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The Appropriation or the Destruction of Memory?
Bell Beaker ‘Re-Use’ of Older Sites

Summary

In Western and West-Central Europe, it is common to find sherds of Bell-Beakers in the uppermost layers of megalithic monuments, sometimes accompanied by bones of a corresponding age. This ‘re-use’ is not restricted to burial-context. Henges and stone circles can contain so-called ‘coves’ from the Bell Beaker period. This points to a changed use of the structure. The most famous example is Stonehenge. I interpret this as a deliberate attempt by a new elite to erase power-mechanisms of previous generations. The effort put into these acts shows that these structures were perceived as a real threat to the new order. This case study illustrates the difficulty of distinguishing between different ways of using the past, between the use and the intended destruction of memories.

Keywords: Bell Beaker; megalith; memory; burial customs.


Keywords: Glockenbecher; Megalithen; Gedächtnis; Bestattungssitten.
The transmission of memory

In order to understand possible prehistoric memory places, I am going to look at the transmission of memory in present and past contexts first, to then discuss how memories can be linked to places and monuments.

In modern societies, memory tends to be a personal and family affair, while written sources contain the ‘official’ record of the past, be it of national history, deeds of property or tax records. Often, only facts that have been documented in writing have legal value. Jan Assmann even claims that cultural memory is dependent on writing. But, as Plato famously claimed in his seventh letter, writing weakens the individual memory. Both historical and ethnographic sources provide evidence for memory specialists who preserved epic cycles, religious lore and genealogy, such as the Greek and Irish bards, or the Griots in Western Africa. Many written texts contain traces of oral transmission, for example parts of the Old Testament, the Ilias, the Irish Táin Bó Cúailnge, or Beowulf. Rhymes and other types of formalised speech (oratio astricta) help to remember a text literally. There can also be a close social control on the integrity of a text. The Indian Vedic texts, keeping the archaic language and even language differences, demonstrate that an oral transmission of sacred texts over several hundred years is possible, even if the traditional dating (1200 BC to 600 BC) is based on circular reasoning and migration myths strengthened by colonial archaeology. The Rajastani epics have also been transmitted orally over long time-periods. Some West African genealogies and Medieval Irish genealogies cover several hundred years, to name but two further examples. Even longer oral transmissions have been claimed, reaching back several thousand years, which is impossible to prove and rather unlikely. Caught up in legal (and moral) disputes about landrights and cultural properties of local native populations, there has been a tendency to overrate the time-span that shared memory can survive.

There is thus a difference between a remembrance of the common past that is available to everybody, via conversation, narration, songs, gestures (religious cult, dance), pictures, emotions and empathy (performance), and specific accounts of the past told by memory specialist who addresses a specific privileged audience and may even own certain accounts of the past. However, the boundaries are diffuse. Old persons tend to turn into memory specialists quasi automatically, and privileged forms of remembrance tend to filter down to a more general audience, if in a changed and often reduced form.

1 Assmann 1992.
2 Culley 1963.
5 Magoun 1953, 446–467.
6 C. R. Cooper 2007, ix–x.
7 See Carpenter 1992 for the sociopolitical context.
8 Kazanas 1999; Trautman 1997.
9 J. D. Smith 1991.
12 Mayor 2005; Mayor 2007.
13 See Henige 2009 for a rather partisan overview.
The choice of events to be remembered is also restricted. Bards and other memory specialists are normally maintained by rulers and powerful families. Their job is the transmission of genealogies and genealogical stories. Priests are trained to remember rites and narratives of religious significance, which may also contain some historical accounts. Again, these memories are linked to power structures, and some events may be ‘forgotten’ on purpose. Therefore, as Sansom emphasizes, the political and social role of memories and social transmissions has always to be taken into account. Both memory and forgetting can produce social cohesion. While the role of memory has received a lot of attention recently, the role of forgetting is mainly studied in psychology.

2. Lieux de mémoire

Memories can be linked to persons and families, but also to artefacts, like heirlooms, armor (as in the Ilias) or specific weapons. Specific places, whether natural or manmade, often act as mnemonic devices: they can recall shared memories, normally about what is supposed to have happened there. Myths give meaning to the landscape. In turn, the physical presence of the landscape proves the truth of the myth. The role of specific places in the narrations about the Australian dream-time is well known, and Malinowski described how local myths are grounded in the physical geography of the Trobriand Islands.

Oral history is also often connected to very specific places in the landscape, and stories explaining the names of certain places can be an important part of it. In the Táin Bó Cúailnge, an Irish epic first known from an 11th century manuscript about a war between the kingdoms of Connacht and Ulster, the last part of the epic is given to descriptions of how specific, if rather uninteresting events led to places receiving a certain name. This could only have been of interest to local people.

There is good evidence for the use of natural features as ritual places. Presumably, many will also have featured in myths. Most prehistoric rock carvings seem rather generalized, with the same items and scenes appearing over and over again, but there are examples of compositions that seem to portray an actual event or a narrative, for example, the skiing scene on the rock carving of Nova Zalavruga in the Vyg area of arctic Russia. On the other hand, the carving may be located where it is because of the physical quali-
ties of the rock, 23 without any link to the specific location. In a somewhat similar vein, Assyrian and Urartian kings created rock inscription to celebrate their victories. While it is generally believed that they are near the actual location of the conquered countries, this does not always seem to be the case. The use of generalized monuments to recall episodes of the national past – with war memorials as the most prominent examples – seems linked to state societies. While they have a fixed location, they are better treated as artefacts, as their location is linked to their function (maximal visibility), and not to a location that is meaningful in the narrative they commemorate.

A change of territory, whether by migration or forced relocation will also presumably affect the transmission of memories linked to a specific place. The Wasco, a tribe of the Chinook had been forcibly settled in the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon in 1855. 24 As recorded in 1919 by Edward Sapir, the Wasco Coyote-circle (trickster tales) was located in the valley of the Columbia River and connected to very specific locations and even individual rock formations. In the version told in the early 1980s by Lucinda Smith, who was born on the reservation and never had the chance to visit these locations, the specific topographic links were missing. 25 How this affects the effect of the stories on the listeners can only be speculated on, but they will probably become further removed from daily practice and loose local color and vividness. They are doubly de-contextualized – both parts of the traditional cultural context, the formalized context in which they were told and the tangible topographic contexts have been removed. Also, visual clues for remembering these stories every time specific locales are visited in the course of everyday activities (males still go to the Columbia River valley for logging) 26 are gone, which is bound to influence the survival of these stories in the oral sphere. The Eastern African Luapula tell specific tales only when they pass the specific point in the landscape these are connected to. 27

On the other hand, there is good evidence of experienced storytellers linking ‘free-floating’ stories to local places in order to make them more accessible to the audience. 28 Antii-Arne’s King in the Mountain 29 – the king who sleeps in a remote place and will return to save his country in its time of need – can reside in the Kyffhäuser, Alderly Edge, Eildon Hill, in the Etna, Blanik, the Untersberg or in the castle of Kronenburg. 30 Either the motif is far older than the person in question and the significance of the respective mountain, as has been claimed for other motifs, 31 or, more likely, the story has migrated from one mountain to the next. For diasporic communities, real places can become the

24 https://warmsprings-nsn.gov/history/ (visited on 31/05/2017).
25 Moore 2013, 18.
26 Moore 2013, 18.
27 Harwood 1976, 792.
28 Moore 2013, 29.
29 Aarne and Thompson 1961, motif 766.
30 Andersen 1845; Rohde 1885, 159.
primary focus of collective memory, at the same time changing into a more or less mythical place, removed from any personal experience. The role of Jerusalem for the Jewish diaspora, from the Babylonian captivity (Psalm 137) to modern times, when ‘Next Year in Jerusalem’ is declared at the end of the Passover Seder can provide an example here. While in some contexts, the focus is on places, in others it can be on eponymous heroes and genealogies (the Catalogue of Ships in the *Ilias*) or on the rules and prescriptions that define a group (*Leviticus*, *Numeri*). Often, all three are interrelated, as is evidenced by the *Old Testament*, where said rules and prescriptions are linked to persons and places.

3 The perception of age

There are different types of knowledge about the past:

1. Personal memory, which has a very limited temporal reach;

2. Intergenerationally transmitted narratives and histories, whether formalized and homogenized in some way or not;

3. The simple knowledge about the age of a monument or artefact. This can often be no more than the realization that its origin lies beyond the present people’s recollection. The Saxon prehistorian Benjamin Preusker actually used the lack of popular traditions to argue for a great age of a monument, as its origin had been totally forgotten, in contrast to other structures which were linked to dwarves, which he saw as former inhabitants of the country who had shrunk in memory. Often, artefacts were not even recognized as such, for example the ‘growing’ pots of the Lusatian culture, or prehistoric obsidian tools in Kerinci, Sumatra that simply fell from the sky in the locals’ opinion.

4. Grimm and Preusker interpreted the links of prehistoric monuments to imaginary peoples like dwarves, giants or wild women (*Waldweiblein*) as genuine folk memory. Alternatively, these attributions could be attempts to explain enigmatic prehistoric structures and finds. Thus, giants were seen as the builders of megaliths, Roman hypocausts, obviously too low for normal humans to live in as the abodes of dwarves, which also were believed to inhabit the pots in cemeteries of the Lusatian culture in Eastern Germany, while the devil was responsible for numerous standing stones. Alternatively, monuments could be ascribed to great figures from

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32 Preusker 1841; Sommer 2004.
33 Sklenár 1983.
34 Own observation, 2006.
35 Picardt 1660.
36 Preusker 1841.
the more recent past, like Julius Caesar or King Arthur. Antiquarians would ascribe prehistoric remains to past tribes or peoples known from tradition, like the Romans, Chatti, Danes or Huns, and it seems probable that prehistoric populations would have done the same.

There are different ways of dealing with physical relics of the past as well: they can be completely ignored or not be recognized as such, they could be used for mundane purposes (mummies as medicine, ‘elfshot’ to treat backpain, thunderbolts to prevent lightning striking), or they could be made part of a group’s past and used to enhance present authority. Thus, ruins and barrows could become places to avoid because they were considered to be the abodes of demons and witches, or because it brings on bad luck to disturb the ancestors. In other instances, traces of the past were systematically destroyed. The best-known practice is probably the Roman practice of *abolitio nomenis* (*damnatio memoriae*): the name and the image of the condemned person would be systematically deleted, any reference to the person avoided. Archaeologically, the practice is attested by defaced coins, destroyed faces of reliefs and statues, and defaced inscriptions. However, while the name or face was destroyed, the lacuna remains. The attempt at the destruction of memory thus only draws attention to it and makes it a self-defeating exercise.

More widespread destruction is rare, but is attested for early Christianity, when heathen temples and images were systematically erased. During the French revolution, pictures of saints were smashed and royal graves desecrated. In 1966, during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, a campaign against the Four Old Things (*si jiù*), Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas, was declared, which led to the public destruction of historic artefacts. The destruction of the Bamiyan Statues in Afghanistan by the Taliban has been widely publicized. In 2014, IS has documented their destruction of museums, archaeological collections and archaeological sites, for example in Hatra and Mossul (Iraq). In the latter case, religious motifs were cited: “We were ordered by our prophet to take down idols and destroy them” – however, an anti-Western impetus seems more likely.

We do have evidence for prehistoric acts of destruction, for example the burning of houses in Vinča tells and in Bronze Age Denmark. Other structures also show evidence of deliberate burning, for example Early and Middle Neolithic timber structures in Scotland. A systematic mass-plundering of graves can also indicate an attempt to destroy certain cultural traditions. The early Bronze Age cemetery of Franzhausen, for

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37 Paphitis (unpublished).
38 Picardt 1666; Colgrave 1956.
39 Kalazich 2012.
40 Jones 2015.
41 Stevanović 1997.
42 Rasmussen 2007.
43 Noble 2006.
example, showed evidence of violent and probably simultaneous plundering, maybe by incoming groups,\(^{44}\) and the systematic plundering of Merovingian graves has been linked to Christianization. In most of these cases, it is difficult or impossible to differentiate between an act of closure as part of the normal biography of a structure – the deliberate “building of memory” in a flashbulb event\(^{45}\) – and attempts to annihilate the past altogether.

A quick forgetting of the past is possible, as for example, illustrated by the Assyrian Empire \(^{44}\). However, why this will happen in one case and not in another does not seem wholly clear. None of the violent attempts at destroying the past described here and in the introduction seem particular successful, but of course we will not know about the successful ones. The “Angel of History”\(^{46}\) turns his back on us. A process of appropriation, where churches are changed into mosques or vice versa, or sacred buildings profaned, but kept in use, may be a more successful way of changing and thus slowly appropriating memory, than attempts to blow them up or bulldoze them.

### 4 Visible traces of the past

There are numerous instances of prehistoric re-use of past artefacts and features \(^{47}\). They can be used to mask a break, establish continuity and thus maintain a specific social order, or to emphasize a rupture and thus demonstrate the superiority of a new dynasty or religious order. The main question is how these different kinds of appropriation can be distinguished from each other.

Tell settlements will form highly prominent landmarks especially in flat landscapes.\(^{47}\) Flat settlements can be visible as low mounds,\(^{48}\) as changes in vegetation or as an accumulation of stones, depending on the building material. Remains of waterlogged settlements (‘pile-dwellings’) are visible as underwater pile-fields even today. Barrows, megaliths, *kjøkkenmédiger* and fortifications often remain visible, especially if the latter have been burned, as the famous vitrified forts of Lusatia and Scotland. Other traces of human activity have also attracted attention, for example the late Neolithic mines on Ross Island in Ireland, which were locally described as Danes’ mines.\(^{49}\)

Visible ancient buildings and monuments could serve, for example, as spatial markers. There are numerous examples of prehistoric monuments, especially barrows used in the descriptions of field boundaries. The Aston Cursus (Derbyshire) influenced the layout of a Romano-British field-system.\(^{50}\) Howard Williams has described the widespread

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\(^{46}\) Benjamin 1968.  
\(^{47}\) Chapman 1997.  
\(^{48}\) Bradley and Williams 1998, 44–45; Bradley 2002.  
\(^{50}\) Loveday 2007, 21. – See (http://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=1211265&sort=4&
re-use of older barrows for burial. He claims that the Anglo-Saxon elite used these places to establish a link with a mythical past and the re-used monuments would have become “the embodiment of an idealized community of ancestors linked to the distant past and the supernatural.”

The interpretations of these traces and monuments are not always stable or fulfil their intended function, however. Herodotus describes the widespread rock carvings of the Egyptian King Sesostris, found from the Phasis on the Black Sea to Syria (Histories Book II), which he claimed to have personally observed in Palestine. This account would seem to conflate Assyrian, Urartian and late Hittite monuments, attributing them to a mythical Egyptian king. In 2014 I was told by the local Kurds that the rock carvings in the Bırkleyn caves (so-called Tigris tunnel) depicted Iskandar (Alexander the Great), not Salmanasser III. The tell of Nineveh was interpreted as the monumental grave of Ninus by Diodorus, probably following an account by Ctesias, and the 5th century Armenian Historian Moses of Chorene attributed the castle at Van and the Menua canal between Yukari Kaymaz and Van to the same mythical queen. This illustrates how fast the memory even of powerful empires could be lost once written records were abandoned – sometimes maybe because they were consciously rejected.

Re-use or a re-interpretation is not restricted to monuments, but it is more difficult to identify when artefacts, especially tools and everyday objects are concerned. Prehistoric artefacts sometimes turn up in the ‘wrong’ context, but often several different interpretations are possible. The curation as memorabilia has been suggested by Woodward, Sheridan and Davis and Frieman for jet and amber necklaces of the British Early Bronze Age, and indeed this phenomenon may be far more frequent than we suspect, as our dating methods are not normally fine enough to trace this kind of behavior. For example, von Richthofen has used wear traces to show how worn Iron Age fibulae were used in the burials of children who presumably did not yet own these dress items. In this case, the chronological difference between different grave gifts is too slight to show up in normal stylistic analyses.

In other cases, artefacts were probably kept as curiosities, for example Bronze Age items in Merovingian graves. Even fossils like sea urchins were collected this way. In the case of the Anglo-Saxon re-use of Roman dress items, both a conscious appropriation of past remnants and the use of ‘second-hand goods’ has been considered. A Neolithic shaft-hole axe found in the exceedingly rich Early Bronze Age burial of Leubingen has

51 Williams 1998, 96.
52 Radner 2009.
53 Lauer 1869.
54 Woodward 2002.
55 Sheridan and Davis 2002.
56 Frieman 2012.
58 Jockenhövel 2007.
60 Eckhart and Williams 2003; White 1988.
been interpreted by Strahm as “an age old symbol of rule”, indicating that the author-
ity of the ruler buried here was derived from distant ancestors.\textsuperscript{61} Eight other Neolithic
stone axes have been found in other rich graves of the Unetice culture.\textsuperscript{62} The Middle
Paleolithic hand axes from the Roman temple at Ivy Chimneys, Witham, Essex, were
probably brought there for religious reasons, maybe connected to the cult of Jupiter
or a related native god.\textsuperscript{63} An Iron Age burial found in Cologne above a Roman drain
is evidence for the pious reburial of human relics disturbed in the course of building
works: in this case, the relics were recognized as such, but treated in the same way as an
accidentally disturbed Roman burial.

5 Case study: finds of Bell Beakers in older structures

As has been illustrated by the above, it can be quite difficult to interpret the re-use of
past structures and objects, even with the help of oral or written sources. There is an
enormous degree of ambiguity – not only can meaning change through time, but it can
also fundamentally vary for members of different contemporaneous groups. As a rule,
prehistoric re-use has been interpreted as affirmative – the past and its remains are seen
to have been used to establish continuity and to bestow authority. As the examples in
this volume demonstrate, societies also have to cope with negative events, and certain
events of the past can be ignored, denied, or even erased as well as celebrated. Is there
any way to distinguish between different ways of appropriating, negating or attempting
to destroy the past by prehistoric groups?

In the following, I will look at one special case, the so-called re-use of earlier Neo-
lithic structures during the Bell Beaker period of the terminal Neolithic (in Central
European terminology), that is, the period between roughly 2600 to 1880 BC. In this
period, the re-use, especially of older graves, is very frequent in Western Europe – Bell
Beakers are common in the upper layers of collective tombs wherever their distribution
overlaps megalithic traditions. Additionally, there is quite a lot of evidence for the ‘clos-
ing’ and blocking of monuments in a Bell Beaker context. While it has been argued that
the re-use of previous monuments indicates a desire to create continuity or to link to
the previous inhabitants or rulers of a country, I would claim that in this case we can
observe a conscious attempt to break the connection to the past or even to obliterate the
past altogether.

There is a long tradition of viewing the producers of Bell Beakers as a people,
colonising Western and parts of Central Europe in search of Copper ore.\textsuperscript{64} However,
it is clear that the Bell Beaker “phenomenon”\textsuperscript{65} does not meet the definition of an archaeological culture. While there is a set of items found across the whole distribution – mainly Bell Beakers, wristguards, certain types of arrowheads, copper daggers and buttons with a v-shaped hole – other elements of material culture, like non-beaker pottery (\textit{Begleiterkeramik}), houses, and even burial customs, continue previous local traditions. Most authors would agree that Bell Beakers and the accompanying items mark some kind of elite that is not necessarily linked to an ethnic group. However, the idea of an incoming “Beaker people”\textsuperscript{66} has fundamentally influenced the way how Beaker pottery found in older structures has been interpreted. Often, a continuation of use, that is, an unbroken tradition either within the same archaeological culture or over several successive archaeological cultures was differentiated from \textit{re-use}, which implies chronological lacuna or a change of population or cultural tradition. The choice between the two was often not so much based on a detailed analysis of chronology or stratigraphy, but on general assumptions about cultural development. In Britain, for example, the Peterborough tradition was seen as a seamless continuation of the Early Neolithic Windmill Hill culture, while the “Beaker Folk”\textsuperscript{67} were foreigners, missionaries,\textsuperscript{68} copper miners or invaders from the continent\textsuperscript{69}. In Northern Europe, the Funnelbeaker culture (\textit{Trichterbecherkultur}, short TBK) was interpreted as the native Neolithic population, while the bearers of the Globular Amphora (short GAK) and Corded Ware cultures came in from the East and the bearers of the Bell Beaker culture immigrated from the West\textsuperscript{70}. The whole question of re-use could thus be an artefact wholly created by a purely ethnic interpretation of material culture. While Middle Neolithic populations simply continued ancestral traditions when burying their dead in Early Neolithic Megaliths (there is evidence for the systematic clearing out of human remains from several North-European megalithic monuments), the people using Bell Beakers are described as “squatters in collective tombs”\textsuperscript{71} and the removal of the bones of previous occupants is described as an act of occupation.\textsuperscript{72} In the following I will therefore try to unravel the various phases of use of megalithic monuments, mainly, but not exclusively on the British Isles, in order to understand how changes of use are related to different types of material culture (‘archaeological cultures’). The picture that emerges is far more complicated than originally assumed, but does, in my opinion, support the claim of a special treatment of past monuments associated with the Bell Beakers and specific burials containing Bell Beakers.

\textsuperscript{65} Lanting and Waals 1976.
\textsuperscript{66} Harrison 1989.
\textsuperscript{67} Harrison 1989.
\textsuperscript{68} Childe 1942.
\textsuperscript{69} Piggot 1954.
\textsuperscript{70} For the history of this interpretation, see Hakelberg 2001.
\textsuperscript{71} Chambon 2004, 71.
\textsuperscript{72} Houot and Gallay 1992.
In British literature, the makers of Bell Beakers are often credited with the introduction of single burial indicative of a society that emphasizes individuality in favor of the group. However, in the western half of the distribution of Bell Beakers, from Spain and Morocco to Ireland, Western Scotland and Switzerland, Bell Beakers are normally associated with communal burials. They are mainly found in structures associated with previous ceramic styles, both megalithic graves and hypogees. In France and Spain, older structures are often re-opened (‘broken into’ for use). Only in Ireland is there a specific form of megalithic grave specifically associated with Bell Beakers, the so-called wedge-tombs. Stone cists were used for Bell Beaker burial in Switzerland, France, the British Isles and in all of the Eastern part of the Bell Beaker distribution, provided there were suitable stones. In other areas, there is frequent evidence for rectangular wooden coffins, normally only preserved as discolorations in the ground.

6 The use of chambered megalithic tombs

In order to understand Beaker ‘re-use’ and the blocking of megalithic tombs, it is first necessary to understand their regular use. In the acidic soils where the glacial boulders suitable for building megalithic tombs mainly occur in Western Europe, bone preservation is normally not very good. Thus, the kind and sequence of use of those tombs is difficult to elucidate. Fortunately, there have been a number of detailed excavations and re-analyses of previously excavated graves in recent years.

One important question is whether the tombs were left open after the deposition of a body. If at all preserved, the bones of individual skeletons are often widely dispersed. This disarray could be caused either by scavenging animals or by making space for newer additions, as was the case in the Central German mortuary houses. Skulls are often found near the walls of the tombs, which led to the theory of burial of corpses leaning against the walls. Alternatively, they could have been moved there when depositing new bodies, as is often observed in Medieval churches. However, skeletons are often incomplete, and sometimes show signs of animal gnawing, which may indicate scavengers entering open tombs. The human bones from the Cotswold-Severn Tomb of Adlestrop Barrow in Gloucestershire have been extensively gnawed, for example. In contrast, Tim Darvill cites the rarity of animal gnawing at the grave at Rodmarton as evidence for

73 Barrett 1993.
74 Lemercier 2002, 172.
75 Waddell 2010.
77 Feustel 1972.
80 M. Smith 2006, tab. 1.
temporary blocking.\textsuperscript{81} As an alternative explanation for the state of the skeletons, the 
excarnation of bodies outside the Megalithic tombs has been proposed, for example, at 
Isbister on Orkney.\textsuperscript{82} There is some evidence for excarnation platforms,\textsuperscript{83} and definite 
indications of weathering have been observed on the bones from Le Breos Cwm chambered 
tomb in South Wales.\textsuperscript{84} The lack of smaller bones, for example of fingers and toes 
that can sometimes be observed can be caused both by excarnation, attrition and loss 
from animal gnawing.\textsuperscript{85} Coldrum in Kent supplied evidence for deliberate dismemberment.\textsuperscript{86} There are also claims that specific bones were removed on purpose\textsuperscript{87} or that 
older bones were added to a funerary assemblage.

The detailed excavation of the Cotswold-Severn Tomb of Hazleton North indicates 
that the dead were deposited as complete bodies.\textsuperscript{88} As the tomb started to fill up, older 
burials were pushed aside and eventually ended up in a very tumbled state, with almost 
no articulated bones left. In Hazleton North, the skeletons in both chambers were less 
articulated than those in the passage, with the north passage providing clear evidence 
for ‘successive interment’ and a completely articulated burial directly at the entrance.\textsuperscript{89} 
A re-analysis of the West Kennet human bones seems to indicate a similar sequence 
there.\textsuperscript{90} While the Orkney tombs generally contain a high number of burials, in others 
the number of individuals interred was much lower, and, as the recent data produced 
by Bayliss and Whittle show, often the actual period of use was shorter than expected.\textsuperscript{91} 
All the people buried in the primary context at West Kennet could have died at the same 
time\textsuperscript{92} or at least during a fifty-year timespan.\textsuperscript{93} This would change our view of a tomb 
serving as the burial place of a community over several centuries. Instead, it could be a 
monument commemorating a special, probably traumatic event, maybe mass mortality 
because of an epidemic or warfare, which was quickly closed up afterwards.\textsuperscript{94} As there 
are no data for the actual construction of the tomb at West Kennet, it cannot be proven 
that the burials inside were the first or only inhabitants of the tomb, however.\textsuperscript{95}

All in all, there seems to be a wide range of burial procedures and the observations 
in a single grave can probably not be generalized. The Mauerkammergräber and mortuary 
houses of the North-European TBK can have quite extended periods of use, 300 years 
in the case of Odagsen in the Leine valley.\textsuperscript{96} The burial of ‘vintage objects’ has been
suspected, but there are also examples of forced entry into these structures, which indicate that their use may have spanned several cultural periods.

The Dutch Hunebedden show evidence of an organized placement of the dead bodies, including fixtures for draining the secretions of rotting corpses by a paved central depression on the floor. There is evidence for a two-, sometimes multi-layered build-up of bodies.

As in the North German mortuary houses discussed below, in all graves of the TBK Westgroup and in most of the Altmark Group passage graves as well as Nenndorf, Ldkr. Harburg, and in Mecklenburg, there is evidence for the use of fire after one layer of burials was completed. This can be manifest as burnt granite, flint or a baked clay floor. Whether this was an attempt to simply remove dead bodies or other accumulated materials or was connected to rituals of closure and cleansing – Jürgen Hoika has proposed that the cracking of burnt flint may have been used to chase away the ghosts of the dead – is difficult to decide. Numerous Irish passage graves show evidence for the systematic use of fire, which may be related to similar rites. In addition, remains of cremated bodies are frequently found in British and Irish megalithic graves, both in passage graves and later structures like the Early Bronze Age Clava tombs. The mortuary houses of the TBK, more specifically of the Bernburg tradition, normally have a better bone preservation than the megalithic structures further north. They are also bigger and seem to contain more dead bodies than the average dolmen. In these wooden structures, for example in Nordhausen and Schönstedt, a rather systematic ordering of bodies in rows is in evidence, with older burials more disturbed than more recent ones. Sometimes, there are several layers of burials, as in Odagsen, where, again, each layer shows evidence of burning.

There are numerous reports about the more or less systematic removal of bones from tombs. In Serrahn, Grave 2 in Mecklenburg an assemblage of disarticulated bones, including several skulls was found in front of the blocked extended dolmen, while the interior contained the more or less articulated skeletons of at least four people.

While this observation cannot be uncritically transferred to the British material, it indicates that dead bodies seem to lose their importance as time goes by, they decay and personal memory of the person fades, and had to make space for more recent interred

97 Rinne 2002.
99 Bakker 1992, 47.
100 Bakker 1992, 47.
101 Schuldt 1972.
103 Bradley 2005.
105 Herrmann 1989.
106 Feustel 1972.
109 Schuldt 1972, fig. 47.
corpses. It thus remains difficult to determine whether a particular act of ‘cleaning out’ is a part of the ‘normal ritual’ or an appropriation of a structure by later people(s).

7 Infilling and blocking

For a long time, West Kennet Long Barrow (Wiltshire) was one of the best excavated megalithic tombs in Britain, and the sequence observed there was used as a template to understand the use of megalithic monuments in England in general, especially after the re-analysis by Julian Thomas and Alistair Whittle. The tomb was built during the early Neolithic and associated with Western Carinated Pottery, or, as Stuart Piggott called it, “Windmill Hill ware”. The forecourt of the Cotswolds-Severn tomb was blocked by a number of massive sarsens while Peterborough pottery was in use, but only a few sherds were left behind, and no indication of any ceremonies could be observed. The whole tomb was then filled up to the very roof with what Piggott describes as chalk rubble, interspersed “with many seams and patches (up to a foot or so in thickness) of rubble stained brown and black with charcoal dust”, containing “soil and rubbish [...] scraped up from the floors of settlement-sites, or perhaps from temporary camping-places connected in some way with the funeral ritual.” As the fill contains Peterborough (mainly Ebbsfleet and Mortlake styles but also some Fengate Ware), Grooved Ware and Bell Beaker sherds, this labor-intensive act of deposition has to be dated in the Final Neolithic (in continental terminology) or later. Western Carinated sherds were missing in the fill. Piggott’s observation of “[t]he greater part of a fine Bell-Beaker carefully placed upside down in an angle of the north-west chamber at a high level” would suggest that the infilling should be linked to the users of Bell Beakers, as large sherds in general and of Bell Beakers in particular are rarely part of settlement refuse proper. The fill was completely unstratified:

[F]ragments of the same vessel may be scattered between two or more chambers, and [...] many pots survive only as a group of sherds none of which join. In other words, the pots were not broken in the tomb as a part of funerary ritual, but were brought there as already scattered potsherds.

A series of 31 \(^{14}\)C-dates analyzed by Bayliss et al. revealed that the primary fill of the tomb was introduced between 3670 to 3640 BC, while, after a hiatus of more than a hundred years, seven dates from the secondary fill span the period between 3620/3240

110 Thomas and Whittle 1986.
112 Piggott 1958, 236.
113 Piggott 1958, 232.
114 Piggott 1958, 239.
115 Piggott 1958, 239.
and 2500 to 2335 cal. BC, roughly a thousand years. The authors follow the model of a gradual infill, probably through the roof,\textsuperscript{117} already proposed by Thomas and Whittle in 1986, stating that the sequence of dates follows the stratigraphy of the chamber. The articulated goat skeleton that provided the final date could actually be contemporary with the Beaker of Wessex-Middle Rhine type excavated by Piggott. It is impossible to assess this claim without going into a detailed study of the monument’s stratigraphy, but as the authors themselves admit, the dates are not numerous enough to be certain about this claim. However, it seems certain that the monument was backfilled at a time it was already disintegrating.\textsuperscript{118}

Numerous megalithic graves were blocked at the end of their use-life. Examples are known from Brittany, on the British Isles, in Northern Germany and Scandinavia. This entailed the closure of entrances and passages by dry-stone walling or the insertion of massive stone slabs. The latter were sometimes made up of smashed remains of ornamented stone slabs, as in the eastern passage of Petit Mont, Arzon, Morbihan,\textsuperscript{119} which calls to mind the destruction of carved slabs for the construction of the megalithic graves of Gavrinis and Table des Marchands in the Gulf of Morbihan.\textsuperscript{120} Not all long barrows and megalithic monuments were blocked – Piggott points to Lanhill in Wiltshire\textsuperscript{121} as a counter-example. The existence of a temporary blocking is difficult to prove, however. If the blocking is completely removed for a new burial, normally no archaeologically visible trace will remain. Only Ascott-under-Wychwood has provided some evidence for temporary blockings and their repeated removal,\textsuperscript{122} even if the interpretation has been doubted.\textsuperscript{123}

There are several ways the access to the dead inside a megalithic tomb could be restricted or prevented:

1. Construction of the chamber itself
2. Construction of the mound
3. Infilling of chamber and passage

Additionally, a limitation of access could be caused by the total or partial collapse of the structure itself. In Hazleton North, a collapse of orthostats blocked the north passage and the access to the chamber.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{117} Case 1995.
\textsuperscript{118} Bayliss, Whittle, and Wysocki 2007, 97.
\textsuperscript{119} Lecornec 1994.
\textsuperscript{120} Cassen 2009; Patton 1993.
\textsuperscript{121} Keiller et al. 1938, 242.
\textsuperscript{122} Benson and Whittle 2007, 329.
\textsuperscript{123} Saville 2007.
\textsuperscript{124} Saville 1995, 91.
1. Construction of the chamber

The ingress to all simple dolmens is blocked by the mound or cairn, the only access would be provided by lifting the capstone.\(^{125}\) While the chambers were normally used for single burials, there is evidence for occasional multiple burials,\(^{126}\) but without a program of detailed dating it is impossible to tell whether the deceased were interred simultaneously or not. Earthen long barrows or ‘chamberless long barrows’ preserve no evidence of how the access was managed, but were presumably also closed structures.

2. Construction of the mound

In several Breton mounds, the entrance to the chambers is either blocked by the original mound, or by an extension of the mound. In Ile Carn, Plouldalmézeau, Finisterre, for example, the entrances to the short passage graves were first blocked, then covered by a large cairn.\(^{127}\) In contrast, in Barnenez, one of the largest Breton cairns, the passages of the original passage graves were elongated to ensure that access was still possible after the enlargement of the original mound. A number of the Welsh Clyde tombs contain structures that were left without access when the long-mound received its final shape, for example Ty Isaf, Pipton and Tinkinswood.\(^{128}\) In this case, it is difficult to decide if this is a deliberate blocking or part of the normal live-cycle of the mound.

3. Infilling of chamber and passage

Infilling was observed in West Kennet (see above). There is also some indication that the south chamber and passage of Hazleton-North were deliberately filled in, but the excavator regards the evidence as “not wholly conclusive”.\(^{129}\) Often, a removal of capstones and filling in of the passages in prehistoric times is difficult to differentiate from later collapse.

4. Blocking of passage and entrance by stones

The blocking of entrances for Cotswold-Severn tombs was already discussed above. It is quite common (Tab. 1).

French Late Neolithic gallery graves sometimes have so-called spirit-holes (*Seelenlöcher*) in the frontal slab. The allée couverte of Bois-Couturier (Guiry-en-Vexin) is one of the rare examples where the ‘plug’ for the hole has been preserved.\(^{130}\) Further examples

126 Schirnina 1979.  
127 Patton 1993, fig. 7-3.  
130 Arnette and Peek 1965.
were found in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, Epône (Trou-aux-Anglais), Arronville (Seine-et-Oise) and Flavacourt Vaudancourt (Oise).\textsuperscript{131} These are obviously special cases, where a constant access (or egress) was envisaged. However, the opening is normally too small for the comfortable handling of a corpse. We have no indication if this was the rule, or how frequent it was.

The north chamber of Hazleton North, blocked off by a collapsing orthostat and thus representing a potential ‘frozen’ picture of a tomb in use, has a clear zone free of bones in front of the inner edge of the chamber proper.\textsuperscript{132} This may indicate some form of organic barrier, or an entirely above-ground blocking slab that had been removed or even smashed. As pairs of bones could be fitted across this boundary,\textsuperscript{133} the barrier may have already been removed by the time the chamber became inaccessible. On the other hand, megalithic graves in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern sometimes contained compartments, with low slabs defining distinct areas of burial, that were only around 10 cm high.\textsuperscript{134} This illustrates that spatial boundaries or barriers to the movement of bones and artefacts need not always have been barriers to the movement of the living.

Long-mounds with stone chambers like the one at West Kennet are a type specific to southwestern Britain, namely the area between the Gower Peninsula in Wales and the Severn estuary\textsuperscript{135} and the North Wessex Downs in Wiltshire and southern Oxfordshire.\textsuperscript{136} A number of these tombs have been explored in modern excavations and published in great detail, among them Hazleton North,\textsuperscript{137} Gwernvale and Ascott-under-Wychwood.\textsuperscript{138} All three provided detailed evidence of the blocking of chambers. The blocking is not always easy to date, unless pottery or organic remains can be securely linked to the event. In Gwernvale (Pembrokeshire), the burial activity is linked to carinated bowls and plain hemispherical bowls of the British Early Neolithic. The blocking occurred in the Middle Neolithic and is connected to the deposition of Peterborough pottery.\textsuperscript{139} Not only the actual entrances to the chambers are blocked, but the forecourt is as well. The longcairn of Hazleton North contained two lateral passages with single

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{lll}
\hline
 & Blocking & incl. possible blocking & n \\
Chamber blocked & 72.73\% & 77.27\% & 22 \\
Passage blocked & 56.25\% & 75.00\% & 16 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Blocking of Cotswold-Severn tombs.}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{131} Arnette and Peek 1965.  \\
\textsuperscript{132} Saville 1990, 113.  \\
\textsuperscript{133} Saville 1990, 117–125.  \\
\textsuperscript{134} Schuldt 1972.  \\
\textsuperscript{135} Darvill 1982, 5.  \\
\textsuperscript{136} Darvill 2004, 9.  \\
\textsuperscript{137} Saville 1990.  \\
\textsuperscript{138} Benson and Whittle 2007.  \\
\textsuperscript{139} Lynch 1969; Britnell 1982.
chambers at the end. Both chambers and passages contained burials. The orthostats in the North passage had collapsed at some point, blocking the access to the north chamber, which was closed off by a “blocking slab” in the passage.\textsuperscript{140} The orthostat had snapped off at the base,\textsuperscript{141} presumably from natural causes. It is thus probable that the blocking slab 366 is a temporary blocking preserved in situ. The bone distribution\textsuperscript{142} extends from the chamber into the passage, but does not reach the blocking slab. Burials continued in the north passage. As there are very few grave goods, the dating depends entirely on \textsuperscript{14}C dates, which indicate the period of one or two generations in the 37th century BC for the use of the tomb.\textsuperscript{143} The forecourt is also blocked off in several Welsh Clyde-Tombs. In the case of Parc le Breos Cwm and Tinkinswood, graves with axial layout, this prevents access to the central chamber. In Ty Isaf, Capel Garmon, Pipton and Gwernvale however, the forecourt has been blocked although the chambers themselves were accessed by lateral passages, which are also blocked.\textsuperscript{144} This would indicate that the real location of the entrance had already been forgotten and the monument long fallen out of use when the blocking took place.

At Belas Knap, Gloucestershire, the forecourt was infilled and some parts of the exterior drystone wall may have been pulled down intentionally as well. Tim Darvill interprets this as an attempt to change the burial mound from manmade-structures into a naturally looking mound, in other words, to destroy even the memory about the existence of the megalith.\textsuperscript{145} Indeed, he calls his chapter on the abandonment of the structures “Blocking barrows and breaking traditions.”\textsuperscript{146} In this area, both Peterborough and Grooved Ware are linked to the blocking of entrances and forecourts.

In sum, it seems that megalithic graves could be blocked by drystone walls during use, immediately after use and later, in Middle Neolithic times. The evidence for infilling is more uneven, but the practice seems to be at least partly linked to the Final Neolithic Bell Beaker complex. To the best of my knowledge, no systematic study of blocking has been conducted in other areas of northwestern Europe, although the practice is certainly known here, for example in D41-Emmen in the western TBK area.\textsuperscript{147}

8 Bell Beakers in megalithic tombs

Unfortunately, the majority of megalithic graves have been emptied without proper observation of the contents, which makes any attempt at quantification extremely prob-

\textsuperscript{140} Saville 1990, 91.
\textsuperscript{141} Saville 1990, 92.
\textsuperscript{142} Saville 1990, fig. 115.
\textsuperscript{143} Meadows, Barclay, and Bayliss 2007.
\textsuperscript{144} Brinell 1980; Lynch 1969, fig. 2.7.
\textsuperscript{145} Darvill 2004, 173.
\textsuperscript{146} Darvill 2004.
\textsuperscript{147} Bakker 1992, 59.
lematic. In the following, I will look at the situation in Scotland in a little more detail. Scotland, especially the Scottish highlands, have a much better preservation of monuments than, for example, Germany or the Netherlands because of the low population density after the 18th centuries’ clearance and the lack of industrial development.\textsuperscript{148} Graves were protected by local superstition, much as in Ireland, where they were seen as the abode of the Sidhe. Henshall reports how “uncanny happenings” were observed after a farmer removed skulls from the chamber in Torlinn on Aran.\textsuperscript{149} In addition, diverse catalogues by Audrey Henshall and associates provide an exhaustive and easily accessible database.\textsuperscript{150} While the Scottish data cannot be generalized over the whole distribution of Bell Beakers, or even its Western part, it gives some idea of the magnitude of the phenomenon.

Beakers are frequent finds in Scottish megalithic graves. The megalithic grave at Clettraval (North Uist, outer Hebrides) illustrates such a re-use of an early Neolithic structure. Blocking is also frequent, but normally only noticed when modern excavations have taken place (Tab. 2).

The cairns of most megalithic graves in the area have been robbed (Tab. 3). When perusing Henshall’s catalogues, a constant re-use of stones becomes visible. Stones are in fact highly mobile, migrating from cleared fields to cairns, chamber-tombs and pre-historic houses, on to Iron Age houses and Brochs, then into modern roads, fences and farmhouses, and, with the collapse of these houses back to the fields. Orthostats can serve as convenient door-lintels and fence posts. Only in exceptional circumstances can their life cycle be mapped, however.

Of the 529 monuments of potentially Early Neolithic type (doubtful structures and Clava cairns were excluded), only 121 (23.8 \%) still contained finds. Of the mounds with datable artefacts, 30 contained artefacts from the early Neolithic, five finds that could be assigned to the Middle or late Neolithic, 16 to the Beaker Period, 15 to the Bronze Age, the same number to the Iron Age or Early Medieval period, and six contained Medieval or modern finds. The dating is based on Henshall’s illustrations and descriptions, and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>blocking</th>
<th>incl. possible blocking</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>all graves</td>
<td>4.17 %</td>
<td>7.42 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excavated graves</td>
<td>13.18 %</td>
<td>21.71 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 2. Frequency of blocking and infilling in Scotland.

\textsuperscript{148} Schirning 1979, 12; Bakker 1992, 1. \textsuperscript{149} Henshall 1974, ARN 15. \textsuperscript{150} Henshall 1965; Henshall 1974; Davidson and Henshall 1989; Davidson and Henshall 1991; Henshall and Ritchie 1995; Henshall and Ritchie 2001.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of robbing</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slight</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>severe</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>40.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nearly or totally destroyed</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sum</td>
<td>214</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 3  Robbing of cairns of Scottish megalithic graves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EN</th>
<th>MN</th>
<th>BB</th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>IA/EMA</th>
<th>MA/Mod</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 4  Finds in megalithic structures of potentially Early Neolithic date. abbreviations: EN=Early Neolithic, MN=Middle Neolithic, BB=Bell Beaker period, BA=Bronze Age, IA=Iron Age, EMA=Early Middle Ages, MA=Middle Ages, Mod=Modern times.

probably suffers from overconfidence. Still, it provides a general picture. Tab. 4 provides a breakdown by period and shows that several episodes of re-use were possible.

There are also finds of Bronze Age food vessels, collared urns and items connected to the Wessex-horizon, such as jet spacers and beads. The Iron Age sees a mainly domestic use, which is also possible in Norse times and the early Middle Ages in general. No preference of specific cairn types can be claimed with any certainty, as the numbers are generally low (Tab. 5).

The distribution of Beaker-type artefacts in relation to grave types indicates an avoidance of the late Neolithic Hebridean tombs (Tab. 6). There are also no Bargrennan-type tombs with Beaker-type finds, but their general number is low in the sample. Other than that, it seems no selection was made according to grave type – but of course, the past perception of graves may be different from the archaeologist’s. There may be a preference for earlier Neolithic tomb types, but better data would be needed to test this supposition.

As no catalogue or database exists that covers the whole distribution area of Bell Beakers, a systematic comparison with other areas would be a major undertaking. In
Form of mound | all | with BB | % BB
--- | --- | --- | ---
long | 118 | 7 | 5.93
round/square | 155 | 5 | 3.23
oval | 18 | 3 | 16.67
horned | 38 | 1 | 2.63
heel-shaped | 24 | 1 | 4.17
type indeterminate | 102 | 4 | 3.92
all (includes rare types not listed here) | 450 | 19 | 4.22

Tab. 5 Form of mound in relation to finds, BB=Bell Beaker artefacts or cists.

| Type | all graves | with BB | % BB |
--- | --- | --- | ---
Bargrennan | 11 | 0 | 0.00
Passage Grave | 29 | 2 | 6.90
Clyde | 77 | 5 | 6.49
Orkney-Cromarty | 145 | 5 | 3.45
Hebridean | 28 | 0 | 0.00
Other | 2 | 0 | 0.00
unknown/unclassified | 131 | 7 | 5.34

Subtypes OC

| Subtype | % of subtype |
--- | ---
OC Bookan Type | 5 | 20.00
OC Camster | 33 | 3.03
OC polygonal | 39 | 5.13
OC rectangular | 10 | 0.00
OC stalled | 1 | 0.00

Tab. 6 Type of chamber in relation to finds, BB=Bell Beaker artefacts or cists, OC=Orkney-Cromarty.

Lower Saxony (Germany) about half of all megalithic graves of TBK type contain finds of Bell Beakers or Corded Ware, often both.\textsuperscript{151} Later additions are common in other

\textsuperscript{151} Tempel 1979, 121.
areas of northern Germany as well. In southern France, Bell Beaker burials are found predominantly in dolmen, but there are strong differences between different styles.

In the East, this re-use of older structures is common in other cultural traditions that are often interpreted as intrusive as well, namely by the Globular Amphorae (GAK) and Corded Ware (CW) cultures. In Mecklenburg, many TBK graves contain GAK-vessels, Corded Ware vessels are also common. In the Western TBK area, all three groups can be observed as well (Tab. 7). “Although we often accuse Bell Beaker people of being squatters in collective tombs, we have to admit that they did not initiate that habit”.

Out of 76 known and 37 excavated graves of the Western TBK, eight contain later finds, four of them between one and seven Bell Beakers (Tab. 8).

In Ostenwalde, Ldkr. Emsland, Germany, the basic fill of the extended dolmen contained predominantly TBK sherds, but also some Tiefstich and several early Corded Ware vessels, as well as seven cremation burials interpreted as ‘later burials’ (Nachbestattungen). This basal layer was covered by a 40 cm thick layer of stones, which also contained Tiefstich-sherds. The upper layer contained later Corded Ware, Bell Beakers of several types and a Riesenbecher. Access for the later burials was presumably gained by digging away the original barrow, the drystone fill between the orthostats providing the material for the stone layer. This sequence runs partly counter to the accepted sequence of cultures in the area, but it also does not show the expected clear division between burials from different archaeological cultures.

Several interpretations of this re-use of older graves have been advanced. Often, it is seen as expediency or laziness, as re-use required less effort than erecting a new building.

---

Tab. 7 Later Neolithic materials in TBK-megalithic graves, Mecklenburg.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of grave</th>
<th>number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>einfacher Dolmen</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>erweiterter Dolmen</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Großdolmen</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganggrab</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steinkiste</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langhügel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megalithgrab</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grab</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

152 Laux 1979.  
153 Lemercier 2002.  
155 Chambon 2004, 71.  
156 Bakker 1992, 1.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>TBK</th>
<th>GAK</th>
<th>EGK</th>
<th>BB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D21</td>
<td>Bronneger</td>
<td>Brindley 1–3</td>
<td>late</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 pot beaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brindley 2–5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D28</td>
<td>Buinen</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>herringbone beakers</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D26</td>
<td>Drouwenerveld</td>
<td>Brindley 2–7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>amphorae, 2 battle-axes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>835</td>
<td>Ostenwalde 1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>vessels</td>
<td>6–7 Beakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>958</td>
<td>Kleinenkneten</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>686</td>
<td>Oldendorf 4</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>7 Graves</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>684</td>
<td>Oldendorf 2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>2 Graves</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>807</td>
<td>Sieben Steinhäuser B</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Riesenbecher?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 8  Finds from TBK-West Graves, TBK= Funnelbeaker culture, GAK=Globular Amphorae, EGK=Single Grave Culture, BB=Bell Beaker.

While this is certainly true, the examples of El Alto de la Tejera and Ostenwalde show that the effort involved was still considerable: the mound had to be partly dug away and heavy capstones lifted. Digging a single grave would presumably involve less labor, but the advantage would increase with the number of subsequent burials. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to assess the number of secondary burials. In addition, the skeletons associated with beakers tend to be relatively complete, which again would indicate some kind of blocking.

As already mentioned, Alain Gallay has interpreted the sequence of use in Sion Petit Chasseur in Wallis, Switzerland, as the aggressive defacement of tombs by an invading somatically different ethnic group. These graves have been excavated and published in great detail, and they are very well preserved. Dolmen MVI had been cleared of bones, a stela of Remedello type broken, replaced by a Bell Beaker-type stela. A change from trapezoid dolmens with communal burial to smaller stone cists accompanied this change. There is also evidence of the removal of skulls. Gallay interpreted the event as an upheaval organised by incoming Bell Beaker people, who practiced a different religion, centered on the veneration of the sun. He believed these incoming people cleared out the skulls of the previous population on purpose and inserted the bodies of their own dead instead. In other scenarios, local ‘megalithic’ people take over the material culture

158 Fernandez Moreno and Jimeno Martinez 1992.  
159 Gallay 2004.
of the invading Bell-Beaker group but continue to bury their dead in the graves of their ancestors.\textsuperscript{160}

\section*{9 Beakers in other structures}

The re-use of structures in the Bell Beaker period is not, however, restricted to tombs. Henges like Avebury, Mount Pleasant,\textsuperscript{161} and the Castlerigg Stonecircle in Cumbria received additions in the form of ‘coves’, high, box-like stone structures of unknown function. Similarly, Stonehenge was totally changed by the addition of the monumental sarsen trilithons and the bluestone horseshoe.\textsuperscript{162} This indicates that (some) sites of previous ritual importance maintained their special status, but probably with a changed emphasis. As most monuments were not static in the preceding periods, it is of course easy to over-emphasize the importance of these changes. As henges are uniquely British monuments, no comparison with the continent is possible.

The Down Farm Shaft, a natural solution pipe in the chalk of the South Downs that opened up in the late Palaeolithic and was the location of deliberate deposition from the Mesolithic onwards, was filled in and blocked by a thick Beaker deposit.\textsuperscript{163} There is also evidence that mining shafts of early Neolithic date were closed and Bell Beakers deposited there, although we have to rely on data from excavations by John Pull in the 1930s, which are not entirely clear.\textsuperscript{164} Maybe even the curious buried stone circle in Trebbichau, Sachsen-Anhalt\textsuperscript{165} as well as the buried stone row at Beltz-Kerdruellan (Morbihan)\textsuperscript{166} can be linked to these attempts to obliterate past monuments, but this is sheer speculation without any good evidence for dating yet.

The infilling of the West Kennet long barrow with Middle Neolithic settlement material is echoed by a Beaker Barrow at Woodhouse End in Cheshire that contains large amounts of Peterborough sherds (Ebbsfleet and Mortlake styles). It has been interpreted as the accidental use of earlier domestic refuse,\textsuperscript{167} but both could also be interpreted as a conscious attempt not only to obliterate traces of the past, but also to symbolically control them by an association with a dead body and the pottery vessel that marked a special social status, namely, the Bell Beaker.

\textsuperscript{160} Tempel 1979.\textsuperscript{161} Wainwright 1979.\textsuperscript{162} Darvill 2008.\textsuperscript{163} Allen and Green 1998; Green and Allen 1997, fig. 3.\textsuperscript{164} Russel 2002.\textsuperscript{165} Homann 2015.\textsuperscript{166} http://www.inrap.fr/les-menhirs-de-belz-9102 (visited on 02/02/2017).\textsuperscript{167} Mullin 2001, 333.
The function of graves

Graves can be places of commemoration and communication with the dead, and that is their main function in the modern Western world. They are also places of change: they transform a dead body into dead bones or let it disappear altogether – modern cemeteries are preferentially located on soils that are not conducive to bone preservation. They provide a place to deal with traumatic personal loss and help to change this loss into less threatening or disruptive memories, and they can change a dead person into an ancestor.

Visibility may be one of the ways to differentiate between places of commemoration and places of change. Different types of megalithic tombs and other communal graves tend to inhabit very different places in the landscape, with passage tombs often being highly visible, while, for example, portal dolmens and *Mauerkammergräber* often lurk in hidden locations. A generalizing account is difficult and probably misleading here. In general, a memorial is destined to be visible forever, while a place of transformation can, and maybe should be shut down once it has fulfilled its remediating function.

The concept of ancestor has been much misused in archaeology recently, not only in a generalizing, but also in an exoticizing way. The idea of a dead near relative looking down benevolently from heaven on the acts of the bereaved or watching out for them in other ways is common to many central European cultures, particularly as a way for children to deal with bereavement. It would be useful to separate this concept of a dead relative watching out for his or her progeny from the concept of ancestor as the founder of a noble lineage, and the 19th century idea of ancestor worship in ‘primitive’ societies, but this is a task beyond this essay. For present purposes, I am going to differentiate between personal, family and communal ancestors. Personal ancestors are close relatives looking over their descendants for a limited period, probably until a new social state has been achieved (marriage, transition from childhood to adulthood etc.). A family ancestor would correspond to a founder of a family or an eponymous hero, that is, a named personage with a remembered history at the root of a family tree. Communal ancestors are taken to be persons of influence, normally of advanced age that will help to maintain the power of the tribal elders after they have passed away. In this case, it is less the personality of the deceased than his or her power that persists beyond death.

As a first approximation, Early Neolithic tombs can be seen as open systems that transform the bodies of the dead into communal ancestors (Fig. 1). A dead body enters a tomb, where, in due course, it is transformed into an ancestor residing somewhere

170 Whitley 2002.
171 For example, in Cinderella or the Goose Girl in the Grimms’ fairy tales.
172 Fortes 1964; Tyler 1981.
Megalithic tombs as machines to create ancestors.

Blocking the entrances of a tomb means that no new bodies can enter, the machine is shut down (Fig. 2). Blocking will limit the number of ancestors and thus assure that the present ancestors remain in living memory and are not slowly forgotten in favor of newer entities (telescoping of genealogies). Blocking is therefore possibly linked to practices of dominance.

The single flat Bell Beaker graves in the eastern part of the distribution area (like Corded Ware Graves), in contrast, were destined for a single person and closed (back-filled) after burial. They were clearly not intended to create ancestors in the way me-

Miller 1979.
galithic tombs did (Fig. 3). A different religious ideology is to be presumed, with different ideas about the afterlife, and different social structures as well. Ownership of bell beakers, bows, copper daggers and possibly also special clothing marked the members of a ruling class. The Bell Beaker and its contents almost certainly held a special symbolic meaning as well as announcing group membership.

The bid for social domination by this new group was not only to rule the living, but also to neutralize the dead of previous dominant groups. As the bones of bodies that have been dead for a longer period were not treated with any special veneration, the power did presumably not reside in the bones as such, but rather the places that had transformed them and still held them. Once an ancestor has come into being, her or his actual bones cease to matter. The way to achieve ascendancy is thus not to simply get rid of the bones, but to control the place where the transformation into this powerful status takes place. Introducing a burial accompanied by the emblematic Bell Beaker and related artefacts into an older barrow may have been seen as a way to destroy the machine, to close the way out of the grave into whatever special place the ancestors normally resided (Fig. 4). In the case of the Welsh long barrows, the exceptional care taken to close every possible or suspected access underlines the importance of that act – and at the same time, the chronological distance. Whoever put the blocking in place had some understanding of the structure, but was not entirely familiar with the setup. Mullin also reports cases of Beaker burials in natural hills, for example at Feltwell in Norfolk, and of the deposition of special food vessels in a similar situation in Hill Close in Cheshire. While Mullin links this to an attempt at forgetting, “wiping the slate clean and allowing new associations to be forged, or invented”, one could also interpret it as the active attempt to destroy the past that takes no chances, and tries to dominate each possible

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174 Harris and Hofmann 2014.
175 Sherratt 1997; Rojo-Guerra et al. 2006.
177 Mullin 2001, 357.
manifestation. If we accept that passages underground may be seen as connections to another, ‘nether’ world, megalithic graves that presented a passage under the earth were blocked as well as any other opening into the depth, like the Down Farm Shaft and Early Neolithic flint mines. The mortuary houses of Northern Europe are far less visible than megalithic mounds, so any re-use of them also indicates an amazing local knowledge and familiarity with the practices taking place inside of them and their meaning. As Darvill puts it in the context of the Cotswold-Severn tombs,

preventing admittance to the inner concealed areas of a long barrow implies the existence of an abstract knowledge about the contents of barrows generally, and realization of deliberate attempts to hide, mask or to restrict that knowledge at particular sites.179

Darvill supposes that the blocking of the barrows presents an attempt to “prevent the spirits of the ancestors leaving the sanctuary of their ‘house of the dead’.”180 In contrast, I would see the blockings introduced in Bell Beaker times as an attempt to protect the living against the dead.

In many other cultures, barrows are perceived as dangerous places. The pagan Anglo-Saxons, for example, saw them as the abode of monsters,181 as illustrated by Beowulf and the Life of St. Guthlac. The people using Bell Beakers knew of the old traditions of burial and their meaning, and consciously opposed it by putting in their own dead, maybe as a guardian against any entity trying to creep back to the world of the living. If my interpretation of the Bell Beaker ‘re-use’ of older structures is correct, this would represent an attempt not to dominate, but to destroy all manifestations of a certain past and to neutralize its power. Far from being seen as imposing and desirable localities, the old

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179 Darvill 2004, 173.
180 Darvill 2004, 173.
megaliths would have been remembered as dangerous places that needed to be blocked and guarded – by a different kind of dead person, accompanied by a very specific type of material culture. Only then could its memory be erased.
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