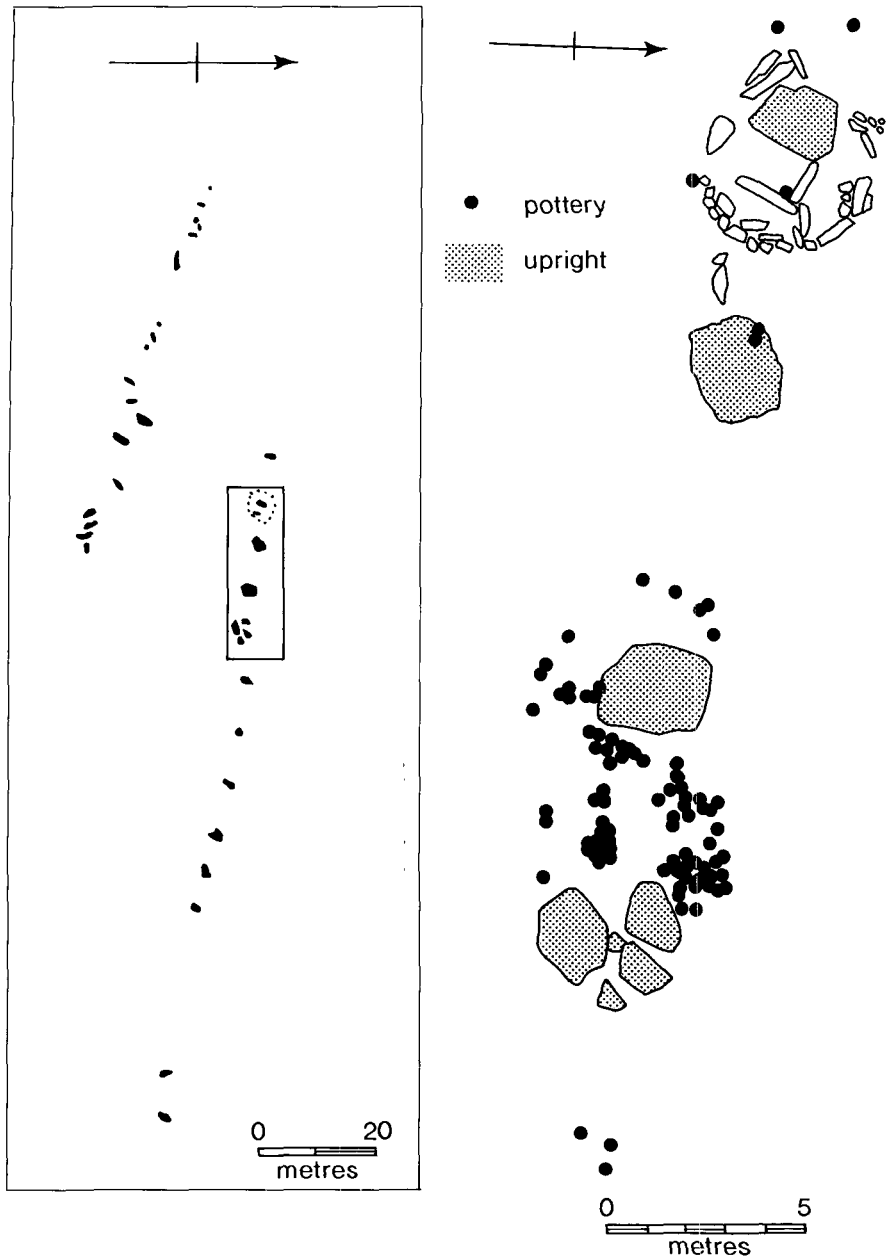
Lastly, there is no reason to suppose that, once created, these monuments were left unchanged. There are numerous cases in which they might be refurbished or extended, but more revealing are those instances in which the building of a major alignment seems to have been re-enacted. The distinction is a subtle one, but it is most important. By repairing and renewing an existing alignment, the population expressed its continued commitment to the ideas that lay behind it – or, at least, to their own interpretation of them. This has been clearly documented at the Breton alignment of Saint-Just, where a sequence of stone rows, timber alignments, and a narrow cairn were all found at the same site. In this case their construction and use spanned hundreds of years (Le Roux *et al* 1989). At other sites entirely new alignments could be built. Some of these reinforced those patterns that had already been established, for example where a whole series of overlapping stone rows could be built across the same piece of ground (Emmett 1979; Thom *et al* 1990). A variant of this pattern has been identified at Maxey where the linear monument which we think of as a cursus may be no more than the aggregate of a succession of episodes of earthwork building, all on the same alignment. The Maxey cursus may never have been a unitary conception, visible on the ground at any one time (Pryor & French 1985, 301). It was essentially an idea, a project.



If many of these distinctions were inculcated from the moment that a monument was built, others could be emphasised during its operation. Cursuses can provide the focus for a series of structured deposits of artefacts, human remains and animal bones. Yet at some sites these may be found inside the enclosure and at others they are kept outside. For example, a series of fine artefacts were deposited in and around the Dorset Cursus, but it was only in the interior that elaborate lithic artefacts were found by excavation; material resulting from the preliminary processing of raw material was excluded (Barrett *et al* 1991, 70–5). Moreover, the ditch of this monument contained finds of human remains, accompanied by wild cattle bones. At other sites, such as the Drayton and Dorchester on Thames cursuses, unburnt human bones may be confined to the interior, with a particular emphasis on the head (Bradley & Chambers 1988, 284–6). By contrast, at Drayton pits containing Grooved Ware were limited to the exterior. There is too little evidence to take the argument any further, but this does raise the possibility that particular deposits were appropriate only in particular places. Given what I have said already about access to the interior, that also means that some people could provide these offerings, whilst others were prevented from doing so.



Saint-Just



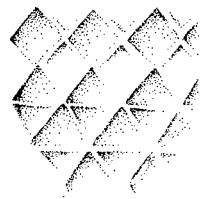
31
 (Left) Outline plan
 of the Saint-Just
 stone alignments.
 (Right) Details of a
 secondary structure
 and deposits of
 pottery around the
 base of the uprights.
 (After Le Roux *et al*
 1989).

That is not an isolated instance. In Brittany there is clear evidence that the stones in alignments and other settings formed the focus for rather similar deposits, sometimes accompanied by a stone-built hearth. Such evidence was recorded by early excavators at Carnac (Miln 1881), and at individual menhirs (Giot *et al* 1979, 398–9). It was also documented at the cromlech of Er Lannic (Le Rouzic 1930), but only recently has this kind of deposit been recorded in sufficient detail. Le Roux's excavation of the alignment of Saint-Just sheds fascinating light on the provision of offerings of this kind, associated with different phases in the use of a small alignment (Le Roux *et al* 1988; illus 31). Again, larger scale work is needed to determine whether particular kinds of material were appropriate in particular parts of these monuments: finds of pottery and axes are commonly mentioned in early accounts. I shall return to this question at the end of the lecture.



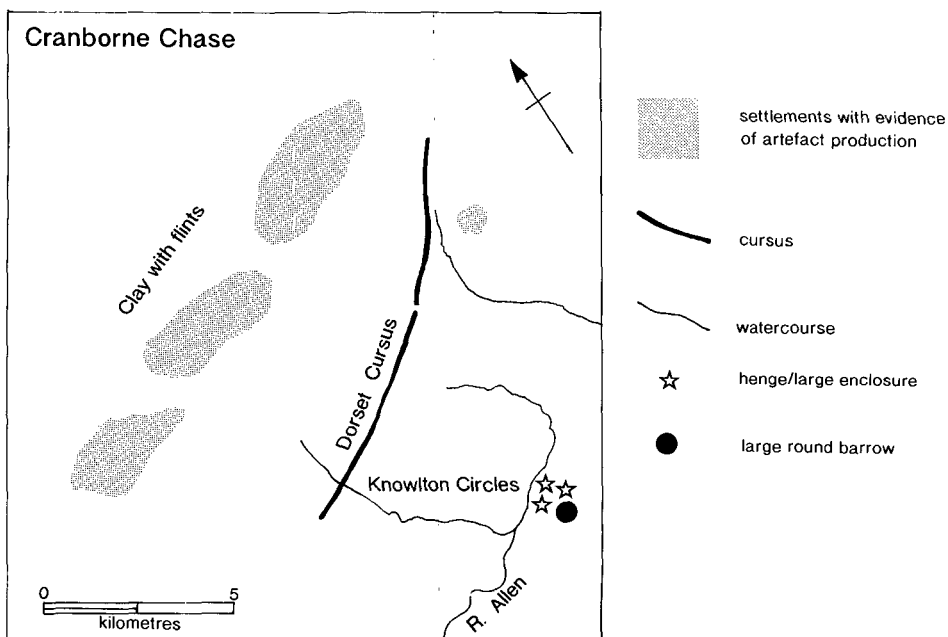
We must also consider the relationship between alignments and the world around them. It is perhaps no accident that some of them were perpetuated in later patterns of land division. This applies particularly clearly to the two largest cursus complexes in England, the Dorset Cursus and those at Rudston on the Yorkshire Wolds, both of which were partially reused in a network of Iron Age territorial boundaries (Bowen 1990, 47–51; Dent 1982, fig 12). The fact is that these great alignments divide up large areas of the landscape. Although there is no evidence that they played a practical role in the demarcation of resources, they would certainly have formed an obstacle to free movement across the terrain. Other monuments may have had a similar impact, but on a much smaller scale. On Dartmoor, for instance, some of the existing stone rows were respected by the Bronze Age land divisions known as reaves, whilst other examples were slighted (Fleming 1988, ch 7). Similarly, in Brittany, where changes of sea level make the original topography more difficult to recreate, there is no doubt that some of the most massive stone alignments cross tracts of rather higher ground dividing up the landscape in very much the same fashion as territorial boundaries. Four such alignments go together to cut off the modern promontory at Carnac (Thom & Thom 1978, figs 9.3, 9.6), whilst two others cut across the Quiberon peninsula (Burl 1985, 164, 166). In Finistère another two complexes of this type cross the neck of land east of Camaret sur Mer (*ibid*, 66–8, 79). Even at a mundane level, the existence and operation of these monuments would have impinged on the pattern of movement around them.

In some cases those alignments would have had a more drastic effect on the ways in which the landscape was perceived. In north-west France there are cases in which alignments divide the landscape into a series of rectilinear units (*ibid*, 66–8). A comparable arrangement, but on a much larger scale, is found at Rudston on the Yorkshire Wolds, where four different cursuses intersect the Great Wold Valley, with the Rudston monolith at the centre of their distribution. Their use of the topography is remarkably like that of the Dorset Cursus, but in this case the juxtaposition of these four enormous monuments also has the effect of dividing up the terrain according to the cardinal points (Riley 1988, fig 5.1). Again, the symbolic dimension may be very important. The Dorset Cursus links a whole series of existing

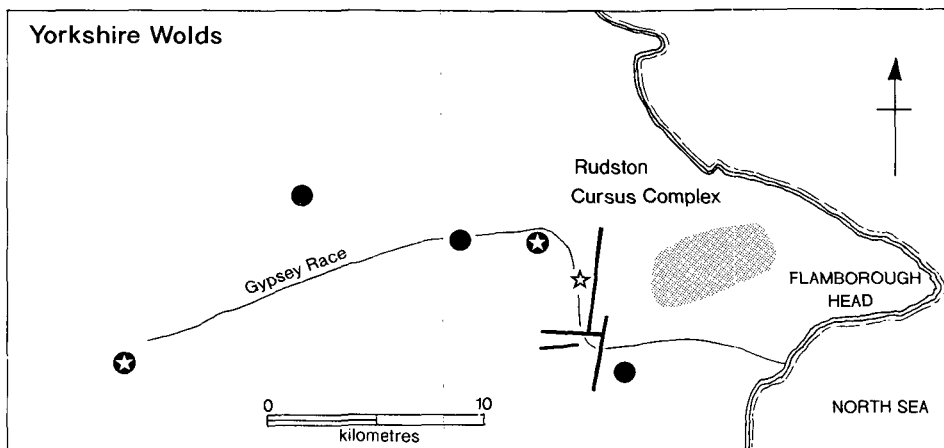


mortuary monuments, but it also separates an upland area which was the main source of high quality flint from the main river valleys which are likely to have formed an important focus for settlement. In fact, some time after its first construction, it divided a series of extensive occupation sites involved in flint artefact production from a lowland area in which the main group of henge monuments was built (Barrett *et al* 1991, 59–70, 92–108; illus 32).

The Rudston complex had rather similar connotations. The cursuses found at this site establish a major north–south axis, breached by two shorter monuments of the same type and most likely of the same date. It is probable that all these were first



32
(Upper) The relationship of the Dorset Cursus to major henge monuments and the main settlement area with evidence of lithic production (after Barrett *et al* 1991). (Lower) The relationship of the Rudston cursuses to the distribution of major monuments (data from Manby 1988) and settlements producing elaborate flint artefacts (information from Tess Durden).



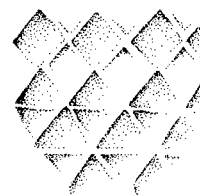
built during the Early Neolithic period, and, like the Dorset Cursus, one of these earthworks ends at an enlarged terminal which looks just like a long barrow. To the east of this axis were major sources of raw material along the beaches below Flamborough Head (Tess Durden pers comm), whilst all the long barrows of the Yorkshire Wolds were built to the west of this division. The distinction is perpetuated in the Late Neolithic. To the east of the Rudston complex were a number of settlement sites, the most important of which may have been making elaborate flint artefacts out of raw material introduced from the coastline (Tess Durden pers comm). To the west were all the Neolithic enclosures on the Wolds and all but one of the great round barrows of this region (Manby 1988). These mounds are especially important as they contain some of the specialised artefacts made on the other side of this alignment. Such distinctions may even be found at the local scale. Not far from Rudston is the Kilham long barrow (Manby 1976). At a developed stage in its construction its mound was approached by an avenue of paired posts. In one direction this led people to the monumental facade in front of the mortuary deposits. In the other, it was aligned in the general direction of the cursus complex. In this instance all trace of the posts had been destroyed not far from the barrow, but there are other cases in which the mound itself was lengthened during a secondary phase.



In certain cases the axis of major alignments almost certainly reflects basic astronomical events. This evidence will be familiar (Heggie 1981) but it is important for several reasons. I am unhappy with the argument that such alignments were instituted for the purposes of scientific observation, if only for the logical reason that the movements of the heavenly bodies would have to have been understood **before** these monuments were built. Again this involves a reference to the past, for such monuments clearly enshrine patterns that had already been observed. The choice of these orientations adds another dimension to certain monuments even if it is not their *raison d'être*.

A number of these alignments would only work in combination with natural features of the terrain, such features as mountains or passes. *This is important* because it forges yet another link between the creation and operation of monuments and the workings of the natural world. Some of the places that I discussed in my previous lecture may have had similar attributes. Menhirs could often have been used in combination with distant parts of the landscape to observe the movements of the sun and moon, but in this case those natural events have been annexed and brought into the world of human culture.

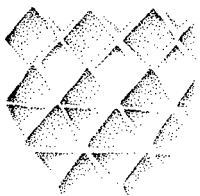
At the same time, I have placed some emphasis on the question of access. Some monuments were structured in such a way that not everyone would have been able to go inside them. Despite the size of the workforce involved in their construction, such sites were too small to have held many people. Moreover, these monuments were not self-explanatory. Even if the wrong people were able to find their way into a major cursus, they would need to know exactly where to position themselves if they were to understand its placing in the cultural landscape. *Just as important,*



in those admittedly rare cases in which cursuses had been laid out on the rising or setting sun, it would be essential to possess the further knowledge of when that event was to happen. The same argument applies to the other kinds of alignment. Their operation only makes complete sense under two conditions: the participants must know **where** to place themselves in order to appreciate the subtleties of the design, and they must know **when** to do so, otherwise the astronomical significance of those sites would be completely lost on them. In that respect they would be at much the same disadvantage as we are in investigating these sites today.

But taken another way, these observations could have a powerful impact. Those who built the monuments were able to link them to the most basic elements of the cosmos and at the same time to restrict the detailed knowledge of that relationship by constructing a monument in which there was space for only a limited number of observers. Astronomical events like the midwinter sunset on the Dorset Cursus, or the equinoctial sunrise on the Stonehenge Cursus, could only be seen from one carefully chosen position, and access to this might have been controlled (Barrett *et al* 1991, 58). Thus the restrictions that seem to be implicit in the very layout of certain monuments go beyond the question of access and unimpeded movement. They also extend to specialised knowledge: the knowledge of the basic alignments hidden in the design. This would not be accessible to outsiders, who could not have observed these phenomena. But at the same time, by controlling movement within such monuments, people might also have seemed to be controlling time itself. It is not that alignments of these kinds were necessary to establish a calendar. Rather, the important point is that by linking the operation of great monuments to the unchanging world of nature their builders were putting the significance of these constructions beyond any kind of challenge. The same phenomena could be observed year after year. Through the creation of monumental architecture, society confirmed its stable structure. And it was by linking concepts of place to those of time that monuments have had such a profound influence over human experience.

So far I have talked about one class of monument and tried to explain how it is that monumental architecture can help to create a view of the world. But that still leaves another topic to consider. I have commented on the ways in which monuments may be linked to the areas outside them: by creating obstacles to unimpeded movement about the landscape; by their integration with natural features of the terrain; and by their use of astronomical alignments. In each case we need to move beyond the enclosed space of the monument itself to discuss its wider setting. Having considered how places were transformed into monuments, and how monuments acted as places, I must say rather more about the links between these domains.



I have emphasised the distinction between the wild and the domestic at several points so far. It played a part in my discussion of the origins of monuments in the first lecture. In the second, I emphasised the ways in which natural places were gradually assimilated into the pattern of monument building; and now I have stressed how monuments themselves had an impact on the landscape around

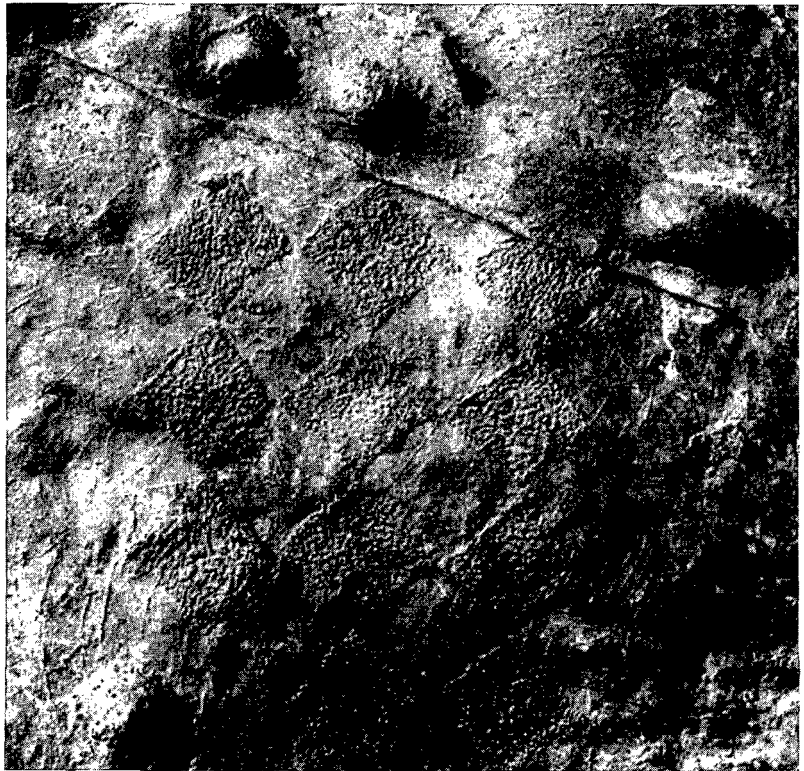
them. But how pervasive was the contrast between the cultural world of the monument and the natural world outside it? Have I imposed an anthropological cliché on the evidence, or does further material exist which can allow us to investigate this relationship?

In order to make much progress, we need to isolate a phenomenon which is common to both these worlds. I have mentioned one already. In my last lecture I talked about the ways in which natural places might be embellished by rock carvings and even how fragments of those carvings could be taken away from their original locations and incorporated into monuments. In this lecture I referred briefly to the placing of decoration in some of the British stone rows. Here we have a suitable field for investigation.

I have already observed that the roots of Atlantic rock art seemed to be closely bound up in the decoration of Irish passage tombs. Although I hazarded the opinion that the more public art of the passage graves might have its origin in the carvings found on natural surfaces, its precise source matters less than the fact that the two groups were closely related to one another (Johnston 1989, 182–219). It is in the Boyne tombs that the practice of Neolithic rock carving reaches its fullest development, but even at its most elaborate this system has many points in common with the petroglyphs found in other locations. It also shares some of these motifs with portable artefacts, particularly carved stone balls and Grooved Ware.

33
Angular motifs in
the passage tomb at
Knowth.
(Photograph:
George Eogan.)

The art of the Boyne Valley may be unusually ornate, but it follows a relatively simple set of rules. The principal sites are defined by longer passages than their counterparts elsewhere in Ireland and, in contrast to the decoration found in shallower structures, at Knowth, and to a lesser extent at Newgrange, there is a division between angular and curvilinear motifs (Shee Twohig 1981, 93–121; O' Kelly 1982, ch 13, ch 14; Eogan 1986, ch 7, ch 8. The angular motifs (illus 33) include such characteristic devices as the chevron; the curvilinear motifs (illus 34) include a variety of arcs, circles and spirals, many of which centre on a single cup-mark.



34
Curvilinear motifs in
the passage tomb at
Knowth.
(Photograph:
George Eogan).



There is no uniformity in the organisation of the carvings inside most passage tombs, and at sites like Loughcrew there is only limited evidence of careful composition (Thomas, J 1992). In the large tomb at Knowth in the Boyne Valley the situation is very different, and here the contrast between angular and curvilinear designs seems to be reflected in the organisation of the motifs. Curvilinear motifs may be found at the centre of the monument and also on the kerbstones, in particular those located around the entrances. Angular design elements tend to be found *inside* the monument. This distinction between interior and exterior is the one that I wish to explore.

This same distinction is echoed in a number of different fields. In Orkney, for example, the angular motifs of passage grave art are repeated in the designs found within the houses at Skara Brae, a site where curvilinear decoration is limited to a few sherds (Shee Twohig 1981, 238–9; Richards, C 1991). At Barnhouse angular designs are also present within the buildings, but curvilinear motifs are found on pottery (*ibid*, 28–9). Yet they also occur in other media in Orkney, most notably on the lintels of passage tombs (Shee Twohig 1981, 227–8; Sharples 1984). There are hints of a wider system of connections and contrasts.

We can take the argument even further. Where curvilinear designs are found in greatest numbers are on rock carvings located in isolated positions in the landscape. Here cup-marks and cup-and-ring-marks are very common indeed and angular designs are hardly known. In northern Britain there is evidence that these different phenomena may have been closely related to one another, and in Northumberland and Mid Argyll the most complex curvilinear designs are found on natural surfaces in the vicinity of Late Neolithic ceremonial sites (Bradley 1991). At the same time, the Grooved Ware found inside monuments of this kind is almost entirely limited to angular decoration.

So far there is little to bridge the gap between these two styles, but in fact such information is already to hand. In a recent paper Rosamund Cleal commented on

the repeated discovery of vessels with complex Grooved Ware decoration in structured deposits at the entrance of henge monuments (1991, 141–5). On several sites this included the rare curvilinear decoration that has features in common with the motifs carved in stone. With one exception, sherds with this kind of decoration did not occur inside the same monuments. With that observation in mind, it is worth examining the relationship between enclosures and decorated stones. Although the evidence is of poor quality, it is actually rather revealing. Carvings are not common on stone circles, but those that do occur are usually simple cup-marks (Burl 1976). These are generally found on the exterior of the monument. Most examples are recorded from Recumbent Stone Circles, where these motifs are associated with the recumbent itself and with the uprights immediately flanking it (Ruggles & Burl 1985, 54–6). More complex motifs are uncommon but are exclusively curvilinear, and these are found in the same positions. Such motifs are more often found in the surrounding landscape but usually occur beyond the confines of the monuments themselves. The main exceptions are where outliers, rather than the stones of the circle, are associated with curvilinear motifs.

A good example illustration of this pattern comes from the Eden Valley in Cumbria (Beckensall 1992). The most famous site in this area is the large stone circle known as Long Meg and her Daughters. The uprights of the circle itself are entirely undecorated, but the one outlier is of a different raw material and is profusely carved with motifs found in passage tomb art. This stone is also located on the axis of the midwinter sunset, as viewed from the centre of the circle. Not far away are other monuments with carved decoration. The original form of these sites is not always clear, but both Glassonby and Little Meg include stones that were ornamented in the same style. They reveal an interesting contrast. At Little Meg the decorated stone faces outwards, whilst a stone in a similar position at Glassonby looks inwards towards the centre of the site. In this case the curvilinear designs are combined with chevron decoration.

We can also consider the decorated stone rows that I mentioned before. The carved motifs are generally confined to the shorter rows and are usually discovered at the end of the alignment, on the tallest upright; again cup-marks are the most common element (Thom *et al* 1990, 387–90). These sites share a further feature with other groups of decorated monument, for in each case individual examples follow basic astronomical alignments. From the point of view of the audience utilising those sites there is one common element, for in such cases the decorated stones **face outwards**. They are located at the point at which that alignment extends into the wider landscape, and it is of course in that landscape that more elaborate curvilinear motifs are found.

So this emphasis on curvilinear designs is shared between different kinds of monument and also between different media. It is illustrated by the deposition of decorated pottery, but it is equally apparent from the decoration applied to stone circles, and particularly to outlying stones. It reflects the basic principles according to which passage grave art was organised at Knowth, with curvilinear decoration looking out into the landscape and angular motifs more frequent in the internal area of the monument. As we have seen, this emphasis on angular motifs is repeat-



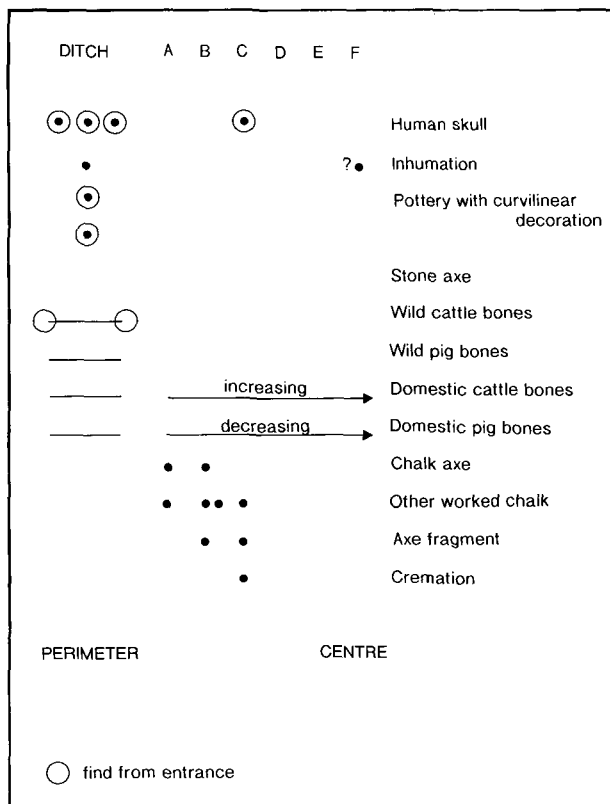
ed in the decoration of the houses at Skara Brae. The presence of reused stones bearing angular designs among the finds from Bronze Age barrows shows that these motifs once had a wider distribution (Bradley 1992). Following these observations, we might be seeing some reflection of a broader distinction between the cultural area of the monument and the natural world beyond it. That would certainly account for the distinctive locations at which the more complex open air carvings are found.

If I confined my argument to rock carvings, it would not be at all convincing. Too few stone monuments were decorated, and too few other monuments have been excavated with the distribution of decorated pottery in mind. But in fact this contrast is echoed in several different media. The curvilinear designs on the pottery deposited at the entrance of henge monuments tend to be associated with other classes of material culture. In particular, one artefact type which featured in a previous lecture is worth considering here.

There has been considerable discussion of the relationship between henges and the movement of polished axes, and it is certainly true that these objects are clustered in areas with these monuments. But at a more detailed level, finds of axes show the

same general pattern as pottery with curvilinear decoration; that is to say, they are mainly in the entrance to these monuments or the entrances to the timber circles found within their interior (Bradley & Edmonds in press; illus 35). In other cases they are confined to the perimeter earthwork. Far more axes may be discovered outside these enclosures, where they may sometimes form part of complex pit deposits containing other non-local artefacts. By contrast, different kinds of lithic artefact are discovered inside these monuments.

This distinction echoes another contrast that was identified some time ago: the deposits found inside



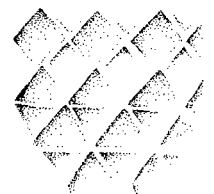
35
The location of different classes of excavated material in relation to the post circles and perimeter earthwork at Woodhenge. For the plan of a very similar structure see illus 56 (Mount Pleasant).

henges tend to be associated with domestic animal bones, whilst wild animals are much better represented around the perimeter (Thomas, J 1991, 70–3). We can add a little detail to that contrast for it is also illustrated by the finds of antler at these sites. At Durrington Walls nearly all the antler picks were in very large deposits close to the entrance of the site and also in the post holes by the entrance to the Southern Circle (Wainwright & Longworth 1971). Red deer skulls and unused antler follow the same distribution on excavated sites, suggesting that the pattern is not entirely the result of how their construction was organised (cf Barrett *et al* 1991, table 3.12).

Do any other deposits show this distinctive patterning? I would suggest two further examples. The relatively rare carved chalk objects found in southern English henges also tend to be associated with the entrances to these sites, the perimeter and even the area outside. Their interpretation is problematical, but they certainly include some objects that might indicate a concern with fertility. Lastly, even the human remains from henges show a certain patterning. Most stratified cremations come from the edges of these sites or the internal area, whilst unburnt human bones, generally in the form of weathered fragments, are found at the entrance, or elsewhere on the boundary. Skull fragments are most often recognised in these locations. The distinction might be that between the complex cultural treatment of the body – its cremation on a pyre – and the processes of natural decay that could have been associated with the wild. Indeed, there could be links between some of these separate categories of material. For instance, we might compare the finds of antler with those of isolated human bones. Aubrey Burl even suggests that the cyclical growth and shedding of antlers might symbolise a broader pattern of death and regeneration (1991, 34). A rather similar cycle is indicated where monuments were orientated on yearly astronomical events.

I have emphasised the evidence of specialised monuments, but in a number of cases the kinds of deposit that I associated with the entrances and boundaries of these sites are of types that are also found in pit deposits in the landscape as a whole. If that is true, it means that the deposition of a range of significant items was attended by the same basic rules, both inside these monuments and also in the landscape beyond them. They form part of a single system, but it is one that pointedly emphasises the contrast between the cultural world and the wild. It takes in house decoration at one extreme and the embellishment of impressive natural places at the other, and it seems to show that an interest in the boundaries between them was among the main concerns of Neolithic society. That is my justification for saying that the relationship between those two worlds was one that monument building helped to regulate.

Now we have seen a little of how monuments might have helped to inculcate a new sense of place. We have observed how natural places can be turned into monuments and even how some of their physical manifestations – sculptures or fragments of rock carvings – could be translated into a new, more monumental setting. We have also seen how those formal constructions influenced human perception and experience and how active a part they could play in the expression of social distinctions. That is how monuments work as **places**. Yet at the same time, the



exclusive character of those constructions needed constant protection and was reinforced by a distinctive symbolism and by the use and deposition of specific kinds of material. Certain people were excluded from these places, and so were certain elements of material culture. The distinction between insiders and outsiders echoes the geographical contrast between the private arena of the monument and the natural world round about it. In this sense the places that archaeologists call monuments were kept apart from other significant locations in the landscape.

I have said very much less about **time**, but the close integration between certain monuments and astronomical events can hardly be coincidental. Important as these were in the lives of farming people, it seems extremely unlikely that this was their main reason for existing. I prefer the argument proposed at the start of these lectures: that farming did not lead to the creation of monuments, or, indeed, monuments to farming. What monument building did achieve, but without any conscious planning, was a perception of the world that made agriculture easier to imagine and easier to execute. But the correct interpretation of those monuments would have been contentious from the moment of their creation, and for that reason they acquired a history that was unstable yet very distinctive. My second group of lectures move on from place to time as they attempt to follow that sequence.