

South of Woodhenge: an interim report on the 2007 excavations

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Following the completion of her excavations at Woodhenge in 1927, Maud Cunnington turned her attention to a series of features revealed through aerial photography to the south of that monument. These included a linear group of four ring-ditches and a middle Bronze Age enclosure, the Durrington 'Egg' (Cunnington 1929). In August 1928 the four ring-ditches (Durrington 67-70) were trenched, and substantial areas of the interiors of each were cleared. Only one of the ring-ditches (Durrington 67) enclosed a central burial, a crouched inhumation accompanied by a comb-decorated Beaker and a tourmaline axe-hammer. Another inhumation, in this instance unaccompanied, was found in the south-west part of the area enclosed by Durrington 68. The four ring-ditches are probably of early Bronze Age date, but within the areas enclosed by the circuits of Durrington 67 and 68 were several features belonging to episodes of late Neolithic activity. These include several post-holes within the inner ring of Durrington 67 and a substantial timber setting inside Durrington 68. Cunnington considered the latter to be an enclosure of Early Iron Age date, linking it erroneously to a spread of dumped bone and pottery in the secondary fills of the adjacent section of ditch (Cunnington 1929, 45-7). However, re-evaluation in 1995 showed this structure to be associated firmly with Grooved Ware, and to have clear parallels with the Northern Circle inside Durrington Walls and a number of other timber 'circles' elsewhere in Britain and Ireland (Pollard 1995): its later Neolithic date is not in doubt. Residual sherds of Grooved Ware and late Neolithic lithics also came from fills of the inner ring of Durrington 67 and from those of Durrington 69 and 70 during the 1928 excavations.

Later work within this riverside zone – occupying a low north-south ridge overlooking the Avon – revealed further evidence of later Neolithic activity. During the late 1940s several ash-filled pits containing Grooved Ware and remarkable assemblages of material culture were discovered in the garden of 'Woodlands' 80m to the south of Durrington 67 (Stone & Young 1948), while oblique and chisel arrowheads were recovered during surface collection further to the south (Richards 1990, fig. 158). Further structural detail was provided by a parchmark survey undertaken by the then RCHME in the summer of 1992. In addition to the ring-ditches and components of the middle Bronze Age and Iron Age/Romano-British settlement and fieldsystems, this work recorded a number of pit-like features around the area of the ring-ditches. Of immediate interest in the context of the aims of the Stonehenge Riverside Project – to more fully understand the extant and character of later Neolithic activity along this stretch of the Avon riverside – were a bowed arrangement of apparently eight features immediately south-east of Durrington 70 and a ring of possible pits or post-holes projecting from the outer ring-ditch of Durrington 67. Both sets of features were considered potential candidates for being additional later Neolithic monuments, and so components of a more extensive riverside complex than that represented by Durrington Walls and Woodhenge alone. Demonstration of their date and character, and relationship to the Durrington 68 structure, Woodlands pits and other

monuments of the Durrington/Woodhenge complex, was therefore a significant goal to achieve.

The anomalies to the south of Durrington 70 were investigated by means of a 15 x 15m trench (Trench 21). A second trench (Trench 22: 30 x 20m, with a 15 x 10m extension to the north) was laid out to take in the area of the Durrington 68 timber structure previously examined by Cunnington (in order to establish whether deposits and features had been missed) and the northern half of the Durrington 67 double ring-ditch with its possible pit/post circle. Prior to machine stripping, artefact densities within the topsoil were assessed by means of recovery from hand-dug 1 x 1m test pits across the areas to be excavated. Set out on a 5m-grid, these provided a 4% sample of the topsoil. Most produced worked flint, though not in great quantities. A few distinctive later Neolithic pieces, including two oblique arrowheads, were recovered from the soil over the southern part of Trench 22. Of the other finds (including Roman and later pottery), it is tempting to interpret the blade of an old pointing trowel as an excavation tool discarded during the 1928 work. The topsoil was a uniform 0.20-0.25m deep. Until recently this area was subject to annual ploughing; as a consequence no buried soils survived.

Results

The Timber Structures

The parchmark anomalies within Trench 21 (Durrington 70) proved to be large post-holes and pits belonging to a timber structure analogous to that within Durrington 68, while a third such structure, of much smaller dimensions, was revealed several metres to the south-west of Durrington 68 in Trench 22. While varying in scale, all three share a common architectural format defined by square settings of four posts, in two instances (Durrington 68 and 70) with paired pits/post-holes set in the entrance areas. The two Durrington 68 structures – both old and new discoveries – are described first, then that adjacent to Durrington 70.

Durrington 68

Re-excavation of features belonging to the Durrington 68 timber setting demonstrated the thoroughness and efficiency of the Cunnington work. With the exception of a small lens of possible *in situ* fill [219] in the base of post-hole [203], all the original packing and post-pipe material had been removed during the 1928 campaign. A few pieces of worked flint and a little bone remained in the backfill. While there was a certain disappointment that substantially intact and dateable deposits did not remain within the post-holes, the scale of this structure was reinforced in a very visual way through its re-excavation. At 1.35-1.45m deep, the four main post-holes, [201], [203], [205] and [207], would have held substantial timbers standing some 4.0-5.5m tall above ground (Table 1). The profile of the two south-eastern 'entrance' features, [209] and [211], with width-to-depth ratios of c.2:1 suggests these were pits rather than post-holes; and the original fill of [211] is recorded as having been without a post-pipe, though containing a cremation associated

with Grooved Ware (Cunnington 1929, 156). A small amount of cremated bone recovered from the excavation of the backfill [210].

Care had been expended in their creation of the major post-holes and entrance pits, demonstrated by the way they were very regularly cut with vertical sides and flat bases. Slight under-cutting was present in [201] and [207], and the digging of [203] and [207] utilised vertical bedding planes in the chalk for part of the sides. The resulting flat, ‘panel’ surfaces were checked for signs of engravings (as occurred at the Flagstones enclosure, Dorchester: Healy 1997), but none were found.

Feature	Cunnington no.	Fills	Diameter	Depth
[201]	29	[200]	1.15m	1.45m
[203]	30	[202], [219]	1.10 x 1.20m	1.35m
[205]	31	[204]	1.05 x 1.15m	1.40m
[207]	32	[206], [226], [227]	1.15m	1.45m
[209]	33	[208], [221]	1.30m	0.56m
[211]	34	[210]	1.33 x 1.26m	0.62m

Table 1. Contexts and dimensions of features belonging to the Durrington 68 structure

Backfill deposits from the 1928 excavations comprised a grey-brown clayey loam with varying quantities of chalk, often more towards the base, while layers of much finer soil in [203] and [204] look to have been sieved. The only certain *in situ* fill was a lens of pale grey silty clay with much small chalk and chalk ‘powder’ [219]; a central, 0.4m diameter, patch of darker and more soil-rich fill within this probably being the base of the post-pipe. A few small pieces of bone were recovered from this, but do not constitute ideal radiocarbon samples for dating the structure. The status of a compact lens of light brown clayey silt on the base of [209], [221], is ambiguous, although it too might comprise *in situ* deposit.

As revealed by Cunnington, the outer limits of the structure were defined by an oval ring of small post-holes giving an overall diameter of 14.5 x c.12.0m. These are quite ephemeral features, and with around 0.1m of chalk being lost through ploughing since 1928, it is not surprising that all those recognized in the early excavation are no longer present. This fence or wall line could be identified where the small post-holes survived on the northern side. Post-holes [239]-[246] and [248], and a central post setting also recognised by Cunnington, [247], were in the range 0.20-0.32m in diameter, and up to 0.18m deep. Post-hole [246], in the entrance area adjacent to [211], was more substantial at 0.47m in diameter.

The status of the ‘entrance pits’ requires some consideration. That they did not hold posts suggests that they need not have been part of the structure proper, and circumstantial evidence suggests they may be secondary features, potentially equivalent

to the re-cuts in the major post-holes of the Southern Circle and Woodhenge, and the 'closing' pits associated with the late Neolithic houses outside the Durrington east entrance. Both [209] and [211] look to cut earlier features that could make up the outer wall line of the timber structure. On the south-west sides of both were circular projections, [222] and [235] respectively, c.0.4-0.6m in diameter and 0.15-0.30m deep, either pits or shallow post-holes. Unfortunately, any direct stratigraphic relationship has been removed by the 1928 excavations, and so the primacy of these smaller features must remain conjectural.

Similar shallow pits or highly truncated post-holes were identified adjacent to [203] ([224]), immediately north-west of [209] ([262]) and close to the edge of Durrington 68 ring-ditch ([261]), all lying on a NW-SE line running over a distance of c.12m. All were circular and in the range 0.4-0.5m diameter and 0.04-0.18m deep. The fill of [224], [223], was a pale brown silty clay with moderate chalk, being slightly less chalky in the centre where the base of a post-pipe might be present. Their close spatial relationship with the Durrington 68 structure, and position on an axis shared with the latter, suggests they are related and not associated with the ring-ditch phase.

One final feature, that may or may not be associated with the structure is the grave pit encountered by Cunnington (her feature 37) between post-holes [205] and [207] and pits [209] and [211]. The cut [213] is oval, 0.9 x 0.75m and 0.16m deep, and was filled with a backfill deposit [212] similar to that in the post-holes. Cunnington records a crouched skeleton, head at the north-west, facing south (Cunnington 1929, 46). A report on the remains by Arthur Keith (in Cunnington 1929, 59-60) identifies the skeleton as that of an adult female. He remarked: 'I suspect these remains are of Neolithic date; the characters are those of the long barrow type' (ibid. 60).

One highly significant discovery, resulting from on-site measurements made by Clive Ruggles, is that the axis of the Durrington 68 setting as defined by the central post-holes is on the midwinter solstice sunrise. As such, it mirrors that of the Southern Circle at Durrington Walls. This critical axial alignment could say much about the special status of this structure.

Durrington 68 south-west

Situated several metres to the south-west of the Durrington 68 structure was a further setting of post-holes that had not been detected on either the parchmark or geophysical surveys. While of a much more diminutive size, the square setting of four post-holes was highly reminiscent of those within the centre of the Durrington 68 and 70 structures, and consequently these features are considered to belong to an analogous later Neolithic monument.

The four post-holes formed an approximate square of 2.5 x 2.6m (measurements taken from the centres of the features). All were similar in dimensions and depths, the latter ranging from 0.4-0.5m (Table 2). In each instance two components to the cuts could be identified: regular, deep, steep-sided and circular sections at one end; and more irregular,

usually sloping, ramps at the other. The ‘ramps’ were present on the western sides of [268] and [287], and the north-eastern of [231] and [237]. Aspects of the cuts and feature fills strongly imply that the ‘ramps’ are related to post *extraction* (i.e. the dismantling of the structure) rather than post *erection* (as more commonly occurs). First, it would be unusual if ramps were employed to set posts of this size. Second, all the fills were very disturbed in the upper profiles, almost removing any distinction between post-pipe and packing, and there was no reason to assume that this disturbance occurred at a much later date (e.g. through animal burrowing). These upper fills [230]/[238]/[269]/[286] were of an orange-grey-brown clayey silt with varying quantities of chalk. Towards the bases and lower sides chalk packing, [236]/[253]/[271]/[298], around erstwhile post-pipes could usually be discerned. Some of the packing here was very compacted. A localised deposit of clayey silt, [272], in the centre and towards the base of post-hole [268] looks to be post-pipe fill proper. Large nodules of flint in [286] occurred above the remnant post-pipe. Removal of the posts by digging ramps to their bases and then levering the timbers out would result in the pattern of feature shape and fill described here. The structure was therefore intentionally dismantled at a point soon after construction, before the timbers had started to rot.

Finds from these features were very few, but included small quantities of fragmented bone and fresh worked flints.

Feature	Fills	Dimensions	Depth
[231]	[230], [236]	1.3 x 0.7m	0.50m
[237]	[238], [253]	1.3 x 0.7m	0.43m
[268]	[269], [271], [272]	1.2 x 0.6m	0.40m
[287]	[286], [298]	>1.1 x 0.7m	0.47m

Table 2. Contexts and dimensions of features belonging to the Durrington 68 SW structure

In the case of this structure no trace of an outer fence-line or wall occurred, but if constructed of lightly-set stakes (i.e. which did not penetrate c.0.15m or more into the chalk) this would not be expected to survive. The absence of obvious entrance features makes establishment of the structure’s principal axis impossible, although by analogy with the others it was probably to the south-east.

Durrington 70

Located to the south-east of Durrington 70 was a structure similar in many details to the Durrington 68 setting. With a WNW-ESE axis, it comprised a square arrangement of four posts, [003], [004], [005], [006], set 3.5 x 3.8m apart (taking measurements from their centres), and a pair of large pits/post-holes, [007] and [008], c.2m to the east and defining what was probably the entrance area. These were encircled by a partial oval of stake-holes and a small post, [041]. Post-holes making up the ‘central’, square setting

were 1.1-1.2m in diameter and 0.98-1.18m deep (see Table 3). Circular and neatly cut, their sides were very steep to vertical, and bases flat. A slight lip on the northern side of [005] could mark the remains of a shallow ramp. That the post had rotted *in situ* was indicated by clear packing and post-pipe components to the fills. The packing material was chalk rubble in a pale beige clayey silt, compact at the top and looser towards the bases; while the post-pipe fills – [020], [024], [026], [028] – were a dark brown clay silts with varying chalk, each 0.5-0.6m in diameter. Those of post-holes [005] and [006] (towards the front of the setting) were noticeably darker than in [003] and [004]. A thin lens of very dark brown, friable loam towards the base of [020] probably represents an accidental incorporation of turf or topsoil. Occasional pieces of worked flint, bone and some Grooved Ware came from the post-pipes and, to a lesser degree, packing, sometimes well down within these fills.

Following the decay of the posts and formation of the post-pipe fills, pits were cut into the tops of post-holes [003]-[006]. As excavated, these re-cuts were shallow (0.15-0.25m deep), although truncation of the chalk here has been severe. In each instance tightly defined deposits of bone (comprising mixtures of cattle and pig) were placed in the re-cuts. Group [018] in the top of [005] included an inverted canid skull, possibly of wolf, while the small group [091] in [004] incorporated a split cattle long-bone set near vertically.

Although clearly ‘paired’, of similar diameter and sharing elements of their finds assemblages in common (e.g. serrated blades), the ‘entrance pits’ [007] and [008] showed quite different fills. Again, both these features were neatly cut with near vertical sides and flat bases. Feature [007] is probably a large post-hole, if slightly wider than the others. Within the centre of the fill was a post-pipe or possible cut, [038], more quadrilateral than circular in plan, though the shape was perhaps distorted by slumping on the west side. If a post-pipe, this was certainly not as regular as the others, perhaps because the timber was withdrawn. The fill of this, [037], was a brown loam that incorporated quantities of worked flint, large bone, daub fragments and Grooved Ware. The [039] chalk rubble packing included several pieces of tabular chalk possessing lines that could have been deliberately incised. A 0.15m-thick layer of orange-brown clay loam, [029], containing flint and bone pitched at an angle (the fill of either a re-cut or weathering cone) overlay the post-pipe.

Feature [008] was shallower than [007] and the fills not consistent with it being a post-hole, unless an erstwhile post had been removed. A lower fill of loose, angular chalk rubble [046] had been tipped in from the eastern side. Above this was a brown clay silt [015] containing scattered worked flint, pottery and bone, and a compact deposit of animal bone towards the top of the fill, [031], largely of pig with some vertebrae articulated. A sherd of comb-decorated Beaker was recovered from the top of [015] and several sherds of Grooved Ware from lower in this fill.

Feature	Fills	Re-cut	Bone group	Diameter	Depth
[003]	[010], [026],	[049]	[019]	1.1m	1.18m

	[027], [034]				
[004]	[012], [016], [020], [021], [023], [035]	[032]	[091]	1.1m	1.05m
[005]	[011], [017], [024], [036], [047]	[045]	[018]	1.2m	0.98m
[006]	[013], [028], [030], [033]	[048]	[025]	1.2m	1.0m
[007]	[014]/[029], [037], [038], [039]	-	-	1.3m	1.1m
[008]	[015], [046]	-	[031]	1.25m	0.9m
[041]	[040]	-	-	0.25m	0.14m

Table 3. Contexts and dimensions of features belonging to the Durrington 70 structure

The outer wall or fence line of the Durrington 70 structure was, in contrast to the main posts, a very ephemeral affair. It took the form of an oval ring formed by a curving line of stake-holes, perhaps with a second entrance return on the west – [041], [057], [061], [063], [067], [069], [071], [073], [075], [079], [081], [083], [085] – and small post-hole [041], providing the setting with overall dimensions of c.11 x 8.5m. Post-hole [041] had a single fill of grey-brown clay loam with chalk, [040]. Time did not permit the elucidation of all the possible stake-holes in the trench, particularly those that might have formed the northern half of the enclosing oval.

To the immediate south-west of the structure was a separate cluster of stake-holes ([051], [053], [055], [059] and [065]); a further two stake-holes occurred within the interior ([077] and [087]); and isolated examples to the north ([088] and [089]), and east, [090]

Post-hole [006] of the structure cut an earlier and unusual linear feature, [044], orientated north-south. Regular and evidently artificial, this was 1.80 long, 0.95 wide, up to 0.16m deep, with very steep sides and a flat base. Extending across the base and into the top of the feature on the north was a fill of clean chalk rubble, [043]. In places, and especially towards the centre, this was extremely compact – effectively crushed and ‘structureless’. Above and at the south end was a layer of chalk rubble in a pale beige silt, [022]. The degree of compression of the basal fill and smoothing of the feature base in the centre suggests the pit originally held a stone. Being long and shallow, this does not, however, look like a conventional stone-hole – any standing megalith would have to be set on its long axis as a recumbent. An alternative interpretation could see it as a stone extraction pit, that is a feature dug around a naturally occurring sarsen (as the only geological possibility in this region) in order to remove it; but this would not explain the presence of a compacted lower fill nor the regularity of the cut.

The Durrington 67 Pit Circle

The final pre-ring-ditch monument to be described is the pit circle partially cut through by the outer ditch of Durrington 67. Excavation and parchmark survey demonstrate the monument comprises a ring of 10 pits with a diameter of just under 30m. An arc of three pits on the east, and of four on the west are regularly spaced at approximate 10m intervals. Those on the south and north have a more eccentric spacing: the gap between [307] and [318] is only 0.6m, while an abnormally wide distance exists between [318] and [265], perhaps indicative of an entrance area. Five of these pits on the northern part of the circumference were excavated, one previously by Cunnington ([296], her feature 'h').

All the pits were oval and very regularly cut, with very steep sides in their lower profiles and dished bases. Their axes followed the circumference of the ring. The pits ranged in size from 1.65 to 2.30m in maximum dimension; depths varying from 0.55 to 1.00m (Table 4). There may exist a progressive decrease in size as one moves clockwise from the western most of the excavated pits [311] to the north and [318]. All but [296] had been cut by the outer ditch of Durrington 67.

Feature	Fills	Dimensions	Depth
[265]	[254], [264], [276], [292], [293], [294], [312], [313]	2.2m x >1.4m	0.70m
[296]	[277]	2.30 x 1.85m	1.00m
[307]	[308], [310]	2.00 x 1.45m	0.65m
[311]	[315], [316], [317], [328], [329]	>2.2 x >2.0m	0.85m
[318]	[319], [320]	1.65 x >1.20m	0.55m

Table 4. Contexts and dimensions of excavated pits belonging to the Durrington 67 pit circle

The pit fills varied. [265] contained a complex sequence of fills, resulting from the re-cutting of the pit on at least one occasion. The original fills survived in the northern third, comprising a basal chalk rubble, [312], over which were further and more substantial rubble deposits, [294] and [293]. Sealing the top 0.3m, [293] was very compact rubble in an orange-brown silty clay. A circular re-cut around 1.3m in diameter was detected in the southern side of the pit, extending to the base of the feature. The initial fill [313] was a thin layer of loamy soil. Above this were deposits of chalk rubble in silty clay [292] and loam [276]. A 0.2m diameter, dark brown clay loam 'post-pipe', [331], cut through this material on the east side of the pit. Potentially filling a second re-cut in the top 0.2m of the pit was a concentrated group of worked and unworked flints and sarsen, [264], in a chalky loam. A human tooth was also recovered from this deposit. This in turn was sealed by a grey-brown clayey loam containing chalk, flint and worked flint and bone, [254].

The fill sequence in [311] began with a basal layer of loose chalk rubble, [317], within which was a 0.1m thick lens of friable dark grey-brown loam (originally turf), [329]. Partially overlying this on the west side was a clayey silt with an 'ashy' component, [316]. Both were in turn sealed by [328], a thick layer of clayey silt with chalk and flint, and a top layer of compact grey-brown clayey silt with moderate chalk, [315].

In pit [307] a compact clayey silt with much chalk, [308] – confined to the northern side of the feature – overlay a deposit of loose chalk rubble, [310]. The lower fill in [318] was a loamy soil with variable chalk, [319], thicker against the north side. Several refitting flint flakes came from this. Above [319] was a chalk rubble within a clayey silt, [320].

Only one of the pits, [265], had evidence of a post, and this in the re-cut. All look to have filled quickly with soils that contained high quantities of chalk, indicating, perhaps, a degree of deliberate backfill. Finds were remarkably few, especially from the lower fills; the absence of pottery or other diagnostic material making provisional dating difficult. It is hoped that organic material from the bases of [265] and [311] might prove suitable for radiocarbon dating. In terms of the relationship between the pits and the ring-ditch, the latter only just clipped these pits, the exception being [311] where the extent of inter-cutting was much greater. This degree of 'respect' implies they or an accompanying bank were still visible when the ditch was dug. The key remaining question is the extent of the interval between the pit circle and ring-ditch.

The Ring-Ditches

Durrington 67

Excavations in 1928 confirmed this to be a double ring-ditch with an inner ditch of c.14m in diameter and an outer of c.25m in diameter, both forming slightly 'squashed' circles. Cunnington cleared the interior and excavated extensive sections of the two ditches on the eastern and south-western sides (Cunnington 1929, 42). A central grave pit contained a crouched inhumation accompanied by a comb-decorated Beaker and a tourmaline axe-hammer. Adjacent to the grave, but probably unrelated, was a NW-SE line of post-holes containing worked flint and Grooved Ware. A slightly but readily discernable rise in the chalk natural within the interior of the ring-ditches indicates the erstwhile presence of a barrow mound. It is assumed that the two ring-ditches are not contemporary, with the inner being the earlier of the two and associated with a barrow constructed to cover the Beaker burial.

During 2007 the inner ditch was sampled in two locations, on the north and north-west (4.5m in total), and the backfill removed from the Cunnington excavated section on the east. With a flat base and very steep sides, the ditch [304] ranged between 0.9-1.3m in width and 0.55-0.72m in depth. The fills began with an intermittent soil on the base [335], perhaps deriving from turf or topsoil that had fallen in during initial weathering. Above this was a primary fill of chalk rubble, [289]/[334], sealed by an intermittent dark grey-brown loam turf-line, [333]. The upper fill [285] – conceivably a backfill deposit related to the enlargement of the mound – was an orange-grey-brown clayey silt with

moderate amounts of chalk. Small sherds of Grooved Ware, worked flint and animal bone were recovered from these fills.

The outer ditch was quite different in kind, being a steep-sided cut 1.2m deep with a very narrow base and near vertical sides in the lower profile. At the top this was 1.7-2.0m wide (the width being accentuated through weathering), and at the base 0.4-0.6m. When first dug the ditch was remarkably narrow and deep. New sections through the fill were limited to the north and west where removal was necessitated by the establishment of stratigraphic relationships with the pits of the pit circle: none of these sections were fully bottomed. In the re-excavated eastern length, the ditch was filled to three-quarters of its depth with primary chalk rubble. In the southern section there were indications of a rubble-filled post-pipe, suggesting the feature began as a palisade slot.

Over the primary fills was a well-developed brown clay loam turf-line [288], with deposits of shattered and crudely worked flint, [295]/[299], sitting on the top of this. In deposit [295] there was some bone and Middle-Late Bronze Age pottery, and a remarkable number of small flint spheroids. An upper colluvial soil [260], [267] covered these deposits. Over the top of this for a length of c.7m on the north was a very compact layer of re-deposited chalk rubble [270], perhaps bank or mound material pushed into the ditch.

Durrington 68

Durrington 68 is a simple ring-ditch c.28m in diameter. Cunnington excavated lengths of ditch fill on the south, north and west; the latter adjacent to the timber setting. On the west a rich deposit of earthy soil, with ash, animal bone and sherds of Middle-Late Bronze Age pottery, occurred above the turf-line (Cunnington 1929, 46). During 2007 the backfill was removed from exposed lengths of Cunnington-excavated ditch, and an additional nine metres of undisturbed fill on the south-east side investigated. As with the outer ditch of Durrington 67, the ring-ditch here was dug as a series of interlinked straight lengths, each c.7-8m long. As such, it is strictly polygonal rather than circular.

The ditch cut [218] is broad and flat-bottomed, 2.1-2.8m wide and 0.6-0.8m deep, being both deepest and widest on the south. The sides are generally very steep to near vertical in the lower profile, and moderate due to weathering in the upper, especially on the inner edge. On the west the ditch cut through a substantial natural solution feature filled with loessic soil.

Over the primary chalk rubble [303]/[321]/[323] was an asymmetric secondary fill of grey-brown clayey silt, [279]/[297]/[300]/[322]. That this was thicker and more extensive on the outer side implies the former presence of an external bank: the monument could well have been an embanked ring-ditch or disc barrow rather than a conventional bowl barrow. Localised bone groups [275] were present in the top of the secondary fill. On the south-west were two small, inter-cutting pits, dug through the secondary fill. Placed in the lower of these, [302] (0.6m wide and 0.15m deep) was a complete sheep/goat burial [314], laid on its left side, with head to the north and legs

flexed. Cut above this, but further to the north-west, was the second pit, [337], again oval and of similar dimensions. This too contained a sheep/goat burial interred in the same fashion, albeit showing some signs of disturbance. Other animal bone, including a cattle mandible, had been placed in the same pit.

Covering these bone deposits was an extensive and concentrated spread of split flint nodules, expediently worked flint, animal bone and Middle-Late Bronze Age pottery, [263]/[280]. The deposit, which must correspond to that encountered by Cunnington, ends on the south side of the ring-ditch, almost on the line of grave [213], although there need be no connection. The upper ditch fill [256]/[266]/[309] is a colluvial orange-grey-brown clayey silt with moderate amounts of chalk.

In the backfill of the south Cunnington ditch cutting was a remarkable and very concentrated collection of cattle and sheep/goat bone, [225], dumped in from the north side. The likely origin of this material is from the Middle-Late Bronze Age deposit excavated by her on the west side of the ring-ditch.

Durrington 70

This is a simple ring-ditch, c.17m in diameter. Excavations in 1928 did not produce evidence of any associated burials (Cunnington 1929, 48). A 10m section of the south-eastern arc of the ditch was re-excavated in Trench 21, this section having previously been investigated by Cunnington. The ditch [002] possessed very steep sides and a flat base, and was 1.0-1.15m wide and 0.15-0.3m deep, being widest and deepest in the final metre length against the north section of the trench. From the 1928 backfill [009] came moderate quantities of worked flint and bone.

Other Features

Of the other features in Trench 22, three are possible tree throw pits. One of these, pit [252], was located between post-holes [201] and [203] of the Durrington 68 structure. A rectangular cut into this, 1.7 x 1.2m and 0.2m deep, filled with a grey-brown clayey silt, is likely to be a Cunnington 'test' into the eastern part of the tree-throw.

Just to the north-east of the Durrington 68 structure was a second tree-throw [229], the upper fill of a grey-brown clayey silt again looking like the backfill of a Cunnington test excavation. Towards the base were increasing amounts of chalk rubble and a basal patch of brown silty clay. Unfortunately, this was dug, rather enthusiastically, as one fill, even though the lower deposits look to have been *in situ*. The feature is oval, 1.9 x 1.5m and up to 0.5m deep, being wider at the west end. Within the centre, and apparently filled with darker soil, a small oval depression (0.5 x 0.4m. 0.35m deep), might represent a separate feature cut through the tree-throw pit fill.

The third tree-throw, [258], was located in the south-west corner of the trench. This was a flattened oval, 2.05 x 1.70m and up to 0.3m deep, with sides moderate on the east, very steep on the west, and near vertical on the south. The fills comprised a primary chalk

rubble in pale clayey silt, [259], and a clayey silt layer, [255]. A few pieces of worked flint, one perhaps Mesolithic, came from this.

Two isolated post-holes were excavated between the inner and outer rings of Durrington 67. [274] was circular, 0.54m in diameter and 0.33m deep, with clear packing [278] and soil post-pipe [273]. [306] was a pointed oval cut, 0.22 x 0.26m and 0.07m deep, with a single soil fill [305]..

In the eastern part of the trench, between Durrington 67 and 68 was a linear feature, [216]. Aligned east-west, it was 1.9 x 1.0m and up to 0.2m deep, the south side regular and north ‘bayed’. The sides were shallow merging with a dished base in which a line of flint nodules was embedded. Filled with an orange-grey-brown silty clay containing several large flint blocks towards the base, [215], it is likely to be natural in origin, caused by the out-cropping of a line of flint nodules here.

The latest identifiable features on site (excluding those of the 1928 excavations) related to a late Roman inhumation cemetery in the south-east corner of Trench 22. Five east-west aligned rectangular graves occupied a small area between the ring-ditches, and other burials were encountered by Cunnington in both the inner and outer ditches (Cunnington 43-4). Three burials were investigated. One, [249] in grave [251] had been truncated by the 1928 excavation of the inner ditch. An extended inhumation with shoulders to the west, it had been truncated by the 1928 excavation. The skull and mandible were found face down between the knees. Graves [282] and [291] were similar in format, also containing extended inhumation burials.

Discussion

Through the discovery of a further two later Neolithic timber structures (to add to that already known from Durrington 68) and the pit circle pre-dating Durrington 67, the excavations were successful in establishing a continuation of the later Neolithic monument complex well to the south of Woodhenge. Within the Durrington/Woodhenge complex there are now six similar timber structures, as defined by central arrangements of four posts within circular/oval fencelines. These comprise the Durrington Northern Circle, phase 1 of the Southern Circle, that within the Western Circle excavated in 2006, Durrington 68, Durrington 70, and south-west of Durrington 68 – an unparalleled concentration. They vary greatly in scale, but little in ground plan (Table 5).

	Overall diameter	Distance between four posts	Internal posts depth	Internal posts diameter	Orientation
N. Circle	14.4	3.9-5.1	1.0-1.3	1.5	SE
S. Circle phase 1	14.8	5.5	1.2-1.7	0.6	SE?
Durrington 70	c.11.0 x 9.0	2.3-2.6	0.94-1.18	1.0-1.1	ESE
Durrington 68	14.5 x c.12.0	4.7-5.1	1.35-1.45	0.95-1.15	SE
Durrington 68 SW	?	1.8-1.9	0.40-0.50	0.6-0.7	?

Table 5. Details of 'four post in circle' timber settings in the Durrington/Woodhenge complex

The 'four post in circle' settings belong to a geographical widespread architectural tradition; similar structures being known from the Coneybury henge, Wyke Down (Dorset), Machrie Moor (Arran), Knowth and Ballynahatty (Ireland), and perhaps inside the NE and SSW circles at Stanton Drew (Somerset). All of those that have been subject to excavation are later Neolithic in date and associated with Grooved Ware.

We would argue that these are special purpose structures – highly symbolized houses (though not houses proper), mortuary platforms, or commemorative monuments of some kind, for example. However, their function has been subject to debate. Darvill (1996, 2005) has argued that the Durrington 68 structure was a house, but it is very monumental in scale and quite different to the contemporary houses excavated outside the eastern entrance at Durrington Walls (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2007). It is also aligned on the mid-winter solstice sunrise; although this is not in itself a reason for arguing against a domestic function given that many Iron Age roundhouses have a similar axial orientation. A similar 'non domestic' function can be extended to the Durrington 70 and Durrington 68 south-west structures. The post-holes of the latter are remarkable clean – just a few flakes and tiny scraps of bone and pottery, without obvious charcoal – in marked contrast to the 'dirty', artefact-rich deposits associated with the east entrance houses. Most of the material from Durrington 70 came from re-cuts in the tops of the post-holes. While erosion of the surface by ploughing has removed any traces that might formerly have existed of internal hearths and surface spreads of artefactual material, we can use proxy data for the Durrington 68 structure to suggest its surrounds were quite clean. Excavation of a good length of the adjacent section of the Durrington 68 ring-ditch showed little material was present in its primary fills, material that would be expected to have worked its way in from erosion of surface deposits on the sides if present. Typical Grooved Ware pits – a frequent indicator of settlement – are also notably absent from this zone. Of course, 'high status' residences (if such existed) may have been kept clean.

Perhaps the ambiguity in interpreting function is telling, after all, where might the distinction lie between a special house/residence and a monument? And what might a 'house of the newly dead' look like – perhaps like these?

It is important to note how the Southern Circle developed out of one of these structures. The same might also be true of Woodhenge, where there are a number of 'additional' post-holes and others within the rings that are evidently re-cut. If the Southern Circle sequence represents a general trend all of these 'four post in circle' settings could come early in the sequence, perhaps associated with a pre-enclosure phase.

Related perhaps to that recently discovered on Boscombe Down, the Durrington 67 pit circle is a fundamentally different monument to the timber structures. Perhaps its distinctive architecture marks the southern limit of the later Neolithic riverside monument complex. At present its date is uncertain, beyond pre-dating the Early Bronze Age outer

ditch of Durrington 67. It could be contemporary with the inner ditch which in turn is linked to the creation of a barrow mound over a Beaker burial. Alternatively, it might be contemporary with the setting of late Neolithic post-holes excavated by Cunnington in the centre of the inner ring. What is striking is just how 'clean' this monument was, and the absence of timber in its construction.

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