

# Bronze Age Stone Monuments of Dartmoor

by J. W. BRAILSFORD

THE lofty expanse of heather, bog and bare granite which forms the region under discussion in this paper, contains a numerous and in many ways unique group of prehistoric antiquities. Although Devonshire archaeologists have for many years been doing good work in this district, it has never, to the best of my knowledge, been comprehensively dealt with in the light of modern methods and experience. Consequently, the prehistory of Dartmoor still presents something of a mystery. After describing the material at our disposal, I shall here make a few tentative suggestions which seem to resolve some of the difficulties encountered in the interpretation of the archaeological evidence, and which may throw some light on the prehistory of the rest of southwest England.

The types of stone structure on Dartmoor which seem to belong to the Bronze Age are as follows :—

- |                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (A) Alignments or Stone Rows | (D) Cairns                 |
| (B) Stone Circles            | (E) Menhirs                |
| (C) Cists                    | (F) Hut-circles and pounds |

The last group are not strictly speaking monuments, but they unquestionably belong to the same complex as the sepulchral structures, and since they have yielded evidence for dating, their omission could hardly be justified. Other prehistoric structures, hardly referable to the Bronze Age, but which have some connexion with the matter in hand, are 'Dolmens' and 'Camps'.

## A, ALIGNMENTS

Monuments of this type are very rare in Britain outside Dartmoor, where, however, about sixty known examples occur. They consist of single, double, or multiple rows of stones, usually, and probably originally always, in association with a burial. The cairn which usually marks the starting point of the alignment is most often more or less on the summit of a ridge, from which the row or rows run downhill. The stones nearest the beginning are usually larger than the average, and the first is sometimes a fine menhir as at Drizzlecombe, Langstone

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Moor and other sites. The end of the alignment is almost invariably marked by a transverse 'blocking stone'. The intermediate stones have their long axes along the line of the row; sometimes the first as well as the last stone is placed transversely, as at Assycombe, Cosdon, Trowlesworthy Warren 2, and some other sites. One of the Drizzlecombe blocking stones is the highest menhir on the Moor, being 17 ft. 9 ins. long overall. The stones which form the body of the row may be

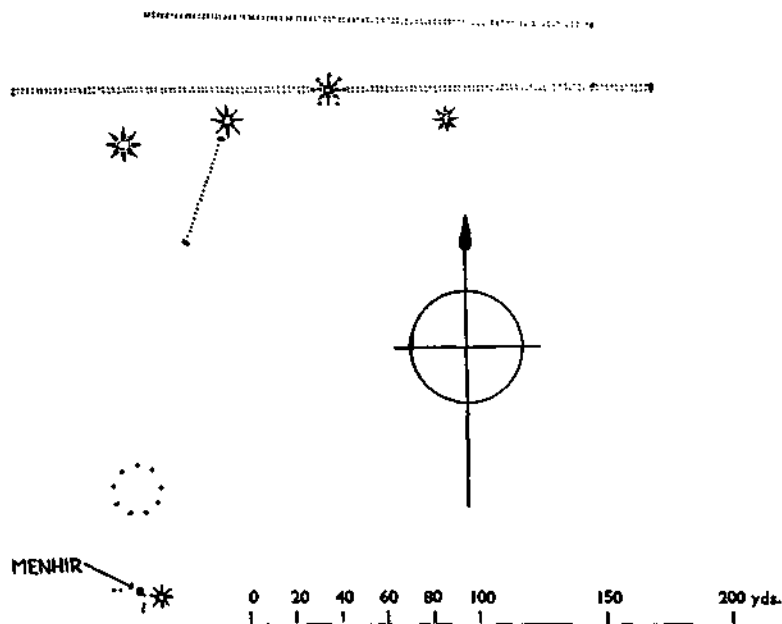


FIG. 1. STONE ROWS ETC. AT MERIVALE

only a few inches high, and are rarely over two or three feet, though many of those on Stall Moor are 6 ft. to 8 ft. 6 ins. high. Here the stones are spaced at intervals of 3-15 yards, but usually they are only about 5 ft. apart. There is great variety in the total length of these alignments. That connected with the large kist on Lakehead Hill is only 40 ft. long, but is probably incomplete. (FIG. 4). The most usual length is about 150 yards. Of those I have surveyed, nine are between 130 and 165 yards, 4 are between 400 and 413 yards, and the others, excepting the second row, also incomplete, on Lakehead Hill, are 266 yards (Merivale, FIG. 1), 62 yards (Harter Tor), 85 yards

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(Trowlesworthy Warren), and 83 yards (Drizzlecombe, FIG. 2). The small row at Merivale, which appears to be complete, is only 46 yards long. There is a row, consisting of small, but closely set, stones, which starts with a circle on Staldon Moor, and ends with a small cairn on Green Hill, some  $2\frac{1}{4}$  miles distant. Another on Butterdon Hill is over a mile long.

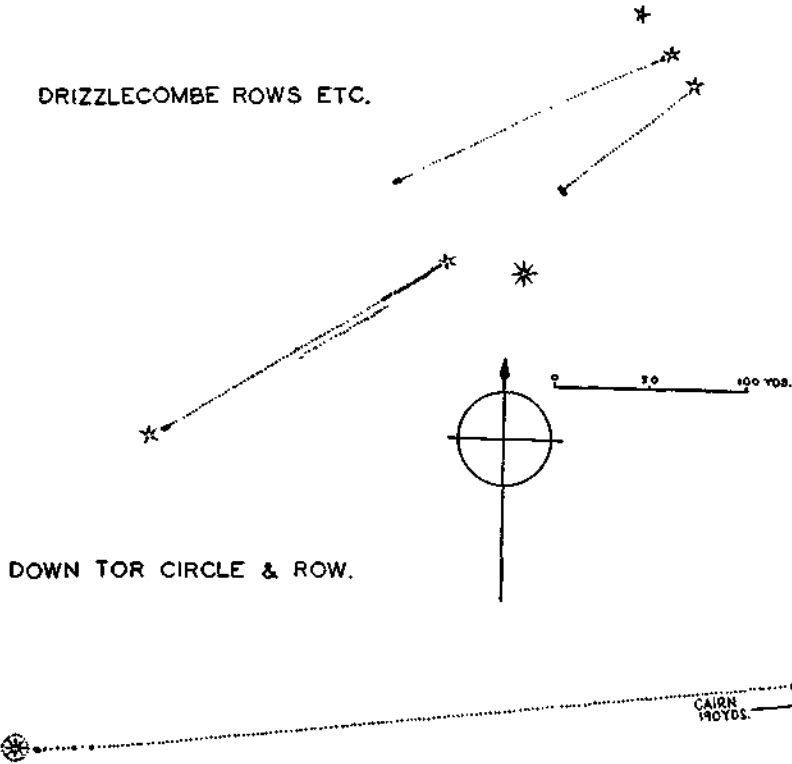


FIG. 2

The stone rows tend to run approximately east and west, as at Drizzlecombe, Merivale, Assycombe, Harter Tor, Trowlesworthy Warren 2, Down Tor (FIG. 2), Cosdon Beacon, Lakehead Hill, etc. In other cases the direction seems to be governed by the form of the ground. The Erme Valley group, including the Stall Moor and Staldon Moor—Green Hill examples, all run north and south, parallel to the river, but following the undulations of the Moor on either side. Those at Challacombe (N-S), Hurston Ridge (SW-NE), Ringmoor Down

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and Trowlesworthy Warren 1 (NNE-SSW), also follow the slope of the ground.

It is impossible to do more than conjecture the purpose of the stone rows, though many theories have been put forward. It has been suggested that they were processional ways, but it is difficult to apply this interpretation to the many examples of single alignments. They may simply represent a connecting link between the circle and outlier which is such a common type in Scotland, or a trace of the passage found in the chambered tomb from which the Dartmoor type of monument is probably derived. Fergusson<sup>1</sup> considered that the Merivale rows were a memorial of some great battle, and represented two armies drawn up face to face, but this theory has found little favour, even as regards this specific instance. Worth<sup>2</sup> believed that the alignments marked the resting-place of some great chief, and that the number of stones represented the size of his retinue. The practice of setting up rows of stones is followed today on the island of Atchin, where they are used as symbols for ancestors in religious rites.<sup>3</sup> On the same island a menhir, which replaces an original carved wooden image, is set up to represent the general ancestral spirit.

Alignments of carved stones are also found in Assam, where they are connected with a fertility cult and serve as vehicles for the souls of the dead.<sup>4</sup>

### B, STONE CIRCLES

The great majority of the Dartmoor circles are peristalithic, though in most cases the enclosed cairn or barrow has been almost or completely denuded. Consequently, a circle of this nature is often found in association with an alignment. Some of these circles are very small; there is one on Ringmoor Down only 12 ft. in diameter. Others are multiple, as that on Shovel Down, one near the Stall Moor row (FIG. 3 and PLATE 1), one on Lakehead Hill, and perhaps that at the end of the Assycombe Hill row. The best of these multiple peristalithic circles is that near Yellowmead Farm. It is a quadruple circle; the concentric rings have diameters of 62 ft., 48 ft., 38 ft., and 21 ft. respectively. None of the stones is over 4 ft. in height, but they are mostly

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<sup>1</sup> *Rude Stone Monuments*, 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings Devon Association*, 1892, pp. 387 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Geographical Journ.*, October 1936, p. 344.

<sup>4</sup> *ANTIQUITY*, September 1929, p. 324.

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wide and set close together, especially in the innermost ring. On the west are traces of about 8 alignments.

Besides the peristalithic circle, another type is found on Dartmoor, as elsewhere in the Highland Zone of Britain, which seems to have no immediate sepulchral significance. This occurs at the 'Grey Wethers', a fine pair of circles, each about 100 ft. in diameter; on Langstone Moor, where there is a double circle, with several 'foreign' stones, and at Brisworthy, Sherberton, Cosdon, Huccaby, Fernworthy and Scorhill. These circles are all comparatively large; Langstone Moor, inner circle, 70 ft.; Brisworthy, 80 ft., Fernworthy, over 60 ft., Scorhill, 90 ft. They do not contain cairns, and except for the Fernworthy and possibly the Scorhill Circle, are not associated with alignments. It is difficult to discover either of the stone shapes recently defined by Piggott in any of the circles or stone rows.

None of the Dartmoor circles has either a bank or ditch, and they would therefore all seem to belong to the western group, derived from the peristalith of a megalithic tomb, and to have no connexion with the 'Henges'. As to whether the larger circles were used primarily as temples or burial places, it is hard to say. Ashes have been found in some, *e.g.* Fernworthy, Grey Wethers, Brisworthy, which led the excavators to believe that these circles were used as crematoria. On the other hand the charcoal may be cremated remains placed there by intent, in which case the purpose of the circles might be sepulchral, though the ashes might well represent a ritual deposit.

There are altogether over 90 known stone circles on Dartmoor, including both the above groups.

### C, CISTS

There is no evidence to show that any of the Dartmoor cists were not originally covered by a barrow or cairn. A barrow usually contains only a single cist, but at Cosdon Beacon there is a cairn which contains a double cist, and traces of a third burial. A triple alignment leads from the cairn (FIG. 4). There is a considerable variation in the size of these structures; one from Langstone Moor, unusual in that it was paved, measured internally only 1 ft. 9 ins. by 1 ft. 1 in. by 1 ft. 2 ins. On the other hand the large cist at Merivale measures 6 ft. 6 ins. by 3 ft. 3 ins. by 2 ft., and has a capstone 10 ft. by 6 ft. 6 ins. The corresponding measurements for the principal cist on Lakehead Hill are 5 ft. 6 ins. by 3 ft. 3 ins. by 2 ft. 3½ ins., 7 ft. 5 ins., and for that

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at Roundy Park 5 ft. by 4 ft. by 3 ft., 4 ft. 10 ins. by 4 ft. 4 ins. and 5 ft. by 2 ft. 6 ins.

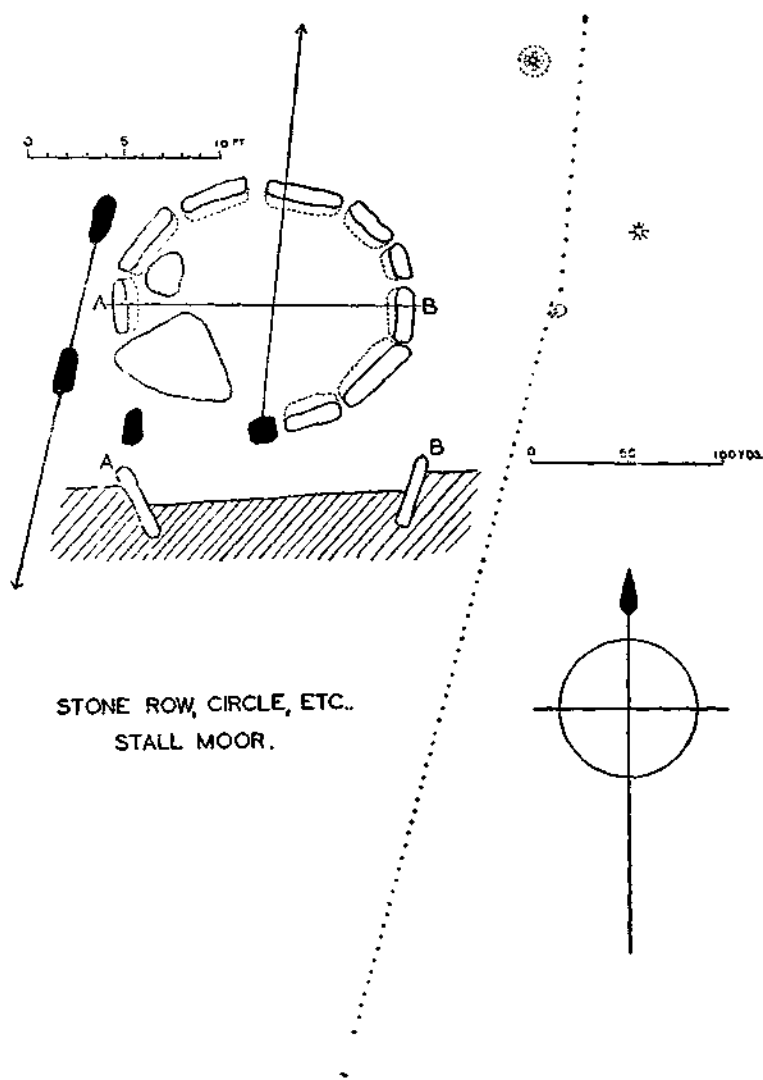


FIG. 3

These three have, however, all been restored, and Worth considers that they are now larger than in their original form. He gives the

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average internal measurements of over 60 Dartmoor cists as 3 ft. 1½ ins. by 1 ft. 11 ins. The average depth of 21 examples was 2 ft. 6 ins.<sup>5</sup>

The cists found on Dartmoor are almost invariably constructed of large slabs, but one at Great Nodden was walled. They sometimes have a pit in the floor, as at Great Gnat's Head, Archerton and Langcombe Bottom. None of the stones used in these cists bears any sort of decoration, which is so common on Scottish examples. In fact, none of the stones used for structural purposes by prehistoric man on Dartmoor is ornamented, or apparently even dressed in any way. There are about 110 known cists in this region. Nearly all are oriented NW-SE.

### D, CAIRNS

Cairns and barrows on Dartmoor are all of the simple 'bowl' type, with only one exception as far as I am aware. An internal or external peristalith is frequently present, but never a ditch. The mound may consist of a simple pile of stones, or there may be a small central cairn covered by an earthen mound, as at Hameldon, where there is also a stone kerb. The slabs composing the cairn may be placed sloping inwards so as to form a kind of crude cist in the centre. Paving is sometimes found under barrows. Near the cists in Langcombe Bottom a paved circle, which had been used as hearth for a large fire, was found without any covering mound. It had probably been used as a platform for cremation. Apparently this was the only rite practised on Dartmoor during the Bronze Age, but inhumed bones would not be preserved owing to the acid nature of the soil, so that evidence of inhumation would be destroyed, even if it took place. Moreover, the cists and cairns have nearly always been disturbed before scientific excavation took place. On the analogy of the rest of the Highland Zone, we should expect to find crouched inhumations associated with the types of grave found on Dartmoor. However, all the undisturbed cists which have been excavated have yielded only ashes, with occasional grave goods, usually of the poorest types.<sup>6</sup>

Cremation often took place in situ, and frequently the whole of the ashes was not collected. Sometimes the ashes are not localized in any way. On the other hand they are often collected, and deposited in a pit under the mound. These pits are often nothing but shallow holes in the earth, filled with ashes and soil, but at Hemstone Rocks and elsewhere a coverstone was present, and an example at White

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<sup>5</sup> *PDA*, 1937, p. 82.

<sup>6</sup> *PDA*, 1902, pp. 119 ff.

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Down, Lydford, was paved. Sometimes the ashes are contained in, or accompanied by an urn, as at Hurston Ridge (inverted), and Pen Beacon. Beakers have been found in cists at Fernworthy, Langcombe, and Watern Down, and elsewhere fragments of urns have been discovered in them.

The turf and topsoil had been cut away under a cairn at Fernworthy,

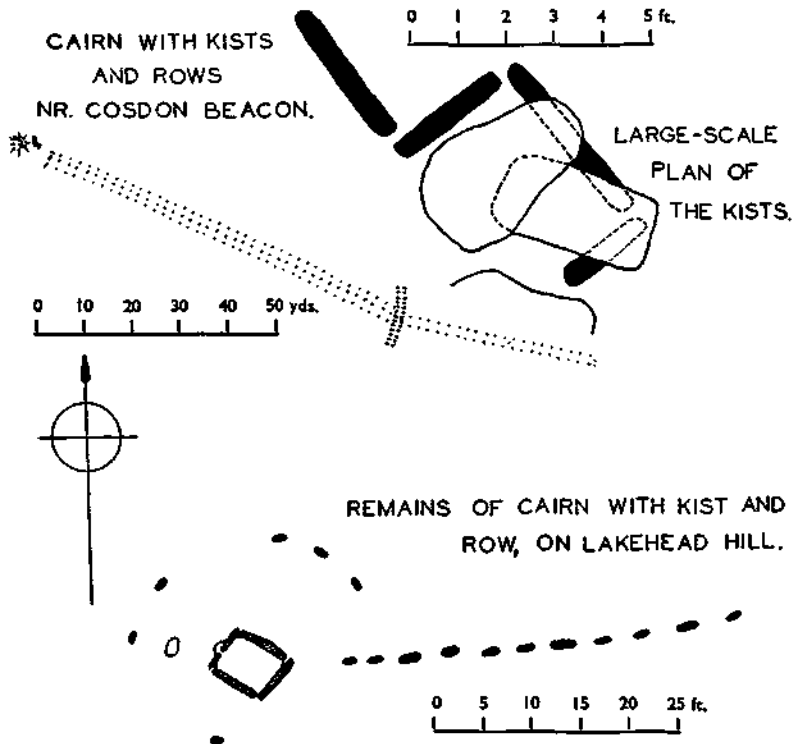


FIG. 4

so that the material of the cairn rested directly on the subsoil. In two cairns at Metherel the area inside the peristalith was lowered, and on this excavated surface was another ring of stones.<sup>7</sup>

### E, MENHIRS

As mentioned above, these usually occur at one end of an alignment. There are some examples, however, which have never been

<sup>7</sup> PDA, 1937, p. 147.



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connected with an alignment, circle, or any other form of monument, nor a burial. The finest of these is the 'Bairdown Man', near Devil Tor.

### F, HUT-CIRCLES AND POUNDS

The density of the population which existed on Dartmoor during the Bronze Age is shown by the great number of settlements—about 100, in less than 300 square miles of territory, much of which is uninhabitable, and probably was so then. It is possible, however, that the climate of Europe may have been drier at that time, in which case the area of completely barren land would have been reduced, and the remainder improved in quality. The Moor still affords good pasture, and some justification for the enormous Bronze Age population may be found in the fact that at that time the Moorland pastures were really exceptionally fine, when compared with the forest and scrub which covered most of southern England, apart from the Chalk regions.<sup>8</sup> Of course, all the huts were not occupied at the same time (though there can be no doubt that most of the settlements were more or less permanent), so that at any given time the population was not as large as the number of huts would at first give us to suppose. It has been suggested by Pilkington-Rogers<sup>9</sup> and others, that the settlers who occupied these huts came for tin, but if this were so, practically the whole of their winnings must have been exported, and their culture has not the prosperity which follows a trading people. They would rather seem to have been predominantly a pastoral race. This conclusion is supported by the frequent occurrence of huts which can only be cattle-stalls, and by the extreme rarity of weapons of the chase. In some of the settlements the occupants grew crops in small square fields. (See Curwen, *ANTIQUITY* 1927, I, 281 ff.)

It has been questioned whether the Bronze Age occupants of Dartmoor formed a permanent population, or were not rather seminomad folk, who drove their herds on to the moor in summer, and retreated to the shelter of the surrounding valleys during the winter. Such a theory, however, does not seem compatible with the archaeological evidence. The extraordinary abundance of sepulchral monuments on the Moor must surely indicate a numerous settled population. I find it impossible to believe that the primitive inhabitants of the surrounding country carried their dead up on to the Moor, as into a vast cemetery, and there erected great memorials of a type of which there

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<sup>8</sup> *PDA*, 1894, p. 185.

<sup>9</sup> *PDA*, 1932, p. 379.

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are only three or four others in Southern England. If Dartmoor was a 'sacred area' it was probably thickly peopled with the living as well as the dead, like Salisbury Plain. However, there is little evidence for communication between the Moor and the fertile lowlands during the prehistoric period. The culture found on the Moor seems to be of a purely local type, developed by folk living on the Moor, and almost completely isolated from the rest of the world, at any rate in the later stages of the Bronze Age. I shall, in dealing with the 'Camps', give further evidence for the existence of a permanent population on the Moor at the end of the Bronze Age.

To return to the question whether the people who dwelt in the hut-circles were miners as well as farmers. Although evidence for the working of tin during the Bronze Age is fairly abundant in Cornwall,<sup>10</sup> it does not seem to have been practised on Dartmoor before medieval times. However, the later tanners would have destroyed any traces of prehistoric working. Owing to the absence of conclusive evidence, and the scanty attention which has hitherto been paid to the matter, it is best to leave the question of whether tin-working was carried out on Dartmoor in prehistoric times until more work has been done on the subject. It has been suggested that the concentration of settlements in the river valleys shows the existence of tin-streaming, but it is more probable that it was due to the shelter afforded by such a situation, and to the water supply and means of communication which the river would give. Moreover, the density of settlement does not correspond with the relative abundance of tin deposits.

We come now to the actual dwellings of Bronze Age man, the hut-circles. Those at Grimspound may be taken as typical examples.<sup>11</sup> Their walls consist of a basis of large vertical slabs of rock, levelled up with small stones, and backed outside with a bank of turf. The doorways, which usually face southwest, are frequently protected from the wind by shelter-walls, and are paved; the jambs are 2 to 3 feet high. The floors are sometimes paved, or consist simply of the subsoil beaten hard. A paved dais was usually constructed on the right side of the entrance, which here is most commonly the higher or southern side of the hut. A flat stone in the centre of the floor formed a base for the roof-pole. A hearth and also an ash-filled 'cooking hole', occur in the huts which were occupied by the settlers themselves. The stones which had fallen from the walls of the Grimspound huts were only

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<sup>10</sup> Hencken, *Archaeology of Cornwall and Scilly*.

<sup>11</sup> PDA, 1894.

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sufficient to raise the sides to a height of 3 ft. or so, showing that the huts were roofed with thatch or turves. Some of the huts showed no traces of human occupation, and must have served for cattle-stalls, as the doorways were unusually wide in these examples. Others were doubtless store-houses. The huts at Grimspound range from 6 ft. 6 ins. to 15 ft. 6 ins. in diameter, and are on the average rather smaller than is usual.

Excavation has shown that in hut-circles near the border of the moor, where a comparatively plentiful supply of wood was available, the raised stone dais was replaced by one of logs, kept in place by upright stones. Larger pieces of wood were used for fuel on these sites than elsewhere.

Cooking was performed by means of 'pot-boilers' and 'cooking-holes'. ('Cooking-holes' with pots still in situ have been excavated at Legis Tor and Raddick Hill.<sup>12</sup> One at Legis Tor, which contained two 'pot-boilers', had been broken in antiquity, and mended with unbaked china-clay). At Harter Tor, slate covers have been found actually resting on the mouth of a pot. They also occurred at Grea Tor and Blackslade Down. Similar objects were found at Skara Brae, Orkney.<sup>13</sup> The pots from Legis Tor and Raddick Hill were round-bottomed, but sherds of flat-bottomed pots have been found. Large circular stones, which seem to have been used to protect the apex of the roof, occur at Whiten Ridge, King's Oven, and Buttern Down. A modern example of this type, used in a similar fashion, was in 1896<sup>14</sup> still in use on a building at Berry Down farm.

The fuel used in the Dartmoor huts consisted of stunted oak, alder and peat. Baring-Gould,<sup>15</sup> describes the discovery of a hut containing charcoal, and numerous heat-cracked stones. He concludes that it was a primitive Turkish bath, in which water was poured over hot stones to produce a cloud of steam. A similar practice exists among the Lapps at the present day. At Shapley Common and Blackslade Down large huts were found, each connected with a small one which contained so much charcoal, and so many potsherds, that it is legitimate to assume it served the purpose of kitchen to the larger building.<sup>16</sup>

The prehistoric pounds of Dartmoor, which contain many of the hut-circles, consist of more or less circular enclosures, walled with dry, unhewn masonry. In size they vary from those which contain only

<sup>12</sup> PDA, 1896, pp. 174 ff.

<sup>13</sup> V. G. Childe, *Prehistory of Scotland*, 180.

<sup>14</sup> PDA, 1896, p. 180.

<sup>15</sup> *A Book of Dartmoor*, 46.

<sup>16</sup> PDA, 1895, p. 88; 1897, p. 148.

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two or three hut-circles, to the large type such as Grimspound (4 acres). That at Broadun is 12 acres in extent. Grimspound is unusual in having a double wall. Each part is built on the same principle as the hut walls, is 4 to 5 ft. high, and about 3 ft. wide. The space between is about 3 ft. wide, and may be reached from the interior of the pound. It was probably originally roofed over with beams and turf. It seems probable that this space was used for storage or even for habitation, and in the latter event, a parallel would be found in the occupied ditches of causewayed camps, if these really were occupied.

That the Dartmoor pounds were not in any way forts, is shown by their weak defences, simple entrances, and often indefensible positions, usually in a valley. That at Broadun is now without any water supply. They were rather enclosures for cattle, and a protection against prowling wild beasts. They even seem to be inadequate for this latter purpose, but it is probable that a hedge of thorn or furze boughs was erected along the walls, which would greatly increase their defensive power.

We now come to some groups of antiquities which cannot be assigned to the Bronze Age, or only doubtfully. They have nevertheless some connexion with the subject of this paper, and belong to the periods immediately preceding or following that under discussion. I shall start with the Dolmens.

Dolmens are the only truly megalithic monuments found on Dartmoor, and probably in every case are the remains of the chamber of a passage-grave. Four examples are known, all on the fringes of the moor. The finest is the 'Spinsters' Rock' near Drewsteignton, which, according to local tradition, was set up by three spinsters before breakfast. The coverstone of this monument measures 15 ft. by 10 ft., and rests on three uprights which are from  $6\frac{1}{2}$  to 9 ft. high. It weighs about 16 tons. According to Polwhele and William Grey there was at one time a complex of circles and stone rows in association with the 'Spinsters' Rock', but their accounts are inconsistent, and of dubious accuracy. The only certain features seem to have been an avenue to the west of the dolmen and a pair of circles nearby.<sup>17</sup> The monument stands in a ploughed field, and as far as I could discover, there is no trace of any barrow or other structure connected with it at the present day. Its present form is not original, since it has been 'restored'.

On Shovel Down are the remains of what may be another dolmen,

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<sup>17</sup> Ormerod, *Archaeological Journal*, 1872, p. 348; *Devon Notes & Queries*, xv, 124; *PDA*, 1930, p. 249.

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the ' Three Boys '. Only one stone is now left. This may at one time have been connected to the Fernworthy circle by an avenue.<sup>18</sup>

The third dolmen is at Coringdon Ball, near South Brent. Here the stones lie at the southern end of a long barrow about 65 yards long and 15 yards wide. Only one upright, 4 ft. 3 ins. high, is left standing, but two of the fallen stones measure about 12 ft. by 7 ft. (PLATES II, III). A short distance to the east is a set of badly despoiled alignments, apparently about eight rows running parallel in an east-west direction, and connected with a cairn on the west. The remains of another Dolmen are to be found on Cuckoo Ball.<sup>19</sup>

It will be seen that all the first three Dolmens seem to be connected with typical monuments of the Bronze Age complex, with which they appear to be, broadly speaking, contemporary, though probably belonging to the earliest phase.

The intimate connexion between the hut-circles and the sepulchral monuments of the Bronze Age complex may be emphasized here. Not only has excavation produced pottery and other finds of similar type from both cairns and huts, but at all the greatest alignments pounds and hut-circles are found in immediate association, and great monuments never occur in a district where these dwellings are rare.

The last class of prehistoric structures with which I shall deal here is that of the hill-forts, or camps, of which there are some 20 on the borders of the Moor. These are all of the type which has been shown to belong to the earlier part of the prehistoric Iron Age. None of these sites has been adequately excavated, but pottery similar to that from the Glastonbury Lake-Village has been found at Cranbrook Castle, together with a granite quern.<sup>20</sup> The earthworks at Holne Chase have yielded iron currency bars,<sup>21</sup> and iron spearheads have been found close by.<sup>22</sup> The camp at White Tor, which is the only one on the Moor proper, is also the one which has been most thoroughly investigated.<sup>23</sup> Owing to the different nature of the site, its construction is unlike the other forts, in that stone is used far more abundantly. It would perhaps be unwise to insist on its contemporaneity with the other hill-forts, though it seems to fit in the general system. The only finds made during the excavation were flint flakes, and some coarse sherds.

The hill-forts are in extremely well chosen positions. (See Ordnance

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<sup>18</sup> *PDA*, 1892, p. 391.

<sup>20</sup> *PDA*, 1901, p. 129.

<sup>22</sup> *V.C.H. Devonshire*, I, p. 597.

<sup>19</sup> *PDA*, 1911, p. 96.

<sup>21</sup> *PDA*, 1932, p. 386.

<sup>23</sup> *PDA*, 1899, p. 146.

PLATE I



STONE CIRCLES AND ROW ON STAFF MOOR. (See p. 107)  
Ph. J. W. Peckford

PLATE II



REMAINS OF CHAMBERED BARROW ON CORINGDON HALL, FROM THE SOUTH (SCALE 1/50)  
/Dr J. W. Bankford

PLATE III



REMAINS OF CHAMBERED BARROW ON CORINGDON HILL, FROM THE SOUTHWEST (SEP. 1899)  
*Prof. J. W. Beantford*



PLATE IV



STONE ROWS ON CHALLACOMBE COMMON (See p. 160)  
*Ph. E. W. Bradshard*

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map.) They command most of the river-valleys, along which communication between the Moor and the lowlands must pass. They are often situated on a spur at the junction of two streams, so that they command both branches. Altogether they form a fortified frontier zone which completely encircles the Moor. None is found in the interior of the Moor; all are on the extreme edge of the plateau, except White Tor, and that is near the border. Now I think there can be little doubt that these forts were intended to check raiders moving along the river valleys. As far as is known, the Iron Age invaders never settled on the Moor, except possibly at White Tor. Therefore the belt of forts cannot have been to check inroads moving up the valleys, but must have been built by the men of the surrounding country, as a defence against the moor-men. This may be taken to prove the existence of a permanent native population on the Moor at the time of the Iron Age invasions.

We have now completed our survey of the major antiquities which prehistoric man has left on Dartmoor and its confines. I have described a remarkable complex of monuments, which I have attributed to the Bronze Age, without as yet giving the evidence for this dating. This evidence consists mostly of small finds from the settlements and cairns, and a summary only of their nature can be given owing to considerations of space.

A considerable number of hut-circles have been excavated during the last 50 years, and are described in the Proceedings of the Devon Association. Almost every site has yielded flint flakes, knives, scrapers, etc., also 'pot-boilers', and coarse potsherds. Most have produced grinding stones, and smooth 'rubbing stones'.

Other finds include a plano-convex knife, red ochre, slate covers, sling stones, spindle whorls, a whetstone. No metal objects have been recovered. Bone implements were probably in use, but none have been found.

The finds from cairns include arrowheads, a bead (faïence?), beakers, a bracer, bronze daggers, flint implements, grinding stone, hammer stone, horn button, flint knives, flint scrapers, bronze spearhead, fragments of urns.

The poverty of this list is largely due to the widespread, in fact almost universal, rifling of cairns that has gone on all over the Moor. This process was stimulated by Edward II, who made a grant for the opening of barrows in Devonshire. The making of this grant suggests that objects of some value had been found before that time.

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The scattered finds were bronze celts, a dug-out canoe, bronze ferrules, flint dagger, wooden idol, moulds, palstaves, polished celts, bronze spearheads, stone axe, stone adzes, a bronze sword.

Flint implements (arrow-heads, both barbed and tanged and leaf-shaped, scrapers, etc.) are common on the Moor.

The evidence of the small finds is supplemented by the affinities which we may find for the sepulchral monuments.

The Dartmoor complex, with the exception of the alignments, is almost identical with the great complex which existed all over the Highland Zone of Britain during the greater part of the Bronze Age, though the associated finds are somewhat different. The typical Dartmoor monument of a cairn, with or without cist, enclosed in a circle, is common throughout this area during the Early Bronze Age, and some Scottish examples belong to the Middle Bronze Age. Scottish hut-circles have been shown to belong to the Beaker period, though Childe,<sup>24</sup> considers that at any rate some of the Dartmoor examples belong to the Late Bronze Age, with analogies in Anglesey. Late Bronze Age cremations have been found at the foot of some of the Cornish menhirs.

As regards the alignments themselves, we can find very few datable parallels. A passage-grave on Lewis, which probably dates from the Early Bronze Age or a little earlier, is surrounded by a circle, and connected with eight alignments. The great alignments at Carnac in Brittany are probably to be referred to the earlier part of the Bronze Age, and an example from Caithness was associated with a cist burial containing a beaker.

Let us now consider such of the small finds as afford a more or less secure basis for dating. Much of the pottery is undatable, but has points in common with Bronze Age forms elsewhere. The three beakers form a more reliable criterion, and those from Watern Down and Langcombe Bottom are of late types. Other objects typical of the Beaker complex have also been found, including the bracer from Archerton,<sup>25</sup> the horn button from Fernworthy, the flint dagger from Belstone<sup>26</sup> and the bronze daggers from Fernworthy, Broadhall and Shavercombe Head. The Hameldon dagger<sup>27</sup> probably dates from the close of the Beaker period. The stone implement from Legis Tor is a

<sup>24</sup> *Bronze Age*, 160, 226.

<sup>25</sup> *PDA*, 1901, p. 135.

<sup>26</sup> *Procs. Devon Arch. Explor. Society*, II, 217.

<sup>27</sup> *PDA*, 1872, p. 554; Evans, 'Ancient Bronze Implements, etc.', p. 228, *Ant. Journ.*, 1937, XVII, 313.

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type common in the Iberian Early Bronze Age. It is of spatulate form, with an incomplete perforation near the broad end. Barbed and tanged arrowheads are fairly common, as well as the more primitive leaf-shaped form, and stone axes of types which commonly occur elsewhere in the Early Bronze Age. It will be seen that a very large proportion of the material, and practically all that from the interior of the Moor, is datable to the Early Bronze Age. When we examine the finds dating from later periods, they are, with very few exceptions, limited to the borders. I have not been able to discover the type of the Moor Barton spearhead, but the hoards of palstaves from Chagford,<sup>28</sup> North Bovey and Bovey Tracey, and the isolated examples from Burleigh Wood and Drewsteignton<sup>29</sup> are probably of the Middle Bronze Age. The socketed celt from Bovey Heathfield is a Late Bronze Age type, it is of a long, narrow form, and rectangular section, and may be of French origin. The Bloodypool spearheads<sup>30</sup> are of the Late Bronze Age barbed type. I have been unable to find the character of the Greenball sword,<sup>31</sup> but it must belong to the Middle or Late Bronze Age. The ferrules from Bloodypool<sup>32</sup> and Gawlor Bottom (the only reasonably certain find of this period in the interior of the Moor), are almost certainly of the Late Bronze Age. As I have said above, the greater part of the pottery from the cairns and hut-circles is undatable. It is mostly coarse red ware, usually with an expanded or everted rim. Ornament consists of finger-nail and cord impressions, sometimes forming a herring-bone pattern, and slashings. Horizontal grooves and 'festoon' ornament were found on sherds from Grea Tor.<sup>33</sup> 'Comb' ornament also occurs, as on sherds from Legis Tor. The pots are sometimes provided with large lugs or cordons.

There is no evidence whatever for any settlement on Dartmoor during the Iron Age, except for what may be a stray Belgic coin from Princetown. Apart from this, the whole period between the end of the Bronze Age and medieval times is represented only by two hoards of Roman coins, one from near Belstone and one from Furzeleigh, and a small fragment of what may be Saxon pottery from the Blowing-house in Swincombe Bottom. A few post-Roman inscriptions are also known, nearly all from the borders of the moor.

Neither is there any certain trace of human existence on the Moor

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<sup>28</sup> Evans, *Ancient Bronze Implements*, p. 82.

<sup>30</sup> Evans, 338, 339, 465.

<sup>32</sup> Evans, 339

<sup>29</sup> Evans, 86.

<sup>31</sup> *PDA*, 1932, p. 387.

<sup>33</sup> *PDA*, 1897, 156.

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before the Early Bronze Age.\* Yet during the latter period, man appears to have existed there in greater numbers than at any other time before or since, until at any rate medieval times. We must therefore postulate a fairly extensive invasion at the beginning of the Metal Age, possibly stimulated by climatic reasons.

Although there is evidence for the continued existence of a population on Dartmoor at the end of the Bronze Age, we find very few objects on the Moor which can be compared with finds of the Middle and Late Bronze Age elsewhere. It would seem that the unique culture which evolved during the Early Bronze Age persisted, while ever becoming poorer and more degenerate, long after more advanced conditions obtained elsewhere. It can hardly have been before the Iron Age invaders had become established that Dartmoor was depopulated, probably owing to the increasing humidity of the climate.

It now remains to consider the origin of these folk who peopled Dartmoor in the Early Bronze Age. The first step is to find from what direction they came. That they arrived from the North is improbable, as there are hardly any antiquities showing affinity with those which are characteristic of Dartmoor, between Okehampton and the Bristol Channel. This is in spite of the fact that Exmoor (though geologically different) is of the same physical nature as Dartmoor, and must have been equally attractive to the invaders. It is true that there used to be an alignment in the Exmoor district on Maddocks Down,<sup>34</sup> and that one is still in existence at Yelland, near the mouth of the Taw,<sup>35</sup> but these were probably due to a coastal settlement, parallel to but not directly connected with that of Dartmoor. Moreover, if the settlers had approached Dartmoor from the North, they would almost certainly have come up the valleys of the Torridge and Taw, and left abundant traces around the head-waters of these rivers. But this district, except for the Eastern part, which is near the Upper Teign, is, of all the regions of Dartmoor, that which shows the fewest traces of prehistoric occupation.

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\* Miss Barbara Shaw, of Wimborne, has recently discovered a microlithic site at Ringhill, near Postbridge. This consists of an occupation layer, containing charcoal and a hearth, and has yielded micro-burins, microliths, and cores of the type usually associated with a microlithic industry. Implements of later types have been found on the same site. I am indebted to Miss Shaw, for allowing me to print this hitherto unpublished information, and to Dr Clark, who first told me of the site.

<sup>34</sup> Westcote, *View of Devonshire*, 1630, p. 90; *V.C.H. Devonshire*, 1, p. 370.

<sup>35</sup> *Proc. Devon A.E.S.* 1, 201.

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At first sight a Western origin seems not unplausible. The Bronze Age culture of Dartmoor has many points in common with that of the Cornish moorlands. However, the alignments, which form such an essential feature of the Dartmoor complex, are absent from the east Cornish moors, and only one, near St. Columb Major, is known from the whole county. The Cornish stone circles seem to be of a slightly different type to those on Dartmoor, as they are larger, frequently composed of dressed stones, and commonly have a central menhir. The circle known as the 'Stripple Stones' seems to be a 'Henge', with bank, ditch and well defined entrance. Another important difference is the almost complete absence of the Beaker culture in Cornwall, whereas Dartmoor seems to form something of a focus for it.<sup>36</sup> Conversely, the typical Cornish cinerary urns are not found on Dartmoor.

There seems to be sufficient disparity between the archaeological material of Dartmoor and Cornwall to obviate any possibility of the Bronze Age culture of the former originating in the latter region. At the same time the two areas seem to have features in common which are not apparent elsewhere in Britain, such as the practice of cremation throughout the Bronze Age. These must be explained by at any rate a partial community of origin for both cultures.

The headwaters of the rivers which flow from Dartmoor to the south and east present a marked contrast to the northwestern section. There is a high concentration of antiquities in the Erme Valley, on the Upper Plym and Walkham, between the East and West Dart, and round the sources of the South Teign, the Wallabrook and the Bovey. This distribution strongly suggests that the folk of the hut-circles came from the South. The evidence for a southern origin given by the distribution of settlement is supported by the fact that the only other area in Europe where alignments are at all common, besides Dartmoor, is the Carnac district in Brittany. Stone rows, besides those already quoted, do, it is true, occur in Caithness, possibly near Shap,<sup>37</sup> and at a few other sites in the British Isles; but these are probably all sporadic examples derived from the same source as those on Dartmoor, *i.e.* Brittany. The two examples named above are very similar to the Dartmoor rows; that at Shap appears to have been connected with sepulchral remains, while one in Caithness,<sup>38</sup> was

<sup>36</sup> Fox, *Personality of Britain*, Pl. II.

<sup>37</sup> *Rude Stone Monuments*, p. 129; Camden's 'Britannia' (ed. Gough), III, p. 401.

<sup>38</sup> *Rude Stone Monuments*, 529.

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associated with a cist containing a cremation. The use of cremation from the beginning of the Bronze Age would also suggest Breton influence, though not necessarily direct; a Breton type which does, however, also occur in southeast England, is the Archerton bracer. The stone implement from Legis Tor has affinities with Iberia. The Hameldon dagger and its pommel have partial parallels in Brittany, but Piggott considers that this type, ornamented with small gold pins, was manufactured in Wessex.<sup>39</sup> The Hameldon cairn, with stone kerb and menhir on the summit, may have Breton affinities, and two barrows of similar type have recently been excavated in Glamorgan. That at Breach Farm contained objects of Breton, or related Wessex, origin.<sup>40</sup>

So far we have seen that the Dartmoor Bronze Age culture is of a general Western type, though the presence of alignments seems to give evidence of direct contacts with Brittany.

When we come to consider the beakers, we find evidence of an element coming from southeast England. There are at least four of these vessels from Dartmoor, a remarkable number in view of their rarity in the Cornish peninsula, and the poverty of the Dartmoor Bronze Age. Moreover in view of the widespread rifling of cairns this number may be only a fraction of the original total. The presence of all these beakers can hardly be due to chance contacts. They were all found near the headwaters of rivers flowing to the south or east; and do seem to represent a definite coastal contact, either ethnic or by trade, with the Early Bronze Age of the rest of southern England. The horn button from Fernworthy, and the Belstone flint dagger, support the evidence of the beakers. The fact that at least three of these beakers were found with cremations is against the hypothesis of an actual westward migration of the beaker folk, though perhaps at the time when the settlement of Dartmoor took place, the older custom of inhumation was losing its hold.

The most we can say at present is that two elements seem to have combined to form the Bronze Age of Dartmoor. One came direct oversea from Brittany, and the other, possibly carrying indirect Breton influence, was carried along the coast and up the river valleys from southeastern England. The former movement may be regarded as parallel to those which Piggott has recently shown to have taken place between Brittany and Wessex in the Early Bronze Age.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Piggott, *Proc. Prehistoric Soc.* New ser., 1938, IV, 52 ff.

<sup>40</sup> For details and further parallels see P.P.S. New ser., 1938, IV, 107. See also 1937, III, 457.

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The reader is advised to consult the Ordnance Survey 'Tourist Map of Dartmoor', scale 1 inch to mile (paper, flat, 2s; mounted and folded, 3s; mounted and folded in sections, 4s 6d). The archaeology of this area has recently been revised, and the map redrawn (5th edition). The antiquities on Dartmoor are so thick on the ground that a text-map is out of the question here. For special sites and areas the 6-inch maps should be consulted; index-maps and information can be obtained from the Director General, Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton (So'ton 5181).

In conclusion, I should like to record my thanks to Mr Stuart Piggott for much useful information and advice, and to Mr M. J. Kidner, whose long-suffering assistance in the field has been invaluable.

### NOTE

The affinity between the alignments of Dartmoor and those of Carnac is shown, apart from their obvious general resemblance, by a specific feature, which occurs in the Challacombe rows (FIG. 5 and PLATE IV). This is the large transverse menhir, which is not terminal, but inserted in the row, marking the position of a structure at the side. Similar examples occur in the Kermario alignments, near Carnac.<sup>41</sup>

### STONE ROWS, ETC; CHALLACOMBE.

The extremities of the rows, especially at the southern end, are largely destroyed, and are here restored conjecturally.

0 10 20 30 40

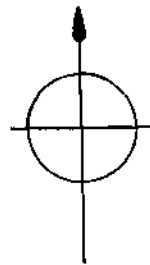


FIG. 5

<sup>41</sup> Miln, *Archaeological Researches at Carnac, etc.*, 1881, pp. 59-60, 71.