

# Excavation of an Iron Age timber structure beside the Candle Stane recumbent stone circle, Aberdeenshire

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with a contribution by M Cressey

## ABSTRACT

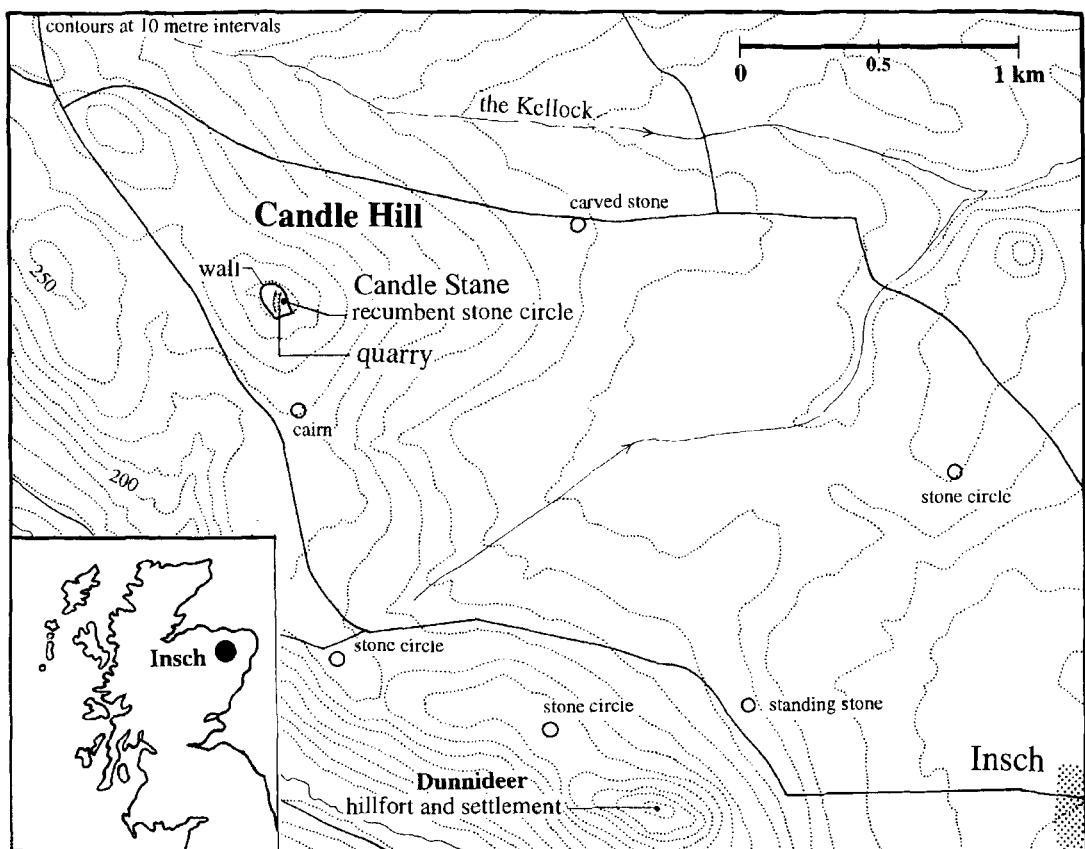
*Excavations undertaken by the Centre for Field Archaeology (CFA) to the south-west of the recumbent stone circle at the Candle Stane, near Insch, Aberdeenshire, revealed the remains of a large, circular timber structure. The area had suffered extensive damage from quarrying prior to its recognition as an archaeological site and therefore less than half of the relevant area remained. The structure was defined by a ring-groove that would have been c 15.5 m in diameter; it enclosed three near-concentric rings of post-holes. Charcoal from these features was radiocarbon dated to the first millennium BC. The entranceway to the structure was massively built and, had the structure been roofed, could have formed a porch. Internal features included a large stone-filled pit and a suite of stake-holes located towards the centre of the structure. No artefacts were recovered. The project was funded by Historic Scotland.*

## INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of excavations carried out by the Centre for Field Archaeology (CFA) of the University of Edinburgh in October 1996 and January 1997 at the recumbent stone circle known as the Candle Stane, near Insch, Aberdeenshire (NGR: NJ 599 299). The site lies within a gently undulating landscape at the edge of the lowlands around Insch, some 3 km north-west of the town (illus 1). The circle lies at the summit of Candle Hill in an area of scrubby woodland and waste ground surrounded by arable fields; it was hoped that external features associated with the stone circle might survive in this apparently unploughed area. The site commands an excellent view towards the hills to the north, west and south.

The stone circle measures almost 14 m in diameter and surrounds a well-defined central cairn 7 m in diameter and 1 m high, eccentrically placed within it. Apart from the recumbent stone itself and its two fallen flankers, five other stones remain, all but one (the Candle Stane) having been displaced. There are a few possible cupmarks on the flanking stones. The remains are scheduled under the terms of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979; an abandoned quarry, possibly of 19th-century date, lies immediately to the west. A recent unauthorized extension along the eastern margin of this quarry had exposed a section in which it was reported that post-holes with charcoal-stained fills had become visible following weathering.

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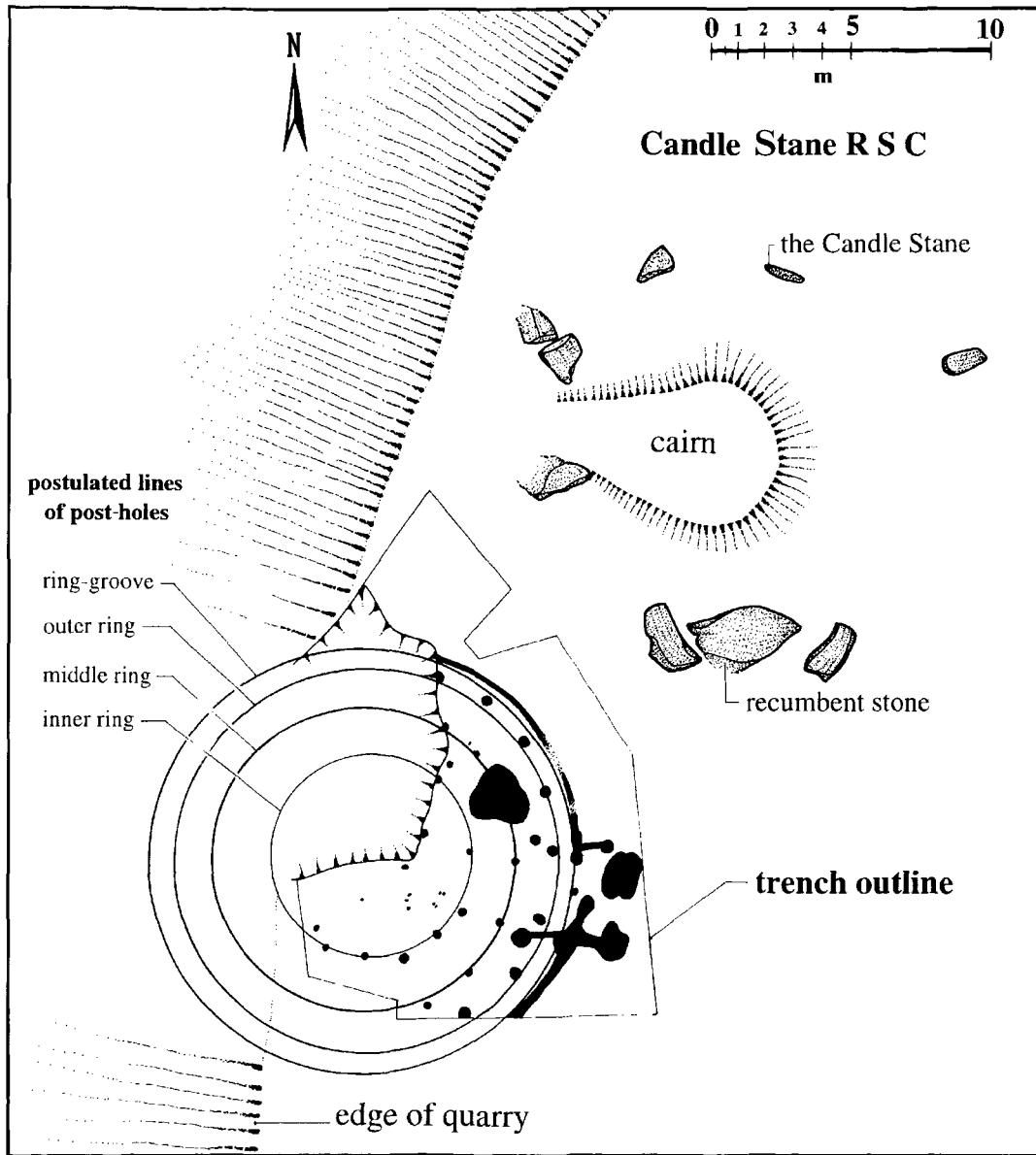


ILLUS 1 Location map (*Based on the Ordnance Survey map © Crown copyright*)

Between this section and the stone circle itself a further area had been stripped of topsoil, presumably in advance of more quarrying. Initial fieldwork was commissioned by Historic Scotland to undertake excavation of the exposed features during October 1996. This preliminary work located a segment of a possible timber structure. Historic Scotland considered that the thin topsoil cover and the close proximity of the timber structure to the edge of both the recent and older quarries might expose the remains to further gradual erosion and a second excavation was undertaken during January 1997 in order to identify and record the remainder of the external timber structure. The total area excavated was approximately 130 sq m (illus 2). The stone circle itself was not disturbed by the quarrying or the excavation.

## EXCAVATION

Topsoil and heavy scrub vegetation were removed manually and the entire subsoil surface was cleaned by hand. All features were half-sectioned; all proved to have been cut into the natural rocky subsoil. There was no evidence for the preservation of any areas of ground surface or buried ploughsoil which could have been related to either the stone circle or the structure identified in the work reported here. However, a few remaining traces of ploughmarks confirmed



ILLUS 2 Plan of the timber structure and quarried area in relation to the Candle Stane recumbent stone circle

that the land had previously been cultivated. It is likely that many of the features described below had been severely truncated during these previous episodes of agricultural activity. All archaeological features discussed hereafter have been assigned unique identifiers (feature numbers F1–F51; illus 3 & 4), which are quoted in parentheses in the following text. No artefacts were found during the excavation.

#### MAGNETIC SUSCEPTIBILITY

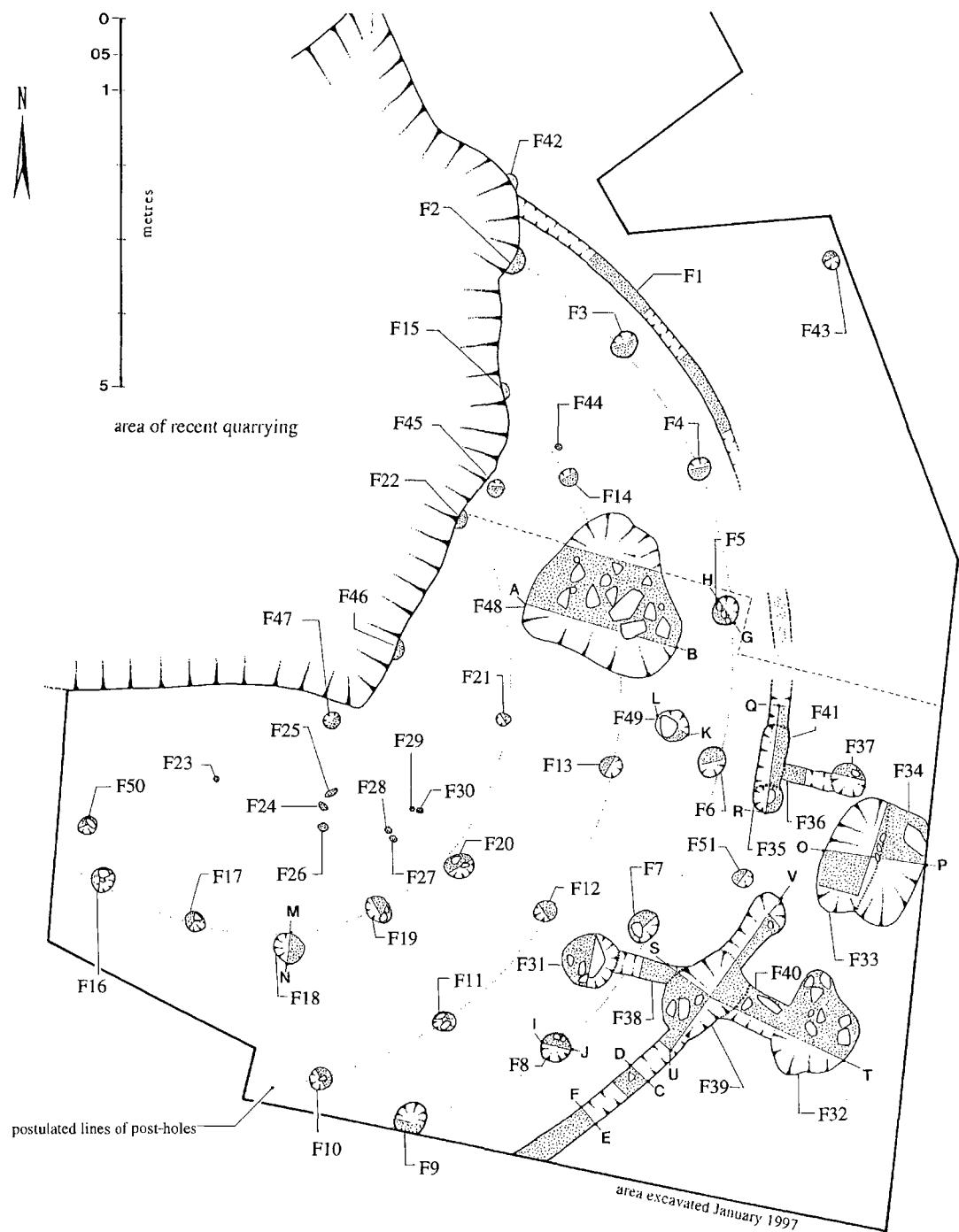
A rapid magnetic susceptibility survey was conducted during the first phase of excavation to test for specific areas of domestic or industrial activity, such as burning. Readings were taken on a 0.5 m transect at 0.2 m intervals across the excavation trench. In addition, six points were taken to the west of the stone circle to provide background samples with which the results from the excavated area could be compared. Maximum efficiency was obtained at the high-frequency range using the Bartington hand-held probe. The results were inconclusive and offered no evidence for areas of intensive burning across the site or within the individual cut features.

#### STRUCTURAL EVIDENCE (ILLUS 3 & 4)

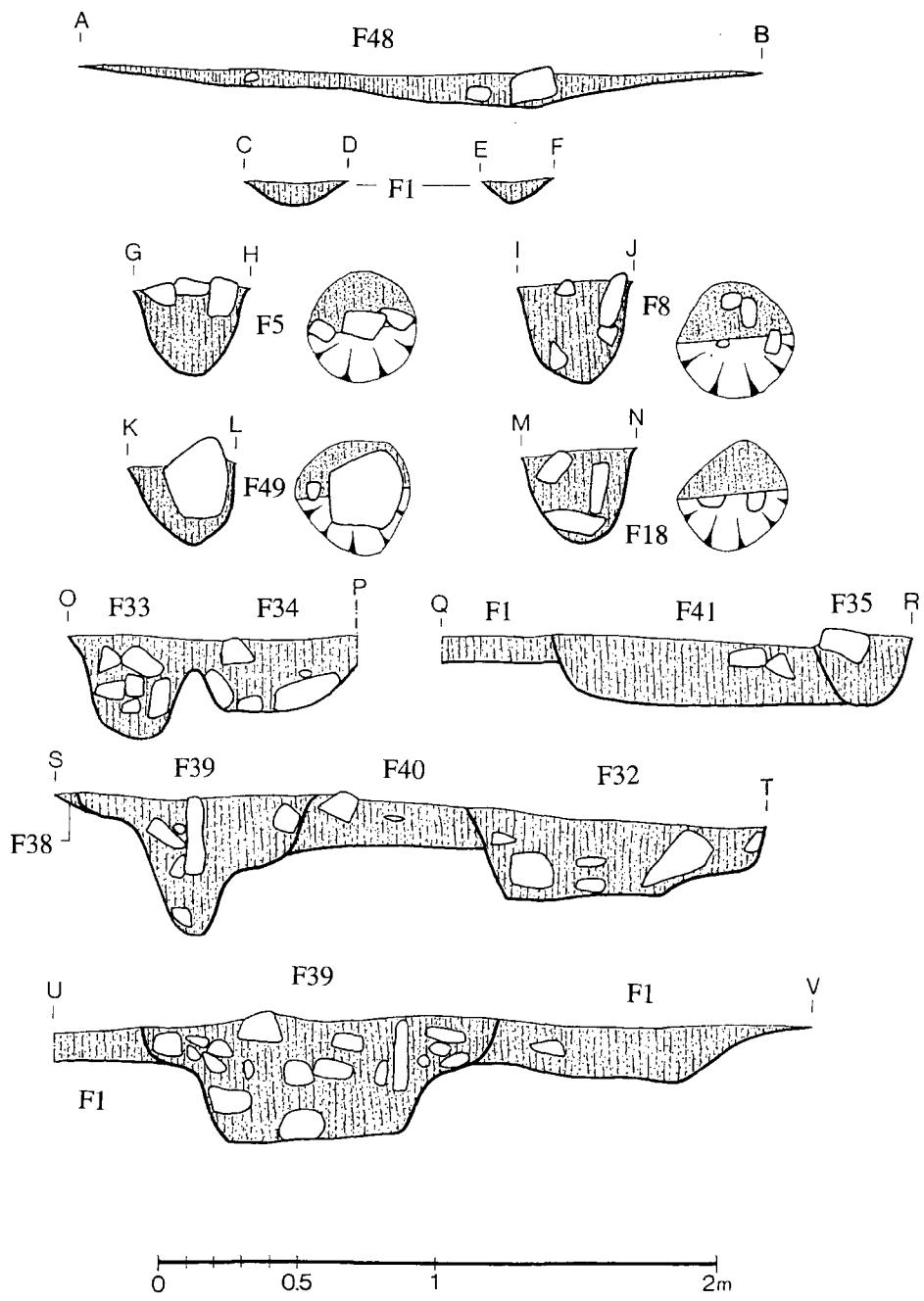
Excavation revealed the truncated remains of a large, well-proportioned, strongly built, but variably preserved curvilinear slot, cut into the natural subsoil with at least two (and possibly three) internal and concentric rings of post-holes. No stratigraphic relationships could be established between these features. The structure would have had an overall diameter of c 15.5 m, assuming that its external wall was founded in the ring-groove.

**Ring-groove** A length of narrow, curving slot (F1) was identified running NW/SE across the northern half of the excavation trench. It was deepest towards the north-west, adjacent to the edge of the quarry. Within 5 m of the quarry edge, the slot became very shallow and eventually disappeared. It reappeared some 4 m to the south, whence it continued southwards for c 2.5 m, where it came to a formally constructed end to one side of the probable entranceway. At the southern limit of the excavation a more substantial slot was apparent: this continued in a north-easterly direction for some 5 m where it was cut by features associated with a complex of features, probably elements of an entrance. No evidence of post settings was visible within either the cut or fills of this feature. Its general shallowness suggests severe truncation and does not disallow the interpretation of the two sectors of curving slot as a single ring-groove.

**Entrance** A group of features was identified in the south-east arc of the circuit, extending east and west of the ring-groove. These can be interpreted as a complex entrance of more than one phase. It appears that initially the entrance consisted of a series of slots (to the south F40 & F38, and to the north F36), running parallel to each other and intersecting the main ring-groove. The two ends of the ring-groove appear at the entrance slightly off-set: if extended they would not meet and the southern terminal would pass outside the northern one. These features have been cut at a later date by a series of large stone-filled post-holes/pits. To the south, for example, a large, circular post-hole (F31) cuts through the western portion of slot F38. It contains numerous small, angular stones and one massive slab set at an angle of 45 degrees which covered most of the area within the feature, leaving no space for any post. Extending beyond the circle of the structure slot F40 is cut by pit F32, which was 0.36 m deep. To the north, the corresponding slot (F36) was cut by a post-hole (F37) at its eastern end. A further feature, comprising two conjoined pits (F33 & F34), is also visible here and seems to mirror feature F32 to the south. The points of intersection between the entrance slots and the ring-groove have been re-cut on the axis of the latter to make them both wider and deeper. In this way the ring-groove to the north of the entrance is re-cut to form F41, and to the south forms F39. A further indication of sequential pattern is suggested by the fact that the re-cut slot (F41) has in turn been cut by a post-hole (F35), located at the very end of the ring-groove curve. It is possible that the ring-groove segment to the north-east of F39 may be a later extension built to narrow the doorway within the entrance passage. A similar feature was visible within a large roundhouse at Bannockburn (Rideout 1996); here, however it seemed to be part of a later linear palisade with an entrance which overlapped the house entrance.



ILLUS 3 Plan of the excavated features of the timber structure



ILLUS 4 Sections and plans of selected cut features

Two further features were identified in the entrance area. A single post-hole (F49), slightly larger than those in the concentric rings, contained a single, large stone. Situated near pit F48, and between the middle and outer rings, its position could be seen to mirror that of F31 (which also contained a large stone). This feature (F31) cut slot F38 and has been identified as part of the entrance complex. If these latter two post-holes performed the same function relative to the entranceway, it may be conjectured that a slot comparable to F38, but of which no trace now remains, once ran from F49 to slot F41 on the ring-groove. Alternatively, the two posts on their own may have defined an entrance passage extending into the structure. The final (possible) post-hole (F51) was situated almost centrally within the entrance area, suggesting at the outset that it could have been a central post for a double door about 1 m wide. However, on excavation it proved to be no more than a shallow, ephemeral feature with much root penetration. Originally, it may have been shallower than the surrounding post-holes, or more heavily truncated, or perhaps simply the remains of a stone hollow.

**Outer post-hole ring** Aligned on the inside and parallel to the ring-groove was a series of eight similar-sized post-holes spaced at regular intervals of c 2 m (F2–F9). All were filled with a charcoal-stained silty fill that often contained angular packing stones, very occasionally defining post-pipes. However, as some of these post-holes contained single, large stones leaving apparently no room for timber uprights, it is likely that these examples did not contain posts that have decayed *in situ*, but rather that infilling took place once the posts had decayed or been extracted. The majority of the surviving post-holes were of a moderately substantial depth (0.25–0.35 m). One (F2) had been partly destroyed by quarrying, but the surviving evidence indicates that when complete, this ring would have comprised 19 or 20 post-holes and would have had a diameter of c 13 m.

**Middle post-hole ring** A series of six post-holes (F10–F15) has been interpreted as the incomplete remains of a further ring, concentric with the outermost set. Cutting across the projected line of this ring was a large, shallow stone-filled pit (F48) which may have obscured the position of another post-hole of this series. These post-holes tended on average to be slightly smaller than those of the outer ring, but showed the same silty fill, incorporating charcoal flecks and occasionally traces of burnt bone. The post-holes are not placed on the same radial lines as the posts of the outermost ring, and describe an arc that is likely to be the remains of a post-ring consisting of some 17 post-holes, with a diameter of some 11 m.

**Inner post-hole ring** Seven of the remaining internal post-holes have been tentatively interpreted as forming a third, near-central ring, with its centre point, however, slightly off that of the two main rings. When excavated, these seven post-holes were of differing sizes, though it was obvious that some had been severely truncated and/or affected by root action. One of these (F21) was the smallest such feature found within the structure, with a diameter of just 0.24 m. Most contained possible packing stones. The irregular spacing of posts makes it difficult to determine how many post-holes there were originally in this set.

**Stake-holes** Evidence for internal features potentially related to the building was otherwise restricted to a suite of stake-holes near the centre of the structure. These had charcoal fills but upon excavation proved to be very shallow, the maximum depth recorded being only 0.15 m. There are two sets of paired stake-holes (F27 & F28, F29 & F30). Two other stake-holes (F24 & F25) showed evidence of multiple stake settings within their cuts (three and two settings respectively). No immediately obvious spatial patterning has been discerned. A further stake-hole (F44) was identified close to the line of the middle post-ring.

**Other features** A large, shallow, stone-filled pit (F48) was located within the structure to the north of the entrance. The pit measured 2.5 m by 2.7 m, with a depth of no more than 0.15 m. It was filled with subangular stones ranging from 0.15 m to 0.4 m in length, with the largest and most angular example set in

the middle of the pit and running the full depth of the feature. The pit was no deeper than this stone. The stones in the fill were set within a fine grey silt containing only occasional charcoal flecks. The function of this feature was not immediately obvious. The stones did not appear to be carefully laid as would have been the case with, for instance, a stone-floored 'scoop' or utility area, like the cereal-processing area recorded at Wardend of Durris, Aberdeenshire (Russell-White 1995). Their haphazard positioning suggests that they were merely intended to infill a hollow within the structure. The position of the hollow, however, perhaps does indicate a specific purpose. It is situated near the entrance and straddles the arc of the middle ring, over a projected post-hole position on this circuit (ie no post-hole was recorded in this position). It is not clear whether the cutting or infilling of this hollow was contemporary with the structure.

Six further features were identified which do not correspond to the arcs of the proposed ring-systems. Two post-holes (F43 & F42) lie outwith the structure. One more (F45) is positioned between the outermost and middle post-rings to the north of pit F48. Three further post-holes (F46, F47 & F50) lie within the sector defined by the postulated inner ring and are of similar average dimensions to those post-holes.

#### CHARCOAL IDENTIFICATION AND DATING

Michael Cressey

The majority of the post-hole fills contained traces of charcoal and those that contained more substantial quantities of this material were bulk sampled for subsequent flotation to obtain material for radiocarbon determinations. Charcoal was also collected by hand during the excavation. Identifications were made using a binocular microscope at magnifications ranging between x10 and x200. Charcoal was identified to genus and species level (in some cases) to enable informed decisions on the choice of material for radiocarbon dating. Generally, identifications were carried out on transverse cross-sections on charcoal measuring between 4 mm and 6 mm. Anatomical keys listed in Schweingrüber (1992), in-house reference charcoal and slide-mounted micro-sections were used to aid identification. Asymmetry and morphological characteristics were also recorded. Six species were identified; none was exotic.

The charcoal comprised mainly small roundwood (Table 1) with no abrasion evident. Contexts 056 (F10), 066 (F16), 082 (F8) and 090 (F38) contained mainly small chips of non-roundwood, possibly representing residues from woodworking (no toolmarks were seen). The charcoal fragments were small at around 4–6 mm; the total weights recovered from each sampled context are also small.

The identified species represented are *Quercus* sp (oak), *Betula* sp (birch), *Pinus* sp (pine), *Corylus avellana* (hazel), *Alnus glutinosa* (alder) and Rosaceae (apple, pear and cherry group). Three contexts supplied samples suitable for radiocarbon dating and a total of six samples (two for each of these contexts) were submitted for single-entity AMS dating (Table 2). These contexts were within F33 (Context 097), a large post-hole/pit from the northern side of the entrance complex; from F6 (Context 076), one of the post-holes in the outermost post-ring; and from F47 (Context 034), a post-hole situated towards the centre of the structure and not on the arc of any of the postulated rings.

The samples were submitted for dating to the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre (SURRC) and measured at the University of Arizona AMS Facility. Dates are expressed in conventional years BP (before AD 1950) and are calibrated after the University of Washington Quaternary Isotope Laboratory Radiocarbon Dating Program (1987).

There is no way of demonstrating whether the roundwood charcoal was introduced during the constructional phase or whether it fell into the void produced by a rotting timber, or a deliberately removed post as has been argued at Bannockburn (Rideout 1996). Nonetheless, the

TABLE 1  
Charcoal identification

Context	Feature	Species	Weight (g)	Structural context
035	F47	<i>Quercus</i>	2.45	central area
035*	F47	<i>Betula</i>	10.20	central area
035	F47	<i>Corylus</i>	6.42	central area
035	F47	<i>Pinus</i>	0.19	central area
097*	F33	<i>Quercus</i>	13.41	entrance
097	F33	<i>Corylus</i>	3.76	entrance
090	F38	<i>Betula</i>	1.70	entrance
090	F38	<i>Pinus</i>	0.14	entrance
090	F38	Rosaceae	0.08	entrance
090	F38	<i>Alnus</i>	0.09	entrance
090	F38	<i>Corylus</i>	0.22	entrance
066	F16	<i>Corylus</i>	3.35	inner ring
066	F16	<i>Alnus</i>	0.90	inner ring
066	F16	<i>Betula</i>	35.00	inner ring
056	F10	<i>Alnus</i>	3.58	middle ring
056	F10	<i>Corylus</i>	2.91	middle ring
056	F10	<i>Quercus</i>	10.00	middle ring
056	F10	<i>Betula</i>	86.00	middle ring
076*	F6	<i>Corylus</i>	9.75	outer ring
076	F6	<i>Betula</i>	1.43	outer ring
082	F8	<i>Betula</i>	1.00	outer ring
082	F8	<i>Quercus</i>	0.03	outer ring
082	F8	<i>Corylus</i>	4.87	outer ring

\* contexts selected for radiocarbon dating

TABLE 2  
Radiocarbon dates

Lab no	F no	Wood type	years BP	Cal years 1 sigma	Cal years 2 sigma
AA-28368	F6	<i>Corylus Avellana</i>	2165 ± 50	360–127 BC	380–100 BC
AA-28369	F6	<i>Corylus Avellana</i>	2245 ± 50	392–208 BC	400–190 BC
AA-28370	F33	<i>Quercus</i> sp	2380 ± 50	517–397 BC	760–390 BC
AA-28371	F33	<i>Quercus</i> sp	2260 ± 50	394–251 BC	400–200 BC
AA-28372	F47	<i>Betula</i> sp	2420 ± 70	762–400 BC	790–390 BC
AA-28373	F47	<i>Betula</i> sp	2395 ± 50	751–399 BC	764–390 BC

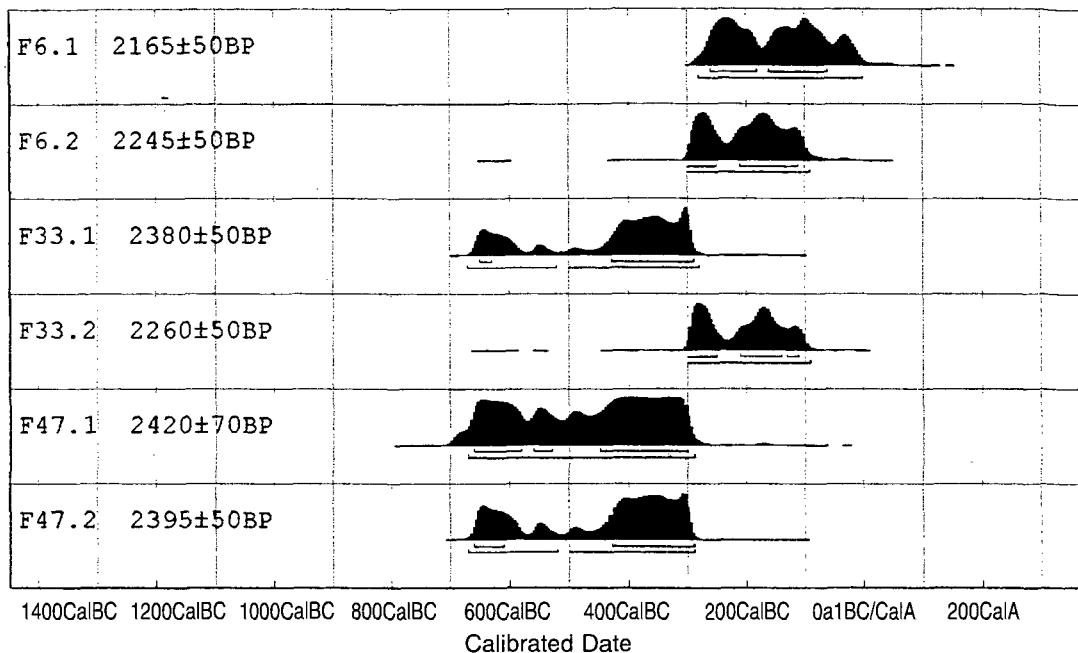
fact that small-diameter roundwood is predominantly represented in the samples suggests that this material does not represent posts that have burnt *in situ*. These contexts may thus have contained relict material, material from the occupation period of the structure, or even intrusive material from activity later than that.

Within the 2-sigma range, the dates obtained may be separated into an earlier and a later series that barely overlap (AA-28370, AA-28372, AA-28373 and AA-22368, AA-28369, AA-28371). Both chronological phases are represented by samples from the single feature F33 (AA-23780 & AA-23781). This suggests that the holes were infilled both with relict detritus from an earlier date and occupation material of a later date, possibly indicating two phases of occupation.

## DISCUSSION

### AN IRON AGE ROUNDHOUSE?

The excavation recorded remains of a series of timber rings to the south-west of the recumbent stone circle. The physical juxtaposition of a major stone monument of the Neolithic period with



ILLUS 5 Calibrated radiocarbon dates

a circular timber structure initially suggested that the latter was earlier than, or contemporary with, the stone circle and thus akin to ceremonial timber rings such as Balfarg Henge (Mercer 1982) or Woodhenge (Wainwright 1979). The radiocarbon dates demonstrate that this is not the case. These fall within the first millennium BC on calibration and indicate that the timber structure should be accommodated within the familiar British Later Bronze Age and Iron Age tradition of timber-framed, circular, roofed buildings. It must be acknowledged, however, that the chronological relationship between the radiocarbon determinations and the timber posts once set within the same features is not precisely known, as the charcoals which were dated represent small roundwood inclusions in the post-holes rather than remains of large timber posts.

The circular timber structure is defined by a ring-groove, most likely representing the outer wall foundation of a ring-groove house c 15.5 m in diameter. Although relatively large for such a structure, it is not so substantial to have made roofing problematic. The remains of at least two concentric rings of post-holes would represent the earthfast roof posts. Their regular, concentric spacing suggests these were elements of a single complex structure, rather than a series of post-rings, one replacing another, although the spread of radiocarbon dates would allow two separate occupations of the site to be proposed. A third, slightly off-centre ring of post-holes is also tentatively proposed from plan evidence. Within the structure, a single, large, stone-filled pit may have been a contemporary feature although its precise function and date remain unknown. The area had suffered extensive damage from quarrying prior to its recognition as an archaeological site and therefore only a fraction (around 40%) of the original footprint of the structure remained at the time of excavation.

On the basis of known parallels and of the radiocarbon dating results, despite the possibility of the sampled material post-dating the structure, it would appear that the post-rings and ring-groove on Candle Hill represent a large, roofed, building of Iron Age date. In the north-east of Scotland, excavated parallels for Candle Hill include Romancamp Gate (Barclay 1993) and Wardend of Durris (Russell-White 1995) where repeated circular patterns of post-holes represent the main structural elements of substantial roundhouses. Similar buildings were also being erected in earlier periods, however, as at Blairhall Burn near Dumfries (Strachan *et al* 1998), where a roundhouse with a similar entrance produced radiocarbon dates calibrated to the Middle Bronze Age. A broadly similar complex roundhouse with concentric post-rings at Scotstarvit Covert in Fife (Bersu 1947) produced pottery which was then dated to the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age (though this broad dating might now be questioned).

Details of the scale of architecture at Candle Hill are interesting. Relative to other similar-sized ring-groove houses (eg Lower Greenyards, Bannockburn: Rideout 1996) it seems that Candle Hill is more heavily provisioned with internal post-holes. Perhaps this arrangement represents an upper floor within the structure. Even allowing a wall of only 1 m in height set within the delimiting ring-groove and adopting a roof angle of 45 degrees, the apex of the roof would have been about 8.5 m high. Of the three post-rings proposed, the outer and middle rings can be estimated to have included around 19 and 17 posts respectively. The inner post-ring is more problematic as the posts are not regularly spaced. If pits F17 and F19 are interpreted as non-structural internal features rather than as part of the ring, there remain five posts spaced evenly at around 2 m apart. These five indicate a total number of about 10 posts, which seems ample to hold up the roof (and perhaps support a second floor). However, if all the posts on the arc of the innermost ring are considered (the gap between F20 and F21 can be interpreted as part of an extended entrance passage), at least 14 or 15 posts can be proposed. This seems excessive in terms of roof support, or even for an upper floor. Possibly more posts, or an extra ring of posts, was added as the building started to decay. At least it seems unlikely that the structure had been rebuilt in its entirety on the same stance, as was the case with structures at Scotstarvit Covert (Bersu 1947), Bannockburn (Rideout 1996), and West Brandon (Jobey 1962), although this cannot be ruled out.

It is certain that the internal space, as well as movement between the near-concentric rings separated by the arcs of posts, would have been extremely limited by this number of posts. The proximity of the rings to each other makes it unlikely that they were used for stalling cattle, as suggested for some large roundhouses with annular floor areas (Jobey & Tait 1996; Reynolds 1982), although some sort of agricultural storage may have been possible. The available width for a door-frame does not exceed 1 m.

#### CHOICE OF SITE

In the absence of stratigraphic links or artefactual evidence, it is difficult to say whether the roundhouse was related to some continuing use of the recumbent stone circle itself, but at least it cannot be denied that the Iron Age structure respected the earlier Neolithic monument, and reuse of the site at Candle Hill may itself be significant. Hingley (1995; 1996) suggests that in later prehistory, people sometimes reused already ancient monuments to associate themselves with older traditions and thus create a link with the past. The recumbent stone circle at Candle Hill is one of a number of such monuments within the immediate landscape that remain highly visible to anyone using the land today, and would have been equally, if not more, striking in the mid first millennium BC. Excavation of a stone circle at Loanhead of Daviot, Aberdeenshire, revealed

some Iron Age reuse (Kilbride Jones 1935); and at Moncrieffe, near Perth, the centre of a stone circle had been partly cleared and reused in the Iron Age for small-scale metal-working (Stewart 1985). It is proposed that the remains on Candle Hill represent the reuse of an earlier, predominantly ritual, site by a later settlement most likely during the Iron Age. This is backed up by the radiocarbon dates which provide at least a *terminus ante quem* for activity at the site in the late first millennium BC.

Candle Hill would have been an ideal place for a settlement even without the bonus of having an impressive and ancient monument already at its summit. It forms a rounded low-lying hill at 260 m OD and raised some 50 m above the surrounding landscape. With the exception of the summit (due to quarrying and the location of the scheduled stone circle) the hillslopes are still cultivated today. Traces of ploughmarks prove that the area around the summit has been cultivated in the past and it is likely that during the Iron Age this would have been an ideal setting for a house. It is possible that the subcircular stone enclosing wall around the hilltop (which is visible on the first edition Ordnance Survey map) follows the lines of an earlier enclosure. The ring-ditch house at Culhawk Hill, Angus (Rees 1998), occupied a similar hilltop site, immediately to the south of the summit with an entrance facing SSE.

#### RITUAL USE?

It is not unusual to recover very little occupation debris from an Iron Age structure and a paucity of domestic debris at Candle Hill could have been explained through erosion or truncation by more recent agricultural activity. However, the complete lack of any artefactual evidence whatsoever from Candle Hill is perhaps significant and suggests the possibility that the structure was not used for a domestic purpose.

The entrance to the timber structure lies in the south-east arc of the ring-groove. Perhaps this orientation was simply to minimize wind and maximize exposure to the sun (Rideout 1996), but a symbolic preference for this direction may also be considered. The entrance is averted from the stone circle but its orientation is parallel with the long axis of the recumbent slab in the circle and also offers an uninterrupted vista towards Bennachie Hillfort, some distance away, encompassing other stone circles in the valley below. There would have been a choice of several places to build a timber structure around the summit of the hill and it cannot be altogether by chance that the ring-groove building lies so close to the stone circle, with the entrance emerging into the space immediately in front of the recumbent stone and flankers at a distance of only 5 m. It has to be conceded that the stones in the circle have fallen, but they do not appear to have been moved. Of course, nothing precludes there being other timber structures near the summit of Candle Hill, at a greater remove from the stone circle, where they would not suggest the same sorts of questions and possibilities.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Owing to the size of this ring-groove building and its location immediately adjacent to an earlier ritual monument, it is possible that this was an important structure. With careful repair and renovation the structure could have continued in use for a long time. The lack of post-pipes within the post-holes suggests that their fills are not the result of posts decaying *in situ*. Furthermore, the small size of the charcoal pieces recovered, together with the results of magnetic susceptibility work, indicate that the posts did not burn *in situ*, although the fills were generally charcoal-rich. This evidence combines to suggest gradual infilling of the negative features on the

site by silting or by agricultural processes, perhaps after some of the major timbers were removed. In contrast, the positioning of large stones within some post-holes suggests that these were deliberately infilled, though at what stage this would have occurred is unclear. Two phases of construction can be identified in the entrance. These could relate to the two phases represented by the radiocarbon dates, in the earlier and later first millennium BC, respectively. It is possible that surface detritus from two phases of activity may have entered at least some of the post-holes, which would explain the presence of two quite different dates from pit F33.

Despite the limitations of the evidence due to truncation and quarrying, the most likely interpretation of the structure at Candle Hill is that it was an Iron Age building. Almost all recently excavated sites from this period have displayed significant variations in structural style and the Candle Hill ring-groove appears to add another configuration to the growing list. The building was possibly of some importance, and was perhaps associated with reuse of the Candle Stane recumbent stone circle. It does appear on present evidence that the single most important aspect of the timber structure is its proximity to the earlier ritual monument.

## PROJECT ARCHIVE

The project archive, comprising all CFA primary records, plans and reports will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland (RCAHMS); reproducible elements will be deposited with Aberdeenshire Sites and Monuments Record.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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