



GLOSSARY

PREHISTORIC DARTMOOR

Chamber Tombs: Long (up to 48m) earthen mounds with a stone chamber at one end where multiple or successive burials took place. They were erected during the neolithic period (probably in the third millennium BC), in small clearances in the woodland cover. Not more than a dozen examples are known on Dartmoor, all on the fringes of the present day moorland; most have lost much, if not all, of their earthen mounds. Spinsters' Rock (illustrated), of which only the chamber remains, fell down and was re-erected in the 1860s.



chamber tomb

Round Cairns: Round mounds, principally of stone, perhaps dating from the third millennium to around the middle of the second millennium BC. These mounds covered burials which were contained within pits or a cist (see over). Round cairns succeeded the

chamber tombs and, although some may have covered more than one individual internment, many (the smaller examples) did not. Cairns vary in size from 3 to 4m in diameter, and less than 1m in height, to well over 20m and sometimes as much as 40m in diameter and 3.5 m in height. The smaller cairns are believed to be generally earlier in date and often have a vegetation cover different from the surrounding area. The larger cairns



round cairn (large)

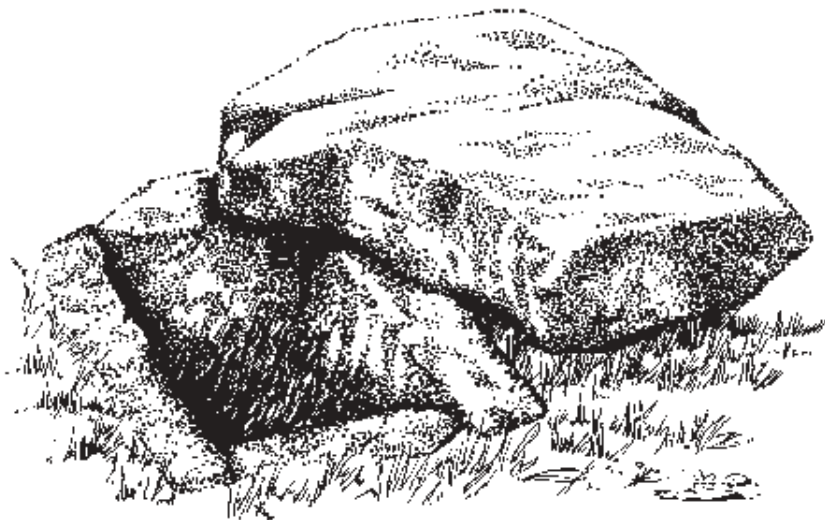


round cairns (small)

that were sited on prominent ridges and hilltops may well have also served as territorial boundary markers.

Cists: These are 'boxes', measuring 1m x 0.5m on average, formed of granite slabs, usually sunk into the ground to a depth of about 0.5m. They contained single burials – crouched inhumations or, perhaps more commonly, cremations, and

were covered by small round cairns. In the bottom of some cists, pits containing charcoal have been found. They belong to the earlier part of the second millennium BC. Most, if not all, of the known Dartmoor cists were excavated in the 19th or earlier 20th century; in some were found sherds of beaker-shaped pots, flint arrowheads and other artefacts.



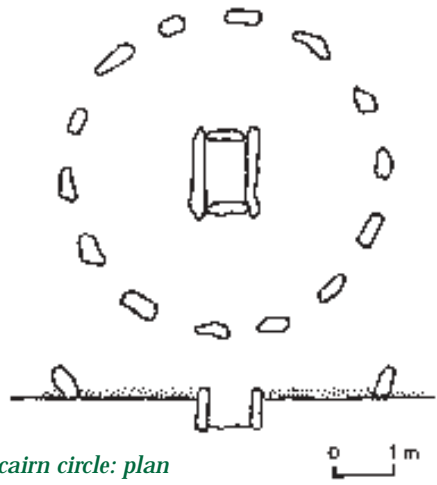
cist



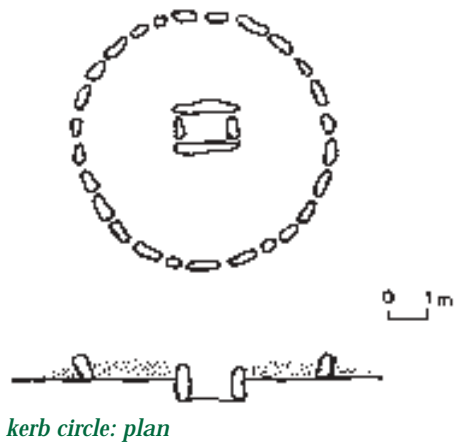
cairn circle

Cairn Circles: Here, a single burial (often within a cist), was covered by a low round cairn. The limits of the cairn are marked by a circle of upright granite slabs, not touching each other, often leaning outwards.

Kerb Circles: A single burial (often within a cist), covered by a shallow spread of stone. The monument is bounded by a contiguous or a very close-set ring of low stones.



cairn circle: plan



kerb circle: plan



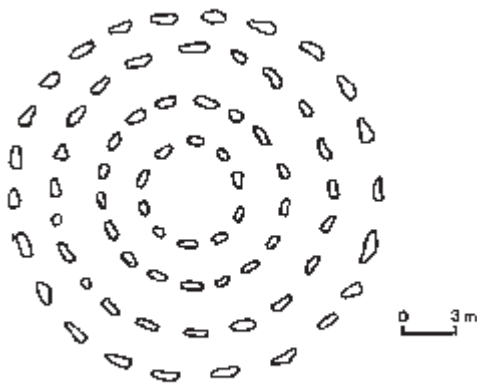
kerb circle



multiple stone circle

Multiple Stone Circles: Concentric rings of slab-like stones, within a low round cairn. A number of examples are known on Dartmoor; but this type of monument can only be recognised where the stones protrude from the cairn material.

Ring Cairns: A level or slightly hollowed area is surrounded by a low circular or oval stone bank. Excavated examples of this type of monument in Wales have proved to contain burials. Within the only two examples on Dartmoor to have been investigated were pits containing charcoal, but no evidence for burial was discovered; they were found to have been constructed around 1600–1800 BC.



multiple stone circle: plan



ring cairn: plan



ring cairn



Tor Cairns: The tors – in the main, granite outcrops – of Dartmoor are naturally dominant features. Some of these tors (or parts of them) were encircled by low banks of stone, or incorporated in a round cairn.



Tor Cairn

Cairn Cemeteries: A few groups of small cairns, numbering from 20 to 30, have been found in various parts of the moor, particularly in the north western quarter. The cairns are very low, often only distinguishable because they have a different vegetation cover from the surrounding area. Many are thought to date back

to the earlier part of the second millennium BC but others can also date from medieval and later periods!. Not all necessarily covered burials; some may result from field clearance.

Stone Rows: Alignments of upright stones, which may be anything from 32m to 3.4 kilometres long (the world's largest) and from 2.5m to less than 10cm high. More than 70 stone rows survive on Dartmoor; nearly half this number are single rows; almost the same number are formed of parallel lines and are called double stone rows. Only five examples of triple or multiple stone rows are known. Almost three quarters of the Dartmoor stone rows have a burial monument at one end;

A number have a tall terminal stone (or **MENHIR**). Some stone rows terminate in a blocking stone – a stone set sideways across the end of a row.

stone row





stone row

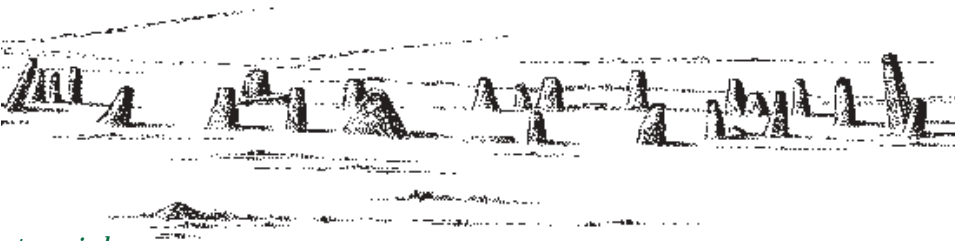
In a few areas on Dartmoor, two or more stone rows can be found together in a ritual complex, often in association with other monuments such as stone circles and cairns.

menhir



Menhirs: These are single tall upright stones (the tallest on Dartmoor is 4.2m) which are generally considered to be part of the component of a ceremonial complex that also contains stone rows and stone circles. They are also occasionally found in apparent isolation. Being visible from afar they may have had both a practical and a symbolic role; serving as territorial markers, way markers or it could be that they were memorials set at points where passers by could see them.

Stone Circles: These are free standing circles consisting of upright stones open to the sky with their flat interiors seemingly devoid



stone circle



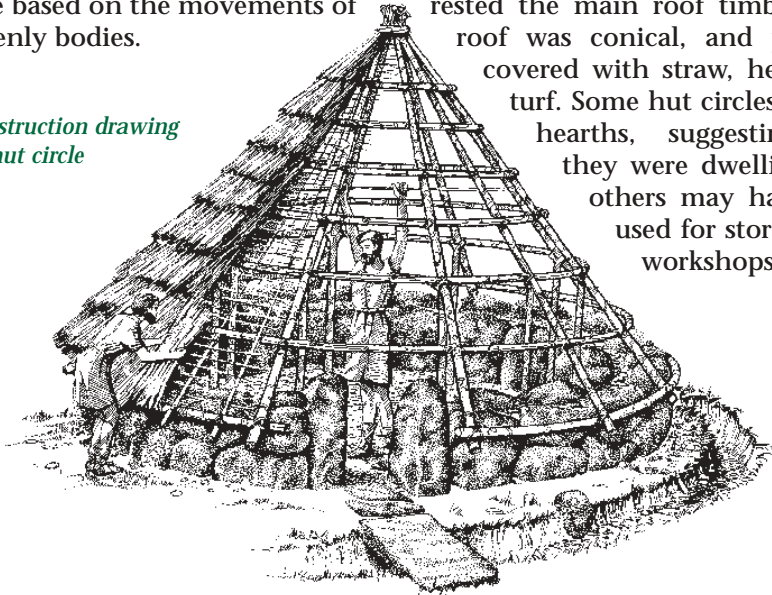
of any burial mound (although cremations may have been added later) or other visible features. Many were partially or wholly re-erected during the 19th century, when at the same time limited investigation of their interiors produced large amounts of charcoal. This suggested that fire played a part in whatever activity was taking place within these monuments. The striking location of many of these circles, some have commanding views to distant horizons or are situated on watersheds, suggest that they have strong links with their surrounding landscapes and were significant points on lines of communication. They have also been the subject of a great deal of metrical and astronomical analysis which has encouraged the idea that they may have had some kind of calendrical significance based on the movements of heavenly bodies.

Hut Circles or Round Houses:

These are the remains of the round stone-walled structures, first built on Dartmoor during the second millennium BC, but continuing in this form into the first millennium BC. Four main construction methods of the stone walls have been observed: (i) a bank of rubble; (ii) single orthostats (usually of granite slabs) around the inner edge of the hut circle, with an external rubble bank; (iii) concentric rings of orthostatic walls with earth and rubble filling; and (iv) coursed drystone.

Hut circles vary in size from 3–10m in diameter. Excavation suggests that the roof structure in many cases consisted of a ring of wooden posts within the hut circle; to these were probably fixed just above head height, a ring beam upon which rested the main roof timbers. The roof was conical, and probably covered with straw, heather or turf. Some hut circles contain hearths, suggesting that they were dwellings, but others may have been used for storage or as workshops.

reconstruction drawing of a hut circle





Enclosures (or Pounds): Some hut circle settlements are surrounded by a circular or oval enclosure wall, formed of stone rubble. Where there is no apparent entrance to the enclosure it is thought that these may have been deliberately built to keep animals away from the dwelling houses inside; in others where there is a well defined entrance the enclosures may have formed a safe area for both people and their stock. In one instance it has been demonstrated, through archaeological excavation, that the enclosure wall was built some time after the construction of the first house on the site.

Some enclosed settlements consist entirely of a single enclosure with hut circles contained within it; whilst others have hut circles both within and outside the enclosing wall. Others are made up of a number of more dispersed small enclosures containing perhaps one or two hut circles each amid a scatter of free standing hut circles. In yet other instances it is possible to see how prehistoric communities seem to have expanded over time with the addition of a second, third or more enclosures expanding out from the original enclosing wall.



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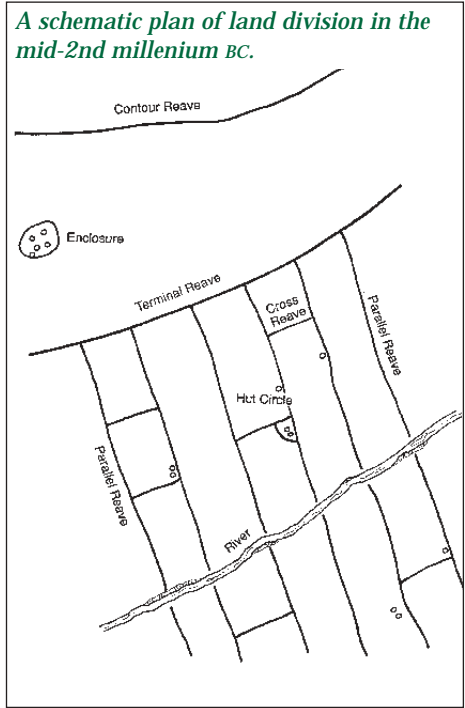
a prehistoric enclosure



Reaves: These are the land boundaries established by the Dartmoor communities during the middle of the second millennium BC. Excavation has shown that some reaves at least were of two phases. The first involved the creation of a low hedge-bank of soil and turf; in the second phase the banks were capped with stone. Remains of gateways in the reaves have been found. Four main types of reave have been identified:

(i) **Terminal Reaves** – These are the boundaries which, cutting across the hillslopes of Dartmoor, defined the limits of enclosed land during the middle of the second millennium BC.

(ii) **Parallel Reaves** – Within the areas defined by the terminal reaves, land was further divided by the construction of parallel land boundaries, set at right angles to the terminal reave, and thus aligned up and down the hill and valley slopes. These created long, narrow, rectangular

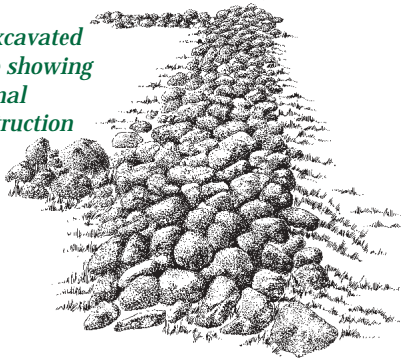


lar fields which, we assume, facilitated the controlled movement of stock.

(iii) **Cross Reaves** – Within the parallel reave systems, smaller fields were created by the construction of boundaries cutting across the areas between the parallel reaves.

(iv) **Contour Reaves** – These land boundaries snake across the contours, particularly on the southern and western sides of Dartmoor, above the main areas of prehistoric enclosures. They are often incomplete, but seem to mark a division between grazing zones.

an excavated reave showing original construction





Hillforts: Defended settlements (containing hut circles) of the middle and later Iron Age, sited on hilltops on the moorland fringe, and demarcated by deep ditches and high ramparts. They may express an increasingly aggressive lifestyle at this time. Three hillforts overlooking the

valley of the River Teign on north-east Dartmoor are sited very close together, and suggest an atmosphere of tension. One of these, Wooston, has a complicated arrangement of outworks (embanked enclosures) which may have been constructed to provide a safe haven for stock.



Cranbrook hillfort

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