

AMR Report 2614



ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY  
Department of the Environment  
Room 3 · Fortress House 23 Savile Row  
London W1X 2AA

Telephone 01-734 6010 ext 3433

Mrs. H. Miles,  
Dept. of Extra-Mural Studies,  
University of Exeter,  
General St.,  
Exeter.  
EX4 3LZ

Your reference

Our reference

Date 29/8/78

Dear Henniella,

Please find enclosed your  
archaeological report(s) for the site(s) of Challow Road.

I would be most grateful if you could send me a draft  
copy of any proposed publication which includes the report(s)  
or extracts from the report(s).

Please acknowledge receipt of this communication.

Yours sincerely,

Carole Keepax

ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY

MATERIAL	CHARCOAL
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SHALLOW MEAD  
 SITE:..... (DATE:29/8/78)  
 1  
 SHEET: .....

AM No	X-Ray No	Photo No	Description and Report	Ref No
731888	140 sample 4 bags		Oak ( <u>Quercus</u> sp.) From mature timbers  All oak from mature timbers	A 24 31  (33)

*Carole A. Keepax*



Interim Report

Shallowmead is an enclosed area of rough pasture immediately above Span Head and below the ridge where the Five and Two Barrow groups of Bronze Age monuments are situated. It lies at c.1450 ft. OD, slopes steeply and faces South West. It is part of an area to be drained and deep-ploughed for agricultural improvement. Field survey by Miss H. Eardley-Wilmot revealed a low circular feature about 10 m across together with small mounds and apparent levelled areas; trial excavation by the North Devon Archaeological Society showed the circular feature to possess a firmly constructed wall with a good outer revetment. It was thought possible that the site contained evidence of prehistoric habitations, possibly hut-circles which are rare on Exmoor. Accordingly the site was chosen for the Exeter University Extra-Mural Department's 1977 training excavation, which was organised in collaboration with the North Devon Archaeological Society and the Devon Committee for Rescue Archaeology. Financial assistance was given by the Exmoor National Park Committee and the Devon Committee for Rescue Archaeology.

The circular feature was fully excavated and is illustrated by a sketch overleaf. Its wall was largely constructed of stones wedged on edge, revetted on the outer edge by a single course of large, flat-laid, blocks; it was nowhere more than two or three stones high. On its inner edge the stones faded out to a sparse scatter of rubble across the interior. A rough wall of rubble and turves defined a slight raised platform across the upper part of the interior. An area of flat and slightly worn slabs may possibly have formed an entrance. The outer revetment was not continuous around the ring; it was absent for a symmetrical length around the lower edge where the ring wall was very slightly constructed. There was no sign of any later disturbance to the site and the structure appears to have been built in this way. Outside the revetment, and wedged up against it, was another band of close set stones. The whole structure appeared to have been built in one phase as a single unit. The site had not been levelled before the building of the ring. The former soil survived beneath the ring wall, but was very heavily leached and irregular on its surface so that it was not possible to determine whether turf had been stripped before the site was built. The interior of the ring had no good surface over most of its extent and certainly nothing in the nature of a worn floor; a small patch produced stake-holes, a spread of charcoal-black soil (but no hearth) and some tiny potsherds. Two good pebble whetstones with grooves (one illustrated overleaf) were built into the wall, with several other possible pebble tools. There was a scatter of flint of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age type, including a scraper from the soil beneath the ring wall. There was a large quantity of charcoal in this soil, some of it directly under the stones.

This structure is provisionally interpreted as a ring cairn. (Ring cairns are circular enclosures usually found associated with Bronze Age barrows and presumably used for religious ceremonial although burials may sometimes be incorporated within their structure). The Shallowmead site lacks most of the features of regular hut-circles, an inner edge to its wall, a reasonable floor surface, drains or internal settings. A hut might also be expected to have been levelled into such a steep slope. The symmetrical ring structure with several inter-locking construction zones is consistent with a Bronze Age ceremonial site as is the use of white quartz for many of the stones in the revetment ring. It is hoped to obtain radiocarbon dates for the site. The sparse finds are consistent with a date in the early Bronze Age (2,000 - 1,500 BC). The suggested ring cairn would relate to the Five and Two Barrow groups on the top of the ridge.

Four other areas were investigated; these consisted of small spreads or piles of stones, one definitely, the others probably, man-made. The soil beneath them had leached to a similar state to that beneath the ring cairn though containing less charcoal; this suggests that the heaps are of considerable antiquity. They are probably to be connected with some early attempt at land clearance. One or two flints were found on each of these sites.

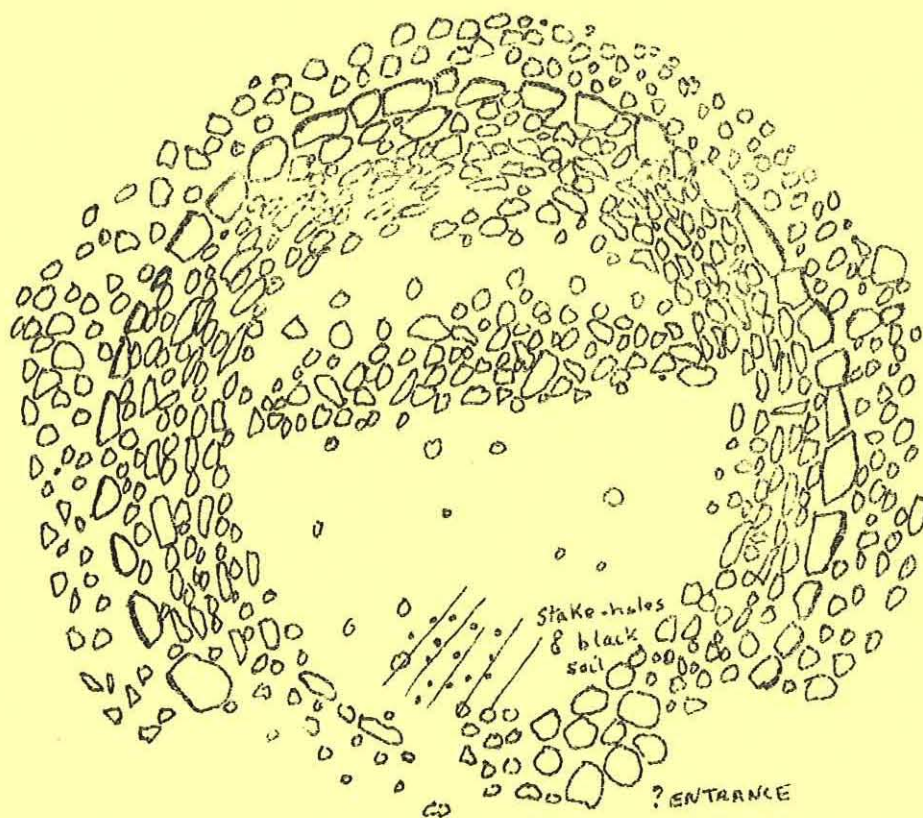
The final report will appear in the Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society.

Warmest thanks are due to everyone concerned for making the training excavation a success; to the landowner for permission, to Mr. A. Brown for provision of a camp; to Josephine Thorpe for initial organisation; to the members of DCRA and NDAS for all their assistance; to the staff, Bob Silvester, Andy King and Edna Thompson; to Steve Staines for looking at soils; finally to Miss H. Eardley-Wilmot, but for whom the whole venture would never have taken place.

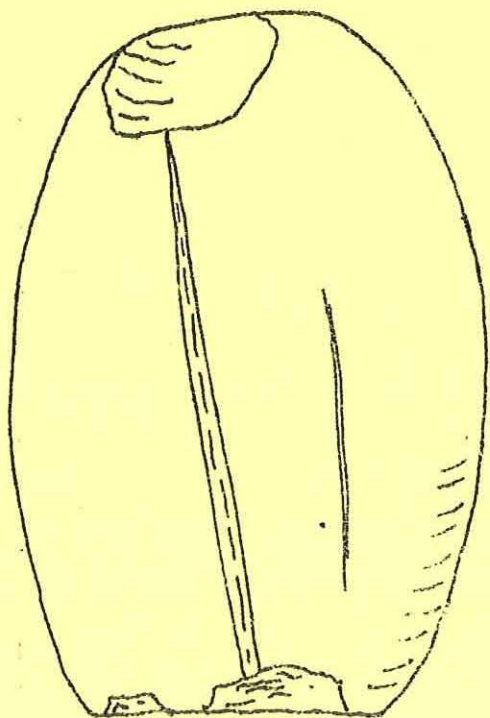
HENRIETTA MILES

Exeter University Department of Extra-Mural  
Studies.





SHALLOW MEAD, NORTH MOLTON, RING CAIRN - SKETCH PLAN  $\times 80$



GROOVED PEBBLE WHETSTONE  $\times 1$



FLINT KNIFE  $\times 1$

FLINT  
SCRAPER

$\times 1$

