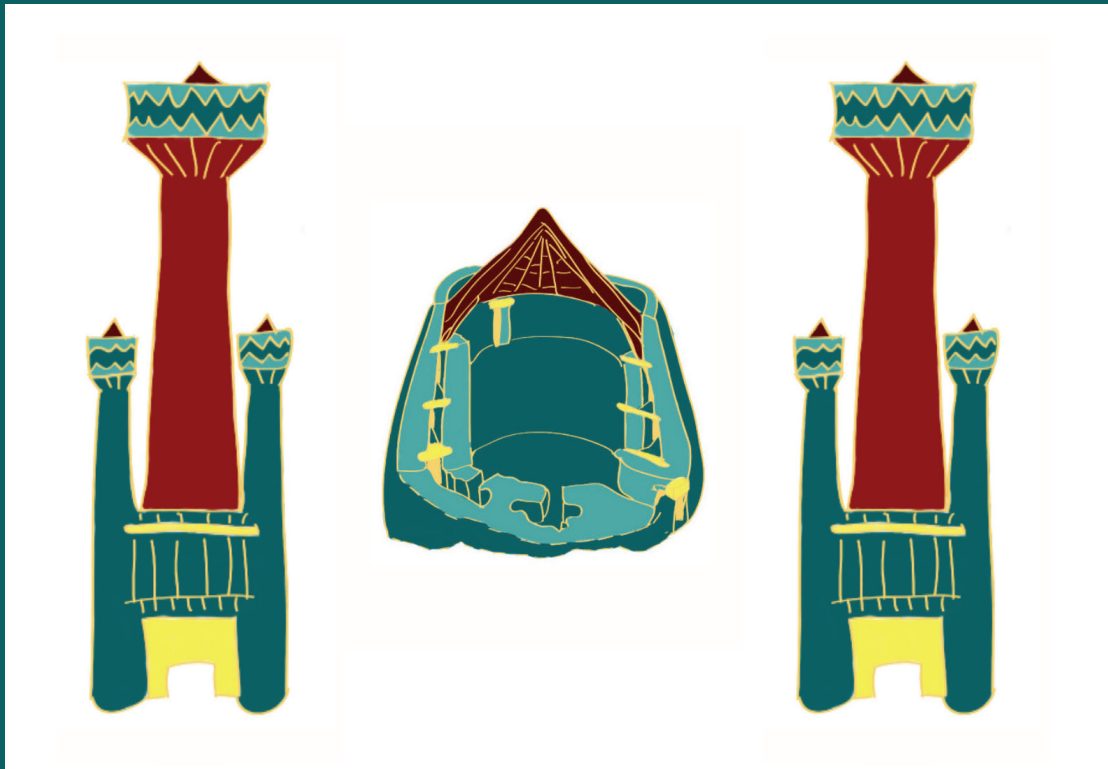




Gardening time

Monuments and landscape from
Sardinia, Scotland and Central Europe
in the very long Iron Age

Edited by Simon Stoddart, Ethan D. Aines
& Caroline Malone



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McDONALD INSTITUTE CONVERSATIONS

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with contributions from

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On the cover: *Cut out reconstruction of a broch flanked by two reconstructed Nuraghi, reconsidered by Lottie Stoddart.*

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Simon Stoddart

A tribute in honour of Giovanni Lilliu (1914–2012)

Anna Depalmas

Remembering Giovanni Lilliu may seem an easy task. One might think that it is only necessary to list his rich scientific bibliography and to describe his great work over the course of nearly a century, as a university professor and archaeologist. However, a simple listing of his achievements would not transmit the true importance of his work. He not only illuminated the prehistoric archaeology of Sardinia, but also used it to establish the idea of a Sardinian epic which he connected to the modern world.

Prehistory was the choice of his field of study – rather than the predominant exaltation of the Roman era and classicism of the time –, and this had its origins in his study under Ugo Rellini at Rome. He graduated in 1938 and worked as Rellini's assistant until 1942, when he returned to Sardinia to take up the position of Professor of Historical Archaeology and Geography at the University of Cagliari. From 1942 to 1958, he taught various subjects – Paleoethnology, Geography and the History of Religion – and in the latter year became a Full Professor and was appointed to the Chair of Sardinian Antiquity at the University of Cagliari. From 1944 to 1955 he also worked for the Superintendency of Sardinian Antiquity.

He held many posts in his long academic career. He was for a long time, and on various occasions, dean of the Faculty of Letters, Director of the Institute of Archaeology and Arts, Director of the School of Specialization in Sardinian Studies and Editor of the Journal carrying the same name (*Studi Sardi*), and, in 1990, he was elected a fellow of the Academy of Lincei of Rome. In his later years, he remained a very active Professor Emeritus at Cagliari University.

In 1936, while he was still a student, he published his first work on Su Nuraxi di Barumini. This was his birthplace, and throughout his life he maintained a close and almost embodied connection with the village. This also led him to carry out his most important

archaeological work in the landscape of his birth. Indeed, between 1951 and 1956, he worked on excavating an artificial hill there, which was found to cover the nuragic complex of Su Nuraxi di Barumini. This was the first excavation conducted in Sardinia using a stratigraphic methodology to establish a time-line for the nuragic period, and it became a benchmark for later investigations and chronological research. His work at Barumini formed the basis for a series of fundamental papers on Sardinian proto-history, from *I nuraghi. Torri preistoriche di Sardegna* (The Nuraghi, prehistoric towers of Sardinia) in 1962 to *Civiltà nuragica* (Nuragic civilization) in 1982.

He was the first to study many of the themes that he investigated in depth during his long scientific career and many of these were only studied for the first time in the first half of the twentieth century. The chronology of proto-Sardinian civilization was one key field that he developed, modified and changed in the course of his long academic career. At the same time, Lilliu published a brief essay in which he attempted to identify certain constant factors in the history of Sardinian art, and this was developed in the catalogue for the exhibition of Sardinian bronzes in Venice in 1949. Following the theories of Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli on how to classify the art of the ancient world, Lilliu assessed the coexistence of the 'anti-naturalistic' art of the barbarian world and the 'naturalistic' art of the classical world within which he inserted Sardinia as a 'land of pure expression', and defined as anti-classical and barbaric. This line of thought became the nucleus of a theme which he studied from various angles and which helped him to define key concepts in his field of study.

At the beginning of the 1960s, he published his wide-ranging synthesis of Sardinia, *La civiltà dei Sardi dal Neolitico all'età dei nuraghi* (1963) (Sardinian Civilization from the Neolithic period to the nuragic

era). This work was later reprinted, expanded and revised in various editions until 1988. Apart from incorporating the results of later research, the later editions also allowed him to reassess some of his earlier observations with a critical eye, which was always one of his great strengths as a researcher and academic. The book proposed that a single unifying thread ran through Sardinian prehistory from the Neolithic period, even starting in the Palaeolithic period, until the Phoenician conquest. It established elements of the historiography of the island using data obtained from his work as an archaeologist. Many of the principal Sardinian monuments were described in an elegant style which alternated with detailed, creative and lyrical descriptions. The book was aimed at not only archaeologists and students, but also at a wider public, and indeed the book was dedicated to 'the shepherds of Barbagia'. Generations of archaeologists have studied the manual and found themselves cited in later editions, in agreement with Lilliu's global historiographical approach which aimed to unite past archaeological research with his experience of teaching Sardinian Antiquity in a university context. This book also gave birth to a national and popular history of prehistoric Sardinia, and expanded the work of archaeologists and their research from being only something studied in university lecture rooms and solely of interest to academics to its status as part of the common heritage of all Sardinians.

This social dimension, this impact, can be clearly seen from Giovanni Lilliu's popularity, which came from having shone a light on the national history of Sardinia and giving life to a Sardinian historiographical tradition, i.e. one with a strong sense of identity. His fame led to him being consulted, even in the later years of his life, on current events in Sardinia not necessarily related to culture or archaeology and being seen as a kind of prophet or even as the 'father of his country'. One of the many lessons that he taught us, and in which he himself was an expert, was the importance of intellectuals being able to discuss, communicate and talk about complex historical themes in a way which was both comprehensible and of interest to laymen.

He showed a total but clear love for his land by taking on civic responsibilities, which he fulfilled in a way which was never dull but rather vigilant and acute, despite his soft tone. As a cultured man, he worked for the Regional Council of Sardinia, drafting the Special Statute of Autonomy. He was also involved in politics, first as a member of the Christian Democrats and later as a supporter of initiatives which promoted the independence of Sardinia and of progressive positions which were

close to the Centre-Left. In practice, he was active in actions which were designed to give greater value to Sardinian identity and culture.

The ideological basis for these activities were elaborated by Giovanni Lilliu at the start of his intellectual life, and were made completely clear in the 1970s when he developed the concept of 'constant Sardinian resistance'. At the beginning of the first prehistoric phase, the Sardinians were characterized by their resistance to foreign invaders and any attempts at acculturation. This characteristic did not disappear in ancient times, but has been a constant theme of Sardinian history and ethnicity, and is still present today. In this sense, Sardinian culture is not a fossil, but rather displays an extraordinary historical continuity with the past. This is an analysis which never became an idealization of aspects of Sardinian society and behaviour, but rather provided a clear and realistic picture through also identifying its negative aspects and its limitations. Nuragic civilization in particular became a symbol of a polycentric society, always in conflict with itself, the land and foreign invaders.

However, it is certainly limiting to supply a rigid definition of what Lilliu meant by nuragic civilization, given that he saw it as a dialectical relationship between its various dimensions, and worked on a reconstruction of it that was complex and multifaceted. He proposed an interpretation of nuragic civilization that saw it not as local but Mediterranean. In this, he was greatly influenced by his direct experience of excavations in the village of Ses Paisses in Majorca, where he found ethnic roots which were common to all the large islands of the West Mediterranean, the Balearics and Corsica, although there were also differences connected to the independent developments drawing on their insularity.

The fact that he found writing easy as can be seen from his some 330 publications. The last of these was in 2010, and was a detailed description of the excavation of the Giant's Tomb of Bidistili in Fonni. It is worth saying that many of the present arguments about certain elements and problems of prehistoric and proto-historic Sardinia were originally raised by him.

I would like to end this brief and partial memorial to Giovanni Lilliu by mentioning his work as a university professor of prehistoric and proto-historic Sardinia (and not only those subjects – with great versatility he also taught Geography and Christian archaeology). What I will personally remember is his little figure in jacket and pullover (he seldom, if ever, wore a tie), typewritten sheets in hand, and always punctual. He never postponed a lesson and was never

absent. As an examiner he was always courteous and understanding. But you had to be very well prepared for his exams. The end of the course every year was the moment that we all waited for. Then there were the one or two day excursions that he led us on to various parts of Sardinia. We students would present

our explanations of the monuments and he would listen with great attention as if it were his first visit, and then sometimes add some of his own memories, making it ever more clear how he was the creator of our view of prehistoric Sardinia.

He really was the memory of Sardinian history.

Tributes to Dr David Trump, FSA, UOM (1931–2016), and Dr Euan MacKie, FSA (1936–2020)

Caroline Malone & Simon Stoddart

David Trump was best known for his important work on the islands of Malta (Malone 2020), but his contribution to the prehistory of Sardinia is also worthy of record in the context of this volume.

David Hilary Trump took his first class BA in Arch and Anth at Pembroke College, Cambridge in 1955, and was a scholar of both the British School at Jerusalem, where he dug with Kathleen Kenyon, and the British School at Rome, where he excavated the key site of La Starza.

After Malta, Trump held the post of Staff Tutor in Archaeology at the University's Board of Extra-Mural Studies until retirement in 1997, when he was succeeded by Caroline Malone. He not only contributed to the teaching of Mediterranean Prehistory in the Department of Archaeology, but also had a large following in the wider, continuing education community, engaging mature students in all aspects of Archaeology in the region and beyond. It was during this period that he made a major contribution to the archaeology of Sardinia, uncovering once again unsuspected phases of prehistory at Grotta Filiestru (Trump 1983) and completing the survey of Bonu Ighinu. At Grotta Filiestru, he characteristically invested all the resources he could muster into constructing an effective chronology (Switsur & Trump 1983) and some of the first faunal studies undertaken in Sardinia (Levine 1983). This work was, in its way, as equally pioneering as his work on the island of Malta. The Grotta Filiestru produced a new scientifically dated sequence of Sardinian prehistory, identifying the fifth-millennium BC Filiestru Neolithic phase for the first time. In earlier fieldwork he also excavated the cave site of Sa 'ucca de su Tintirriòlu (Loria & Trump 1978). His work around Bonu Ighinu (Trump 1990) is, however, closest to the



Figure 0.1. *David Trump.*

theme of this volume since, in typical energetic style, Trump also provided one of the earliest studies of a nuragic landscape, once again demonstrating a pioneering role, now followed by many others.

Euan MacKie was a central figure in the study of brochs, as is shown by the very high level of citation in this volume (Mackie 1965 ... 2008). In several ways the contribution of David Trump and Euan MacKie run in parallel, one journeying south, the other journeying north also from Cambridge beginnings, both Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries of London, engaged in seminal fieldwork, on a shoe string generally with volunteers, providing the first chronological foundations for monuments in the landscape and addressing synthesis of the results. Both were pioneers of their generation who retained their own intellectual independence in museums (both) and in continuing education (Trump), rather than a department of archaeology or a heritage organization.

MacKie graduated in Archaeology and Anthropology from St. John's Cambridge in 1959 and took his PhD from the University of Glasgow in 1973, becoming, after a brief period at the British Museum, Keeper and Deputy Director (1986) of the University Hunterian Museum. As a graduate he took part in an expedition to British Honduras, directing the excavation of the Maya site of Xunantunich, leading to an interest in Mesoamerican archaeology throughout his life.

His excavation of brochs such as Dun Mor Vaul on Tiree, published in 1975, Dun Ardtreck on Skye published in 2000 and Leckie in Stirlingshire published in 2008, were fundamental in uncovering the sequence, material culture and chronology of these monuments. He gathered information for his important three-volume compendium on brochs from his own excavations and the investigations of others, undertaking research well into retirement (1998), publishing the final volume in 2007. These volumes are landmarks of data on the subject, a resource which provides a platform for all broch studies. His achievements were also celebrated in his Festschrift, *In the Shadow of the Brochs* (2002), showing the respect shown to him by younger generations.

He ventured far and wide in his more interpretative work. Some of his interpretations of broch builders and their monuments are no longer widely held and the chronologies are currently being reconsidered, but his stimulating approach to ideas endures. He



Figure 0.2. Euan MacKie on Mousa broch in the Shetlands in 2000 at the Tall Stories conference.

was passionate about many other subjects including his seminal work in prehistoric metrology and archaeoastronomy. The volume *Science and Society in Prehistoric Britain* (1977) was a central work for Glyn Daniel's teaching in Cambridge, and he made the valid point that the sophistication of prehistory is not to be underestimated. His interest in ethnography, no doubt drawing on his Arch and Anth undergraduate career at Cambridge, gave him a great respect for other ways of thinking and for the architectural and political achievements of prehistoric Britain, most notably for the builders of the brochs themselves in the Iron Age.

Chapter 16

The reuse of monuments in Atlantic Scotland: variation between practices in the Hebrides and Orkney

Niall Sharples

During the Gardening Time conference, there was considerable discussion about whether there was any comparison that could legitimately be made between the brochs of Scotland and the *Nuraghi* of Sardinia. Clearly the chronology of these monuments makes direct comparison problematic. The *Nuraghi* are largely a Bronze Age phenomenon and are definitely not constructed in the Iron Age. Whereas, brochs are an Iron Age phenomenon which reaches its apogee at the end of the first millennium BC, though they continue to be built into the first centuries of the first millennium AD. Structurally there are also considerable differences between the stone vaulted towers that are *Nuraghi* and the stone and timber construction of Scottish brochs. Functional differences may also be significant, but unfortunately the limited number of well excavated primary deposits, in both areas, leaves this a mute point of difference.

Some of the seminar's participants were adamant that they were very different structures and that there could be little meaningful comparisons between the two different societies. I would disagree and argue that there is an essential similarity in their role as monumental houses that make a comparison between the two societies potentially illuminating. One of the principal similarities between the two phenomena is directly related to the conference theme of memory and concerns the materiality of these constructions. The common use of large quantities of large stones in the construction of both monuments means that both *Nuraghi* and brochs normally survive to be encountered by successive generations that will progressively have little direct knowledge of the individuals who built them and of the role(s) that they were built to serve.

Many monuments in temperate Europe make extensive use of timber and the natural decay of organic material can result in the complete destruction

of substantial structures of considerable social significance. In these cases only vestigial and ephemeral memories might linger, as place names perhaps, to record the significance of these ancient monuments. Such structures might lead to societies where forgetting is more important than remembering. In contrast, stone monuments, such as *Nuraghi* and brochs, have a corporeal presence, a powerful sense of materiality that makes it impossible to ignore their existence. These structures form prominent features of the landscapes of Atlantic Scotland and Sardinia and would be regularly encountered in the landscape during the seasonal routine of cultivation and stock movement. They are a constant visible reminder of the activities of past generations. The response to these monuments is not prescribed and could vary from region to region but what unites these regions is the necessity to respond because of the immanent presence of the physical monuments. As a result, we have in the periods following the construction of the monuments, complex patterns of rebuilding and reoccupation, of remodelling and total destruction, which tell us a great deal about social memory in these societies.

This chapter is not about these issues, instead it wishes to look at how the response to existing monuments influenced the creation of the brochs of Atlantic Scotland. Brochs are not the first monuments constructed in this region, and nor are they the only stone structures that have survived to impose themselves on the succeeding generations. Brochs occupy a landscape that has been occupied for generations and which is inhabited by tangible memorials as well as intangible memories. The main point I want to make in this chapter is that the physicality of some monuments demanded a response, but it did not dictate a single uniform response, there was scope for different engagements with ancestral monuments.

Twentieth-century encounters with monuments

My original interest in the relationship between Iron Age brochs and Neolithic chambered tombs dates back to 1981 when I directed the excavations at Pierowall Quarry, Westray, Orkney (Sharples 1984). The excavation revealed a substantial Iron Age roundhouse built directly on top of a chambered tomb (Fig. 16.1), which produced one of the most spectacular pieces of megalithic art found in Britain (Sharples 1984). Subsequent interest was stimulated by work, in the 1990s, on the location of chambered tombs on South Uist, an island in the Outer Hebrides (Cummings *et al.* 2005). In the course of this survey, and some associated small-scale excavations (Cummings & Sharples 2005), it was realized that several tombs had structures built into them in later prehistory and that these provided an alternative narrative for the relationship between tombs and brochs.

When I published the Pierowall Quarry excavations (Sharples 1984), the relationship between the chambered tomb and the Iron Age roundhouse was not discussed and, if my memory serves me correctly, I generally thought this was simply a result of propitious use of a convenient mound by the Iron Age occupants; a prosaic functional relationship that had little symbolic content. My thoughts on this

relationship changed as I became involved in the discussions about the relationship between the causewayed enclosure and the hillfort at Maiden Castle (Sharples 1991, 2010) but more importantly through working with Richard Hingley in Historic Scotland in the early 1990s (Fig. 16.2).

At this time, Hingley was working on two papers (Hingley 1996, 1999) which were groundbreaking in highlighting the complex historical relationships that exist between archaeological monuments, and how societies can have important historical relationships with their landscape and locale. Since these papers were published, it has become commonly acknowledged that many of the roundhouses of the Atlantic Iron Age were deliberately located on existing chambered tombs. However, in these papers Hingley was vague about the nature of the relationship with the past. In his 1996 paper, Hingley suggests ‘people in Later Prehistory drew inspiration from chambered cairns for the design of their own houses...’, ‘...round cairns may have provided an inspiration for a new architectural tradition of roundhouse building in later prehistoric Orkney’ (Hingley 1996, 240). However, he also notes that ‘Chambered cairns may have been seen at the same time as the homes of ancestors and as places where the powerful remains of these ancestors were housed’ (Hingley 1996, 241).



Figure 16.1. A view of the section through the chambered tomb and monumental roundhouse at Pierowall Quarry, Westray, Orkney. The two revetments on the old ground face are the remains of the large circular cairn of Neolithic date. Over this and visible at the top of the vertical ranging rod on the right hand side is the wall of the roundhouse. The passage to the chamber of the tomb survives at the base of the vertical ranging rod on the left.



Figure 16.2. *Richard Hingley encounters the ancestors in a chambered tomb at Skelpick, Strathnaver, Sutherland.*

The 1996 paper in some respects painted a simplistic view of a homogenous Iron Age where the past was seen as a resource that was generally pillaged for inspiration. In the 1999 paper, some important differences were clearly present. The principal point was that 'during later prehistory communities partly identified their place in the world through references to ancient monuments' (Hingley 1999, 246). It is admitted that 'we should not...be looking for one simple standardised concept of what the "past" meant to these communities' (Hingley 1999, 246).

These papers focus on several monuments and in the second paper these are identified throughout Britain and include the complex of monuments at Stanton Harcourt in the Thames valley. However, in terms of the Atlantic Iron Age two groups of sites stood out. Three sites on Orkney, Pierowall Quarry, The Howe and Quanterness, which had all been recently excavated, and a couple of sites in the Western Isles, Unival and Clettraval, which were excavated in the middle of the twentieth century by Sir Lindsay Scott.

In Orkney there is a complex relationship between the roundhouse and the tomb, in some cases the tomb is systematically destroyed, but in others it survives with little alteration. This is best demonstrated by a description of the sequence at Pierowall, The Howe and Quanterness. At Pierowall Quarry (Sharples 1984) the excavations were minimal, but it was clear an already substantially modified Maes Howe type chambered tomb (Sharples 1985) was levelled and used as a platform for the construction of an Early Iron Age roundhouse. The wall of the roundhouse was about 3.1 m thick and the structure had an external diameter of roughly 16 m. Radiocarbon dating suggests the house was constructed before the sixth century cal. BC. The interior of the house was not excavated but it was clear that the passage and chamber of the tomb had been substantially destroyed and some form of structure constructed within these (Fig. 16.1). The interior of the roundhouse was subsequently deliberately infilled with rubble and there was no evidence that this structure had a long history of occupation.

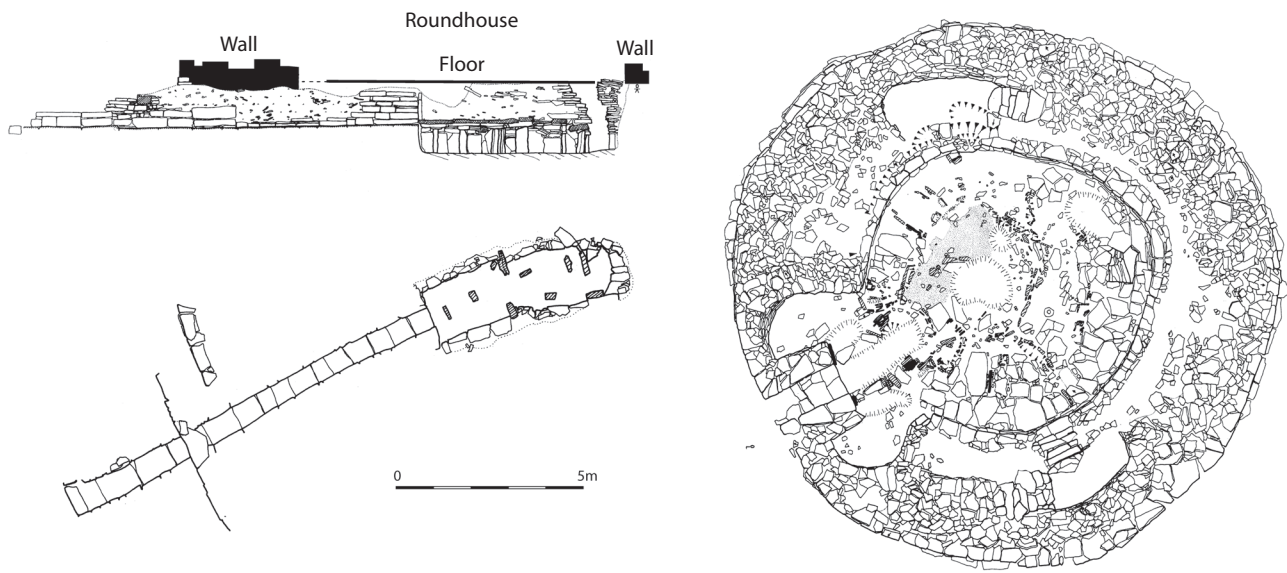


Figure 16.3. A plan of the The Howe showing the interior of the round house in phase 6, and a plan and section through the subterranean chamber. Based on illustrations in Ballin Smith 1994.

At the Howe (Ballin Smith 1994), the Early Iron Age roundhouse was also built directly on top of a Maes Howe type chambered tomb. The construction process involved the substantial demolition of the mound or cairn, the almost complete dismantling of the chamber and the systematic removal of any human remains contained within the chamber. A circular house, roughly 16 m in diameter and with a wall about 4 m thick, was then constructed on top of the mound. In the interior the partially paved and intricately subdivided central living space covered a subterranean chamber that was created by rebuilding the underlying burial chamber (Fig. 16.3). Access was by a staircase entered from directly opposite the main door. The original entrance passage of the chambered tomb was partially preserved and lay directly below the entrance passage to the roundhouse. A largely complete human skeleton was deposited within this passage which is believed to date to the Iron Age. This house was repeatedly rebuilt and the site continued to be occupied until the later part of the first millennium AD.

At Quanterness (Renfrew 1979) there was no attempt to remodel the substantial Maes Howe type tomb, which survived into the twentieth century as one of the best-preserved tombs on the islands. Furthermore, it retained the substantial assemblage of human bones that were deposited in it during the Neolithic, though these were probably rearranged in the Iron Age. In the Early Iron Age, a roundhouse was constructed

in front of the tomb and the original entrance passage was accessible through the interior of the house. The house at Quanterness was not a monumental roundhouse; it had an internal diameter of only 7–8 m and a wall thickness of about 2.2 m.

The two important excavations in the Western Isles that were discussed by Hingley (1996, 1999) were undertaken before and after the Second World War by Lindsay Scott on the island of North Uist. He excavated two chambered tombs on the island and both turned out to have significant Iron Age structures built into the cairns. At Clettraval (Scott 1935, 1948), a wheelhouse was built into the body of a substantial trapezoidal long cairn (Fig. 16.4). A wheelhouse is a non-monumental form of roundhouse found in large numbers in the Western Isles and Shetland (Sharples 2012). In Shetland, these appear as secondary villages surrounding brochs, such as Jarlshof and Old Scatness (Hamilton 1956; Dockrill *et al.* 2010), but in the Western Isles they appear to have been contemporary, geographically separate structures (Sharples 2012). The wheelhouse at Clettraval had an internal diameter of roughly 7.4 m and a wall thickness up to 2.1 m wide. The house was probably constructed in the early first centuries AD, though there are no radiocarbon dates to confirm this. There was no direct access from the house to the Neolithic chamber and the entrance to each structure was orientated in quite different directions; southwest for the house and east for the Neolithic tomb. There was evidence for the deposition of Iron Age ceramics in the

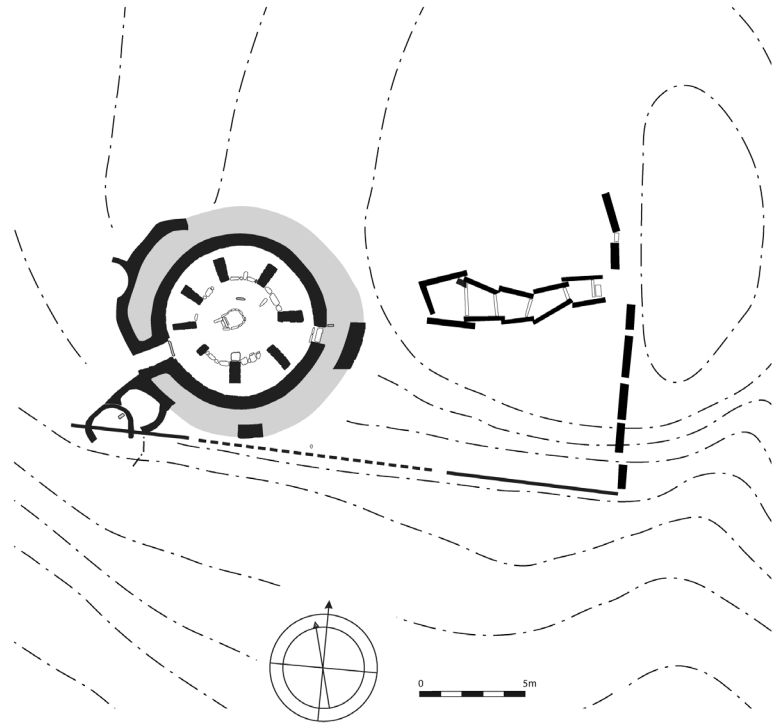


Figure 16.4. *The chambered tomb and wheelhouse at Clettraval in North Uist. The wheelhouse is built into the body of the long cairn and has no access to the burial chamber at the east end.*

Neolithic chamber which appears to have been open during the occupation of the wheelhouse.

The situation at Unival (Scott 1947a) appears somewhat similar though the structures of both the Neolithic tomb and Iron Age house are very different to the structures visible at Clettraval. The tomb was a fairly characteristic small passage tomb in an unusual square cairn (Fig. 16.5). The tomb was entered by a short passage facing southeast. The Iron Age house comprised two rectangular rooms joined by a short passage and was located in the northern corner of the cairn. It lies immediately to the north of the Neolithic chamber but there was no interconnecting passage and the house was accessed from the north. The pottery from the Iron Age structure is difficult to date, but this, together with the bicameral structure, might indicate a date of construction later in the first millennium AD than the structure at Clettraval.

These tombs are not necessarily representative of all tombs in the Western Isles. Two tombs explored in the recent South Uist survey appear to show evidence for a direct connection between tomb and Iron Age roundhouse. At Leaval in South Uist, limited excavation revealed a simple megalithic chamber in a circular cairn, apparently without a passage, which had been substantially dismantled prior to the construction of an oval enclosure (Cummings & Sharples 2005). No excavation of the interior has taken place, but the enclosure almost certainly surrounds a later prehistoric settlement. At Loch a' Bharp a substantial Hebridean passage

tomb has had a circular house constructed on top of the entrance to a passage tomb (Fig. 16.6; Cummings *et al.* 2005). The front of a large corbelled chamber and the passage had been systematically dismantled as part of this Iron Age modification. Unfortunately, this tomb has not been excavated and the nature of the construction which caused this damage is unclear and undated. Nevertheless, it seems likely that both Leaval and Loch a' Bharp indicate a deliberate attempt to control access to the ancestral remains that is quite different to that visible at Clettraval and Unival. The most significant difference between these sites is altitude. Clettraval and Unival are located at roughly 250 and 350 feet above sea level, whereas Leaval and Loch a' Bharp are around 50 ft above sea level. Both the latter tombs would be much more accessible to the communities living on the low-lying coastal areas, and it is possible that access to these ancestors was much more contested and therefore controlled than those in the hills.

Landscape in the Western Isles

I have previously explored the significance of the Orcadian patterns and argued (Sharples 2006) that there was a deliberate attempt to control access to the ancestors by an elite that occupied the monumental roundhouses or brochs. Controlling access to the ancestors would increase the power of the occupants of these houses and the decision to build dwellings at these locations would mark a significant break with

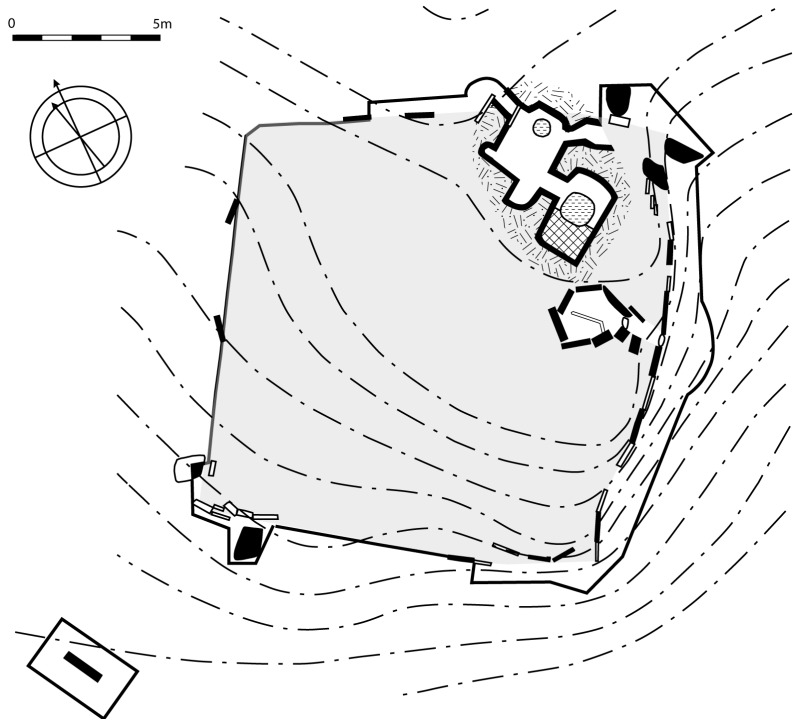


Figure 16.5. The chambered tomb at Unival, North Uist, which has a small bicameral structure built into the northeast corner of the cairn in the Iron Age.

Bronze Age practice when the Neolithic monuments were avoided in a profane landscape of domesticity. The tombs also provided an architectural template for the creation of permanent houses.

In this chapter, I want to concentrate more on the monuments of the Western Isles, as these have been less studied than the Orcadian monuments, and also to concentrate on the landscape setting which has only really been skimmed by writers such as Hingley. In the Western Isles, no monumental roundhouse or broch, that I am aware of, was constructed on a chambered tomb. Some might argue that this is because the brochs have not been extensively excavated, and this is true up to a point. However, pre-broch deposits have been explored at Dun Vulcan (Parker Pearson & Sharples 1999), Dun Mor Vul (MacKie 1974), Dun Bharabhat (Harding & Dixon 2000), Dunan Ruadh (Foster & Pouncett 2000) and Dun Carloway (Tabraham 1977). At the first three sites, activity was detected that appears to precede the construction of the broch, but radiocarbon dates clearly indicate the activity dates to the first millennium BC and represents an increasing interest in the locale as a place for settlement activity. At Dun Carloway and Dunan Ruadh, the brochs were built on exposed rock outcrops with no earlier activity visible or likely.

It is important to note that the brochs of the Western Isles were not situated in locations that were likely to be occupied by chambered tombs. Most brochs in this region were located on islands in lochs; Rennell (2010, 53) reports that more than 60 per cent of the

Iron Age sites on North Uist and 53 per cent on Lewis are on islands within freshwater lochs and the preference appears to be even more emphatic on South Uist (Raven 2012). An island site would be an extremely unusual topographic position for the building of a chambered tomb. A detailed study of the location of tombs on South Uist (Cummings *et al.* 2005) indicated a preference for raised locations on the edge of the hills overlooking valleys used as communication routes. Coastal and island locations, such as Sig More, South Uist, are much more likely to be a result of recent rising sea levels encroaching on dry land rather than a true reflection of locational preferences.

It is possible that the island locations of brochs are related instead to Neolithic settlements, and there is certainly a considerable similarity between the locations of the settlements at Eilean an Tighe (Scott 1950) and Eilean Dhumnail (Armit 1992a) and the island brochs. The Neolithic settlement at An Doirinn in South Uist was originally recorded by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments Scotland as a Monumental Roundhouse of Iron Age date (Canmore NF71 NW5). However, it is important to note that not only have none of the excavated brochs been shown to have Neolithic origins, but also none of the Neolithic settlements have any evidence for Iron Age activity on top of them. Indeed, in Loch Olibhat the Iron Age settlement, Eilean Olibhat (Armit *et al.* 2009) was located on a natural promontory a little to the east of the artificial island, Eilean Dhumnail, created in the Neolithic (Fig. 16.7).

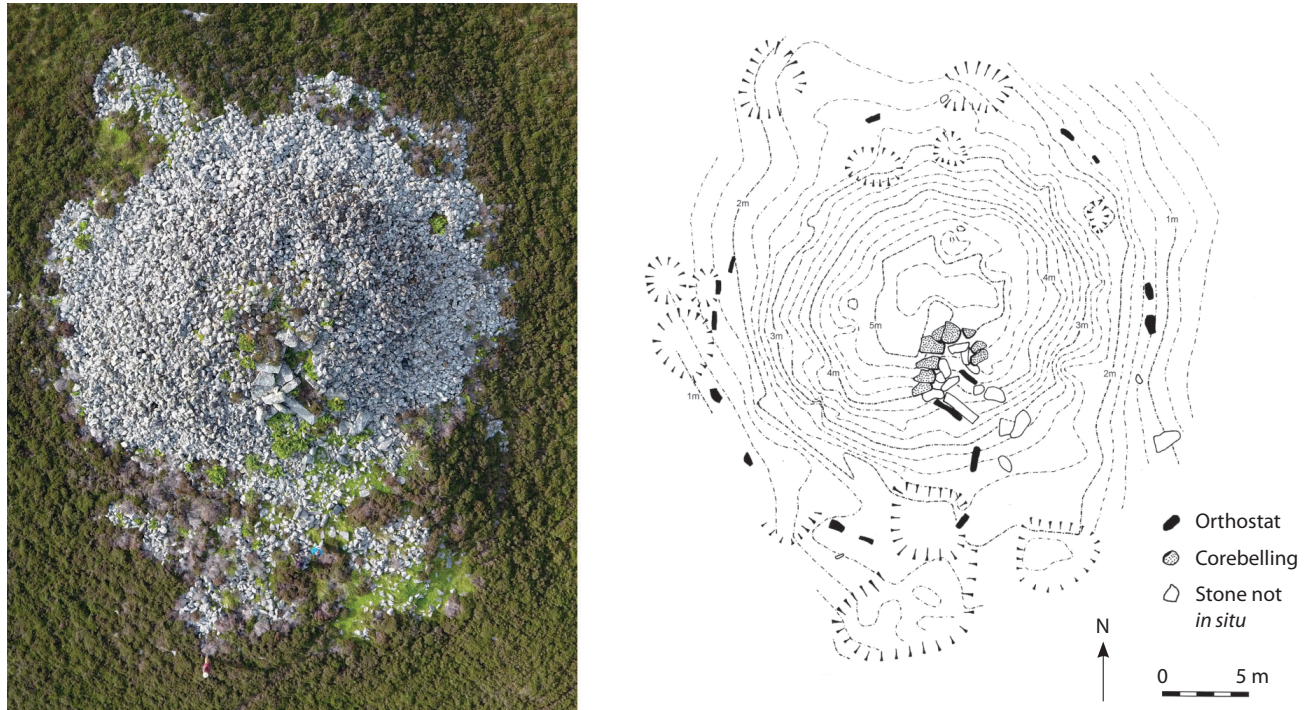


Figure 16.6. The chambered tomb at Loch a'Bharp, South Uist. A roundhouse is defined by an irregular circle of rubble and green grass in front of the entrance to the tomb. Aerial photo provided by Cameron Wesson).



Figure 16.7. A view of Loch Olibhat, North Uist. The island to the left is the Neolithic settlement, the promontory on the right is the location for a long lived Iron Age settlement

It is still unclear whether there was a deliberate connection between these two phenomena. Island locations may have indicated a deliberate reverence for important Neolithic settlements that were avoided and copied rather than reoccupied. However, architecturally Neolithic settlements in the Western Isles were not spectacular (Armit 1992; Scott 1950). Excavation has seldom revealed well preserved stone buildings and it would appear that a considerable amount of timber and turf was used in conjunction with only occasional stone. If they were being acknowledged in the Iron Age this would have to have been through social memory, and possibly the presence of artefacts, such as pottery and stone tools, rather than recognizable architectural remains.

On the island of South Uist, in the Western Isles, brochs appear to have been quite specifically constructed in a liminal position (Sharples & Parker Pearson 1997). They are located between the principal settlement zone on the machair, a shell sand deposit that lies along the west coast of the island, and the extensive areas of moorland, loch and mountain that cover the centre and east coast of the island. Most of the evidence for Iron Age settlement comes from the contemporary wheelhouse settlements that were located on the machair plain and these were clearly surrounded by fields of barley, which dominates the carbonized plant assemblages from all Iron Age settlements (Sharples 2012). In contrast, the interior of the island, during the Iron Age, was a sparsely populated peat covered bog only suitable for the summer grazing of cattle and sheep. In the recent past, the occupation of this area was seasonal and based on sheilings, temporary summer settlements, and this is likely to have been the case in the Iron Age.

This Iron Age division of the landscape into a permanently settled domesticated coastal plain and a hostile and only intermittently occupied interior was a relatively recent pattern that reflected the deterioration in the climate during the early first millennium BC. It is clear that in the Neolithic, settlements were much more evenly distributed across the island and it is possible that the machair plain was not present, or at least not sufficiently stable to be occupied (Sharples 2009). The chambered tombs were located immediately overlooking and close to contemporary settlements and this is most clearly demonstrated at Caranais on North Uist, where a Neolithic settlement was located in close proximity to the long cairn at Bharpa Caranais (Crone 1993).

In the Bronze Age, settlement began to appear on the machair (Sharples 2009), but the evidence suggests that this initially started as a seasonal occupation in the Beaker period as the landscape was still very unstable,

and it was only in the Late Bronze Age that large settlements were created. It seems likely therefore that the upland continued to be the principal location for settlement in this period, and this was certainly the principal period of forest clearance in the peat columns from the island (Brayshay & Edwards 1996).

By the Iron Age, however, things had changed dramatically; peat growth was becoming a serious problem and the centre of the island became increasingly damp and inhospitable (Sharples *et al.* 2004). Settlement was essentially forced onto the machair and there it remains for approximately 2000 years. The machair is not the most fertile environment for agriculture, nutrient levels are poor, and the shell sand can suffer catastrophic erosion if the conditions are dry and windy. Settlements were marked by the deliberate accumulation of substantial midden deposits, which helped to reduce the possibility of erosion and provided a source of manure for the cultivated areas. A dichotomy was created in the Iron Age which contrasts the inhospitable moorlands, where the homes and tombs of the ancestors were located, with the green and fertile plains of the machair, where the contemporary settlement was concentrated.

On South Uist the brochs' location on the boundaries of these two landscapes seems in many senses to be a 'defensive' arrangement to impede the continued expansion of the moorland (Fig. 16.8). However, it was also an attempt to position the local elites that occupied these structures in a location that detached them from the prosaic domestic landscapes of settlement and daily activity (Sharples & Parker Pearson 1997). This was a landscape that contained many lochs and I have argued previously that the water was an additional boundary used, together with the architecture and the location, to separate further the occupants of the brochs from other members of their community (Sharples & Parker Pearson 1997). The role of water as a substance with symbolic significance also must be considered and this can be documented in many other Iron Age societies.

The chambered cairns in this Iron Age landscape were central to the wilderness. They were too distant from the main Iron Age settlement zone to empower the elites located in the brochs. The buildings that occupied these monuments were isolated outposts in an otherwise inhospitable landscape. The wheelhouse at Clettraval might indicate the last remnants of the communities that once occupied these locales in the Bronze Age or alternatively, an ambitious attempt to recolonize the wasteland when the climate slightly improved in the Iron Age. Structures such as those found at Unival are more likely to be protection for seasonal occupations associated with the use of this area for grazing. In both cases, I would argue that the

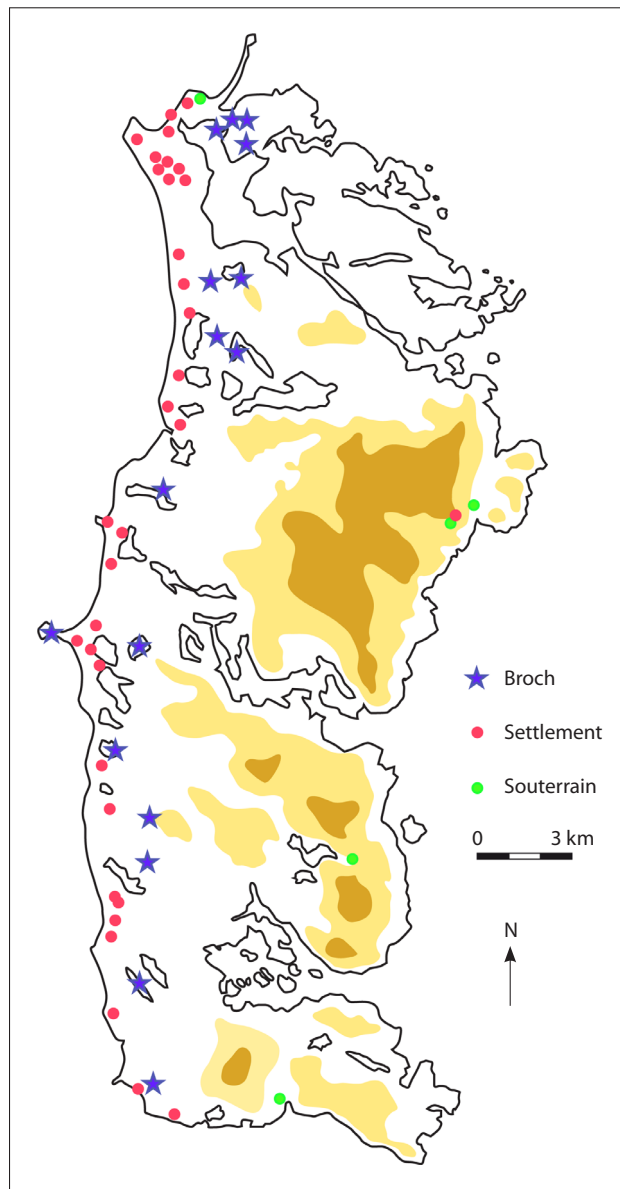


Figure 16.8. *The location of brochs and settlements on South Uist, Western Isles.*

Iron Age occupants were calling upon the ancestors for protection from the inhospitable environment that surrounded them.

Northern landscapes

This interpretation can also be used to reconsider the situation on Orkney. The Orcadian landscape is much more fertile than the Western Isles because the geology is a lime rich permeable sandstone which is eroded into rolling countryside that is generally low lying. Hills are restricted to the geological distinctive island

of Hoy and a limited area of the Orcadian mainland. The islands are generally not characterized by the clear-cut distinction between an inhospitable mountainous interior and a marginal restricted agricultural zone on the coast, which is such a prominent feature of the Western Isles. Large areas of the interior on Mainland Orkney were occupied throughout prehistory and many islands can be farmed from coast to coast.

The dense prehistoric settlement of the Orcadian landscape gives us a very different chronological narrative. In the Neolithic, the settlement densities were large enough to enable the construction of the earliest permanent village settlements in Britain (Richards *et al.* 2016). They also encouraged the development of large complex chambered tombs, the Maes Howe type, that were located within the settlement zone (Sharples 1985). The central position of these Maes Howe type tombs meant that they became the focus for ceremonial activity. They contrast with the early small tombs which were located on the edge of the uplands, a location similar to that of nearly all the tombs on the Western Isles.

These large tombs were the focus for activities throughout the Late Neolithic and the type site, Maes Howe, was incorporated into the principal ceremonial centre of the island. Many tombs were substantially remodelled during the Late Neolithic (Sharples 1984), but in the Bronze Age they appear to have been left alone and this is a period which is generally less visible in Orcadian prehistory. Their central location and substantive presence suggest they were not forgotten and ignored, but represented an ancestral presence that was avoided and perhaps regarded with some reverence.

As we enter the Iron Age, we have in contrast to the Western Isles, a domestic landscape which is extensive and not naturally split into obvious territories. It had a long and continuous history of use and preserved within it were massive monuments that were known to contain chambers with significant deposits of human remains. The construction of a roundhouse on top of the tombs was a powerful statement of change at the beginning of the Iron Age. The act immediately separated the inhabitants of the houses from other households in the profane landscape that surrounded these ritually charged monuments. The construction of the roundhouses was also carefully designed to allow but control access to the chambers of the tombs and the human remains they contained. Access was possible, but in most houses it involved traversing the main living space and at the Howe it was through an entrance that was covered by paving and perhaps invisible to visitors. It seems likely that access to the ancestors was much more restricted and controlled in

the Iron Age than it had been previously and that this privilege gave the occupants of the broch a religious as well as a secular status within the local community. They became a restricted elite who could communicate and receive instructions from the ancestors.

In Orkney, the tombs had a much more central role in the development of the Iron Age because landscape and human action in the Neolithic gave them a prominence, which was much greater than the tombs in the Western Isles. They provide the model for the development of a unique series of subterranean structures which were central to the brochs' importance in the Middle Iron Age (Sharples 2006).

Conclusion

The development of power relations in the Iron Age was focussed on the construction and occupation of architecturally sophisticated houses. These required the control of skilled builders who were able to construct these impressive towers, some up to 13 m tall. They required the mobilization of a substantial labour force in their construction and they utilized important scarce resources, most notably timber, but also good quality building stone, which though available

still required quarrying and transporting to the construction site. These buildings acted as a symbol of the independence of the local community and of the power of the family that occupied the building. The position of these families was emphasized by their liminal location. They were separated from the community by the architectural boundaries of the massive wall, the low entrance passages, the doors and guard chambers. In the Western Isles, this separation was enhanced by their location on islands surrounded by water and accessed across long narrow causeways. In Orkney, this environmental separation was not so easily available and instead ancestral locations surrounded by ancient taboos were chosen to provide this separation.

In both regions the tombs of ancestors provided a resource for the Iron Age population. In Orkney, the ancestors were a powerful symbol that could be used as a model for the development of sophisticated architecture and provided additional resources for elite control. In the Western Isles, the ancestors were more distant and divorced from contemporary society and could be called upon by individuals and communities to protect them from the hostile environment that had destroyed their ancient homelands.

Gardening time

Gardening may seem worlds away from *Nuraghi* and brochs, but tending a garden is a long process involving patience, accretion and memory. Scholars argue that memories are also cultured, developed and regained. The monuments in Scotland and Sardinia are testament to the importance of memory and its role in maintaining social relations.

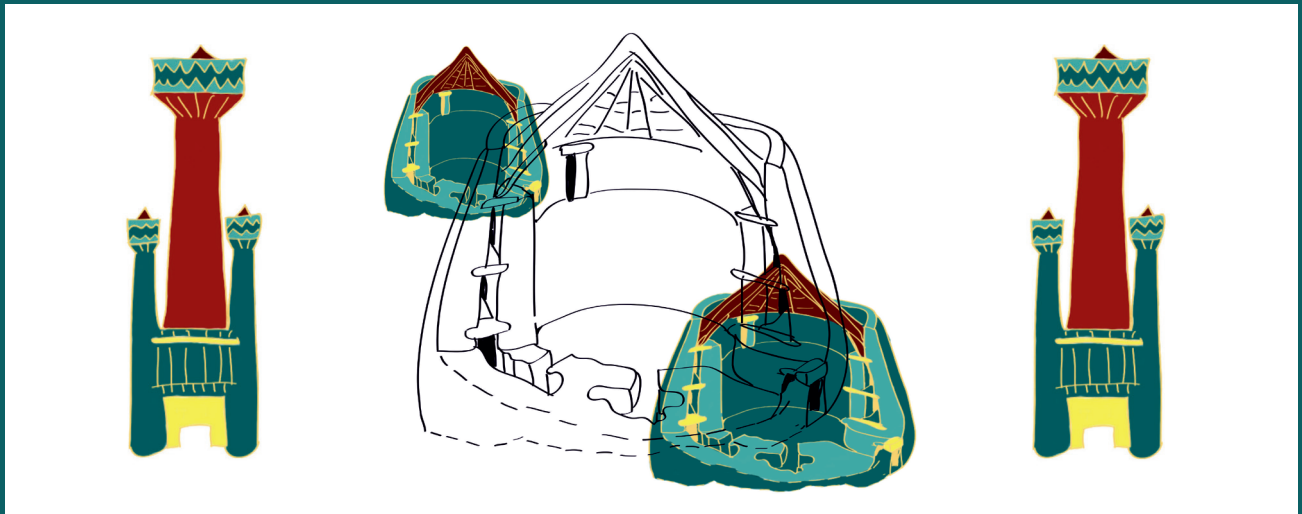
This collection of twenty-one papers addresses the theme of memory anchored to the enduring presence of monuments, mainly from Scotland and Sardinia, but also from Central Europe and the Balkans.

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