

THE PAST IN THE PREHISTORIC CHANNEL ISLANDS

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Abstract

This article examines Bronze Age activity at Neolithic and Chalcolithic monuments in the Channel Islands. It shows that during the Middle Bronze Age the use of monuments was focused upon funerary structures of the Neolithic, but that by the Late Bronze Age the appropriation of these sites had diminished. Such a change, it is argued, was the result of a transition in the way the past was viewed at a time when ritual practices themselves were changing away from monuments and towards mobile material culture. What emerges from this paper is that the monuments chosen for reuse were primarily coastal, reflecting connections to the sea at a time of increased maritime movement.

Keywords

Reuse, Bronze Age, Channel Islands, identity, interaction.

Introduction

The study of the significance of the past to prehistoric societies has been a growing concern in archaeology in recent years (eg Alcock, 2002; Bradley, 2002; Gosden and Lock, 1998; Hingley, 1996; Woodward, 2002; see also Parker-Pearson et al, 2005). In insular contexts, history plays a pivotal role in the confirmation of identity, occurring often when communities feel under stress (Parker-Pearson et al, 2004: 14). In the Shetland Isles, for example, external threats have enforced islander belief in their collective heritage (Turner, 1996: 93), whilst on Majorca the islanders demonstrate a level of reticence to external concepts; a result of continuous foreign invasion and influence (Waldren, 2002: 5). However, such concepts can mask the intricacies of island life and relegate islanders once more to the stereotypical perceptions of belligerent xenophobes. The need to define one's identity is more complex than this, particularly within island communities who can at times be influenced by mainland culture and other times become entirely isolated from it (Broodbank, 2000).

This article focuses upon the context and chronology of re-occupation of ancient monuments in the Channel Islands during the Bronze Age. It will demonstrate that the re-occupation of ancient sites has been a largely ignored subject in Channel Island research and will offer preliminary interpretations on the nature of appropriation of the past. The initial observations presented here have been drawn from ongoing PhD research that is currently under final review. In particular, the pottery sequence for the Bronze Age in the Channel Islands is being reassessed as it has never been categorised properly before. These are therefore observations rather than conclusions.

Geography

The Channel Islands are located off the NW coast of France, within the gulf of St Malo and form part of the Armorican Massif. Jersey, with a total landmass of 116km², is the largest and most southerly island, located 56km north of Brittany, 24km west of the Cotentin (Normandy) and 160km south of England. Guernsey, the second largest island, is roughly triangular in shape, with a landmass of 78 km. It is located about 24km NW of Jersey and occupies the most peripheral position in relation to France and Britain. The smaller islands of Herm and Sark are found off the east coast of Guernsey. In addition, a number of satellite islets are found off the coast of Jersey: the Écréhous to the northeast and the Minquiers to the south. Alderney, the third largest island, is located 48km to the north of Jersey and is closest to the French mainland at only 12km from Cap de la Hague.



Figure 1 – Location of the Channel Islands

Defining later activity at Prehistoric sites

The context of this paper is one of deliberate appropriation of megalithic ritual monuments in the Channel Islands, rather than coincidental reoccupation. The Channel Islands possess a remarkably well-preserved megalithic heritage, representing the elaboration of stone built monuments in Neolithic and Chalcolithic phases. The remains of 59 megalithic sites survive on Jersey and Guernsey, but it has been estimated that as many as 130 may have been destroyed since the 17th Century (Hibbs, 1986: 209). Despite this loss to archaeology, they must be seen as a prominent part of the prehistoric landscape and, for the most part, would have been recognisable as ancestral monuments to later populations of the islands.

Driscoll – The Past in the Prehistoric Channel Islands

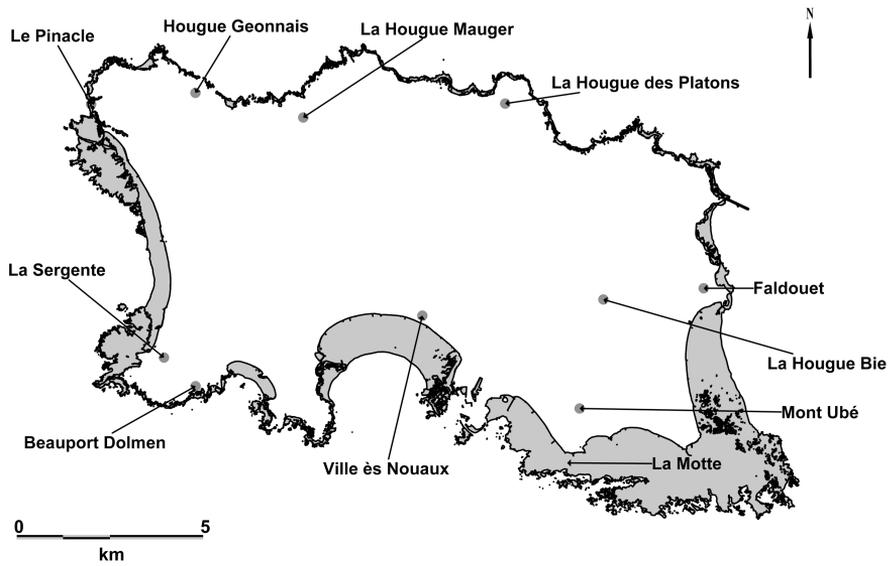
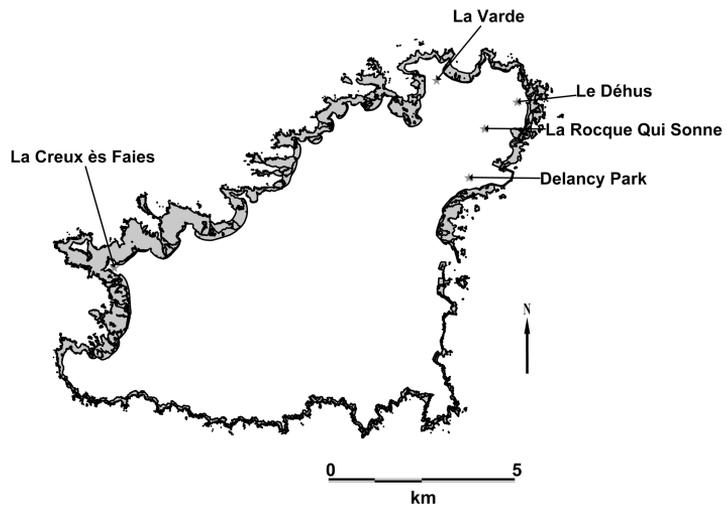


Figure 2a and 2b – Sites mentioned in the text (Jersey – top, Guernsey – bottom)



Driscoll – The Past in the Prehistoric Channel Islands

Channel Island megaliths can be broadly translated into four categories: Menhirs (standing stones) of unknown but presumably Neolithic date; Passage Graves such as La Hougue Bie (one of the largest and best preserved in Europe) of the Middle Neolithic; Gallery Graves (or allées couvertes) of the Late Neolithic, of which only three are known in the archipelago; and Cist-in-Circles, which comprise a central stone lined cist surrounded by a circle of stones and are traditionally placed in the Chalcolithic.

Site	Island	NL	CL	BA	IA	G-R	MDV
Le Déhus	Guernsey	•	•	•			
La Creux ès Faies	Guernsey	•	•				
Delancy Park, Guernsey	Guernsey	•	•				
La Rocque Qui Sonne	Guernsey	•	•	•			
La Varde	Guernsey	•	•	•			
La Hougue Bie	Jersey	•	•				•
La Hougue de Géonnais	Jersey	•	•	•			
Beauport Cromlech	Jersey	•	•				
Mont Ubé	Jersey	•	•	•		•	
Faldouet	Jersey	•		•	•		
La Motte, Green Island	Jersey	•	•	•			•
Hougue des Platons	Jersey		•	•			
Ville-ès-Nouaux	Jersey	•	•	•	•	•	•
Menhir La Sergenté	Jersey	•		•			
Le Pinnacle	Jersey	•	•	•	•	•	
La Hougue Mauger	Jersey		•	•			
Les Huguettes	Alderney	•?		•			
17	5/11/1	15	14	13	3	3	3

Table 1: Monuments with evidence for later reuse

[Abbreviations: Neolithic = NL, Chalcolithic = CL, Bronze Age = BA, Early Bronze Age = EBA, Middle Bronze Age = MBA, Late Bronze Age = LBA, Iron Age = IA, Gallo-Roman = G-R, MDV = Medieval]

The point of this paper is not to argue for reuse over continuity or vice versa but rather that when later (Bronze Age) activity did occur, it was atypical of the patterns of monument use in the archipelago generally. The currently established view for Channel Island prehistory is that Neolithic monuments continued in use into the Chalcolithic period, at the end of which they were sealed and abandoned (Bukach, 2005). Whilst Middle Neolithic tombs in England have been subjected to AMS dating (see Whittle *et al* 2007), such approaches have not been employed on the Channel Islands and therefore drawing parallels for the short duration of use of these monuments is difficult. Furthermore, the connections between NW French and Southern British megalithic

Driscoll – The Past in the Prehistoric Channel Islands

remains have not been demonstrated to a level that would allow parallels on use (ie generational or ancestral) to be drawn between them. It is of course not possible to draw conclusions about the ethnic origins of Channel Islands Neolithic society, but the archaeological evidence supports an extension of the Breton system, influenced by developments within the Paris-Basin.

Certainly the types of material found within megalithic remains in the Channel Islands include Late Neolithic, Beaker and Chalcolithic varieties, which span the period 2850-2250BC and suggest continuity of use. In Guernsey, La Déhus, La Creux ès Faies, Delancy Park, La Rocque Qui Sonne and La Varde all demonstrate Beaker intrusion, whilst the most spectacular occurrence in the islands is at Ville-ès-Nouaux on Jersey where Beaker pottery, found alongside indigenous Jersey Bowls, was accompanied by an archer's wristguard made of schist. The beginning of the Bronze Age ushered in a focus on alternative monument types, primarily tumuli and the abandonment of Neolithic and Chalcolithic megaliths. Therefore those monuments that demonstrate activity in the Bronze Age (and indeed later) must have held a significance that might be alluded to archaeologically. Whilst this paper omits a category of data in domestic monuments it could be argued that for a proportion of these reoccupation occurred because settlements occupied useful positions. For example, Catêl Rozel hillfort occupied a position previously inhabited in the Neolithic but this could be due to the access provided to the sea via the natural harbour, the provision of good agricultural land and availability of fresh spring water, rather than it being any kind of reflection on identity.

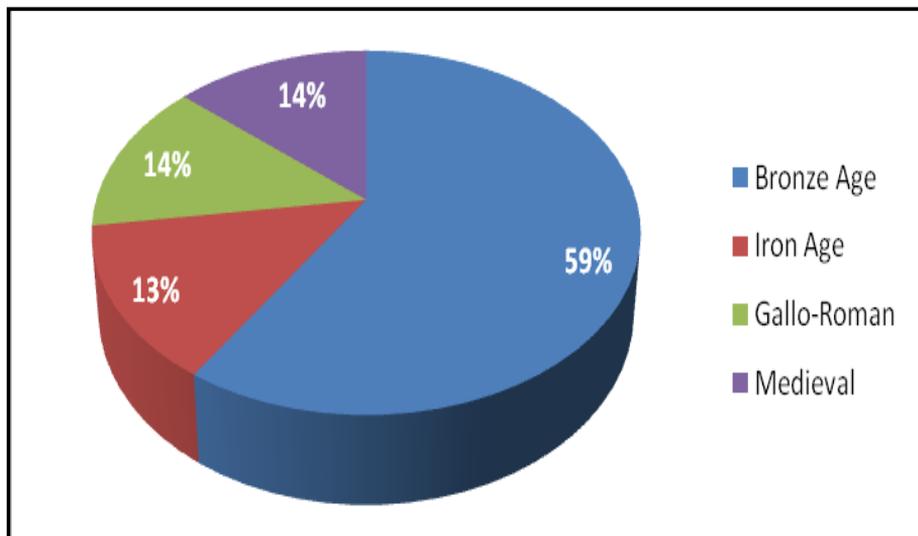


Chart 1: Percentage of Neolithic or Chalcolithic monuments reused by period

Bronze Age Activity at Neolithic and Chalcolithic Sites

The Bronze Age has been a much-ignored aspect of Channel Island prehistory. This is not representative of a lack of evidence, only that the evidence is diverse in nature (eg poorly recorded sites, ploughed-out tumuli, inaccurate pottery definitions, hoards and promontory forts form part of the evidence) and is therefore not easily classified.

Driscoll – The Past in the Prehistoric Channel Islands

Site	Island	EBA	MBA	LBA	IA	G-R
Le Déhus	Guernsey	•				
La Rocque Qui Sonne	Guernsey	•				
La Varde	Guernsey		•			
La Hougue de Géonnais	Jersey		•			
Beauport Cromlech	Jersey	•				
Mont Ubé	Jersey		•			•
Faldouet	Jersey		•		•	
La Motte, Green Island	Jersey				•	
Hougue des Platons	Jersey		•			
Menhir La Sergenté	Jersey		•			
Le Pinnacle	Jersey		•	•	•	•
La Hougue Mauger	Jersey		•			
Ville-ès-Nouaux	Jersey	•	•	•	•	•
Les Huguettes	Alderney			•		
14	3/10/1	4	9	3	4	3

Table 2: Monuments with evidence of Bronze Age and later reuse

[Abbreviations: Early Bronze Age = EBA, Middle Bronze Age = MBA, Late Bronze Age = LBA, Iron Age = IA, Gallo-Roman = G-R]

The Bronze Age represents the joint greatest occurrence of reuse of megalithic remains (see chart 1). On Guernsey there are a number of occurrences of Bronze Age use of earlier sites but they are far fewer than those on Jersey. Le Déhus, one of the most spectacular passage graves on Guernsey, produced an Early Bronze Age axe, one of the few examples of metalwork on Guernsey from the Bronze Age (Sebire, 2005: 73). The rarity of metalwork of this period within the archipelago and its incorporation within a ritual monument must be considered both deliberate and of importance to those who undertook such action. Sebire notes the occurrence of a jet bracelet of probable Early Bronze Age date within the passage tomb of La Rocque Qui Sonne (2005: 74). This monument was destroyed in the 19th Century and represents a considerable loss, at it may have originally been the largest and finest passage tomb in Guernsey (Sebire, 2005: 74). La Varde is another Middle Neolithic passage grave on Guernsey that contained Neolithic and Beaker pottery as well as 'flowerpot' pottery vessels similar to the examples from Les Platons, La Hougue Mauger and La Hougue de Géonnais on Jersey Hawkes (1937: 119). These flowerpot vessels have been variably recognised as Neolithic (Patton, 1987) and Bronze Age (Hawkes, 1937; Briard, 1986) and often appear as later intrusions, cut in the earthen mounds overlying megalithic remains. Such practices are

Driscoll – The Past in the Prehistoric Channel Islands

recognised in the Bronze Age of NW France, such as at Le Haut Grenit Plumelin, Côtes-du-Nord. Some of these intrusive items also parallel the Middle to Late Bronze Age ceramic assemblages from Ville-ès-Nouaux (Cunliffe, 1986: 59)

Jersey, conversely, demonstrates a much higher reuse of monuments during the Bronze Age and from different monument types. La Hougue de Géonnais was a Middle Neolithic passage grave of unusual shape that, aside from containing Middle Neolithic, Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic pottery, also contained Middle Bronze Age pottery fragments. The monument had been badly damaged by quarrying activity in the 19th Century and the stratigraphic integrity is not secure. However, reassessment of the pottery assemblage from the monument suggests a potential Middle Bronze Age intrusion, with the occurrence of small bucket-shaped jar with finger-impressed lugs. Hawkes refers to this vessel as an “[obvious] secondary intruder” (1937: 119, 120, 227). Re-excavation of Beauport Cromlech by Johnston, in 1972, confirmed this monument as a Middle Neolithic passage grave, but also determined that “the last vessel placed in the tomb was probably a coarse heavy urn of Bronze Age type at the mouth of chamber” (Johnston, 1981: 72). Faldouet was a Neolithic monument that has intriguing pottery descriptions, which suggest the possible occurrence of a Bronze Age vessel and the appearance of an object bearing close similarity to Iron Age Belgic examples (Hawkes, 1937: 237, figures 9 and 11).



Figure 3 – Faldouet megalith

The Middle Neolithic passage tomb of Mont Ubé in the parish of St Clement contained possible Deverel-Rimbury Middle Bronze Age pottery as well as an Early Bronze Age strap handle fragment (Patton, 1995a: 98). Small copper fragments may also have been present, whilst a barrel-shaped pot with finger-impressed cordons, similar to examples from other Bronze Age contexts in the islands was also recovered. Unfortunately these

Driscoll – The Past in the Prehistoric Channel Islands

vessels may have been deliberately placed in the tomb by the landowner and tenant (ie the evidence was falsified) who sought to increase the value of the material from the land. This site was looted prior to any archaeological investigation, although Lukis was able to recover some pottery from spoil around the site (Hawkes, 1937: 215). As such it is regrettable that the material cannot be considered secure, although the pattern of reuse throughout the islands means it cannot be entirely dismissed as being an accurate reflection on past practice.

Within the cist of Les Platons were found two pottery vessels, a large barrel-shaped pot that contained copious amounts of cremated human remains, and a smaller flower-pot shaped vessel (Driscoll, 2008a). Patton (1987) has interpreted the pottery as being late Neolithic or Chalcolithic in date, but the style of the larger vessel parallels Early and Middle Bronze Age forms found at l'Île Tatihou in Normandy (see Marcigny et al 2005: 67), whilst Hawkes has suggested the similarity of the flowerpot form to Deverel-Rimbury types found at barrows such as Milborne St Andrew (Hawkes, 1937: 120). Unfortunately, the excavations were undertaken in haste and the cist-in-circle that the monument comprises was removed as part of these investigations (Baal & Sinel, 1915a: 55). However, the excavators noted that the monument had been disturbed at some point prior to their investigations.

La Hougue Mauger is a monument similar to Les Platons (Baal and Sinel, 1915b) and like Les Platons it suffered from excessive excavation (Driscoll 2008b). No intact internal structure or artefacts were found, but six flower-shaped pots were discovered in an arc around the outskirts of the mound suggesting secondary internments (a practice that occurs within both French and English contexts). At Barrow Pleck and South Lodge Camp in Dorset (on the southern coast of England), Middle Bronze Age pots were placed into existing round barrows with radiocarbon dating placing such activities at 1630-1050 cal. BC (Gale, 2003: 88). In Brittany, intrusive cremations are present in the mounds of Kersandy, Plouhinec in Finistère and at Saint Jude, Bourbriac in Cotes-du-Nord (Briard, 1984). Although direct comparisons with pottery vessels in Armorica are difficult to establish, Jacques Briard acknowledges the similarity of the La Hougue Mauger types to vessels from Britain and to the vessel from the Plumelin tumulus in Morbihan (Briard, 1984: 120), whilst flowerpot vessels are known from barrows throughout Brittany (Giot et al 1979: 97).

La Motte (Green Island) on the south of Jersey has revealed prehistoric ritual activity in the form of burials but accurate dating of these deposits has been elusive. Neolithic and Chalcolithic pottery was recovered from associated middens but the structure of the cists suggests that they are more likely Early Bronze Age and in the style of Briard's "cimitières à coffres littorals" (Patton, 1995a: 99) and later than the middens. Iron Age pottery was also recovered (Johnston, 1981: 75) suggesting some form of activity within the 1st Millennium BC. This is not unlikely. At the necropolis of Ile Thinic in Morbihan, Iron Age pottery was located whilst at the cemetery of Saint Urnel en Plomeur in Finistère Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Gallo-Roman pottery was found (Patton, 1995a: 99-100).



Figure 4 – La Hougue Mauger

Le Pinnacle on the northwest of Jersey is a more complicated site to interpret. Starting life as an Early Neolithic axe factory, it demonstrates use in the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Gallo-Roman period. During the Late Bronze Age, a Penard spearhead was deposited at this site in association with double-cordoned pottery comparable to examples from Jerbourg on Guernsey (Sebire, 2005: 95-99). Unlikely to be a chance loss, this spearhead probably represents deliberate consumption and, although we should be wary of assigning purely ritual interpretations to this find, the recovery of carbonised horse beans seeds from Late Bronze Age contexts at the site may suggest ritualised practice (Patton, 2001).

One of the most important monuments for understanding Channel Island prehistoric ritual activity is Ville-ès-Nouaux in St Helier, Jersey. This funerary complex comprised a gallery

Driscoll – The Past in the Prehistoric Channel Islands

grave of the Late Neolithic, from which intrusive Beaker material including Beaker pottery and an archer's wrist-guard were recovered, a Chalcolithic Cist-in-Circle and a Late Bronze Age cremation cemetery. Fragments of an Early Bronze Age strap handled vase (a type commonly found in Bronze Age tumuli in Brittany) and Gallo-Roman pottery were also recovered. The cremation cemetery was located in a sand layer above both the gallery grave and cist-in-circle and contained various pottery types including cordoned and situla vessels (Driscoll, 2008a). The stratigraphic accounts of Ville-ès-Nouaux's cremation cemetery are less than secure (although there is mention of two distinct sand layers) but the presence of the only cremation cemetery from the archipelago directly overlying a prehistoric funerary complex cannot be seen as entirely coincidental. It is of course possible that the site had been covered by sand (blown sand is common on Channel Island sites) before the cremation cemetery came to be. However, it was the megalithic remains that attracted the attention of 19th Century quarrymen intent on using the stone for building purposes that eventually led to the site's excavation and therefore even by this point they still remained visible. The presence of Neolithic, Beaker, Chalcolithic, Early Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age material (and indeed Gallo-Roman) suggests that this site was revisited with intention throughout later prehistory. Some of these periods are represented by considerable hiatuses, for example between the Early and Late Bronze Ages.

Even so, Ville-ès-Nouaux appears to have been a place of great importance for three thousand years and remained a fundamental part of the religious landscape, characterised also by the presence of a church adjacent to the site. It is not just the layering of monuments at this site but the nature of the material assemblages, which are all types generally found in funerary contexts with little in the way of domestic varieties. In fact, the complex itself was used solely for burial purposes over its lifetime.



Figure 5 – Cist-in-Circle at Ville-ès-Nouaux

Driscoll – The Past in the Prehistoric Channel Islands

At La Sergenté in St Brelade on Jersey a cache of six Middle Bronze Age palstaves was recovered from beneath a menhir. Dating menhirs of this type is difficult, but they are normally considered Neolithic and a number of these can be demonstrated to have been incorporated into Middle Neolithic passage graves in Armorica, suggesting that they existed prior to these monuments (Patton, 1993). The movement of these ancestral stones and the careful placing of deposits beneath them are known from Breton contexts (Briard, 1986) and they may signify territorial markers. The deposit at La Sergenté is the sole example of Middle Bronze Age metalwork within the Channel Islands and their burial (if it is conceded that they are not significantly later deposits) occurred at a time when the islands show very little contact with NW France or further afield. This cache of palstaves highlights the fact that monuments need not be the sole focus of the veneration of the past. The Late Bronze Age hoards found in Jersey and Alderney contain objects from as far away as Scandinavia (Driscoll, forthcoming and 2008b). Whilst they mainly belong to the Late Bronze Age, a number of these deposits contain objects from different periods. The Longey Common hoard from Alderney contained a mix of items of Carp's Tongue origins but also later British and European objects including a bronze bucket-shaped vessel (Kendrick, 1928). This vessel dates to around 500BC and is therefore at least 300 years younger than the main body of artefacts within the hoard.

More impressively, the St Mary's (Cadoret) hoard of mainly Carp's Tongue material included an EBA flanged axe (Driscoll, 2003). This axe dates to between 1800 and 1600BC and was therefore at least 800 years older than the main body of material (Driscoll, 2008b). It is in good condition with little corrosive evidence suggesting it had been kept above ground and looked after for a considerable duration before it was buried as part of the St Mary's hoard. It may be possible to envisage this as an heirloom of considerable age, being made into an offering within a contemporary setting of Late Bronze Age hoard deposition. Lastly, attention must focus on Les Huguettes on Alderney. Late Bronze Age pottery vessels were being created (probably for internal or inter-island consumption) at this settlement site and bone appears to have been used as an inclusion in the vessel fabric (Wilson, 1983). However, the site is located in close proximity to a Neolithic megalithic and the suggestion has been raised that the bones from this ancestral monument were used in the making of the pottery vessels, which would, if true, signify the ultimate "consumption" of ancestors.

Discussion: The Past in the Prehistoric Channel Islands

Patterns of reuse during the later Prehistory of the Channel Islands have emerged from this study, relating to the chronological sequence and context of reuse and to island attitudes towards ancient sites. The Channel Islands are not alone in reusing monuments from their past; these patterns can also be seen on the Orkneys and South Uist (Hingley, 1996), Sardinia (Blake, 1999) and Cyprus (Manning, 1998), as well as various mainland regions throughout Europe (Bradley, 2002). There is no suggestion here that reuse of ancient monuments is a practice restricted to islands, only that such practices were devices employed by islanders either in line with mainland practices or detached from them.

Gosden and Lock define two forms of reuse: (1) repeated use and maintenance of features with known antecedents to which a group return and maintain and (2) actions at ancient features in the landscape, given new values within the contemporary setting (1998: 4). Both occurrences are noticeable within the Channel Islands. For example, Ville-ès-Nouaux whose ancestry can be traced to the Neolithic and whose material culture reflects Neolithic, Beaker, Chalcolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman was a

Driscoll – The Past in the Prehistoric Channel Islands

place for the internment of the dead for three thousand years. The symbolism of this place was retained even though the practices of burial (supposed disarticulated remains to cremation) changed.

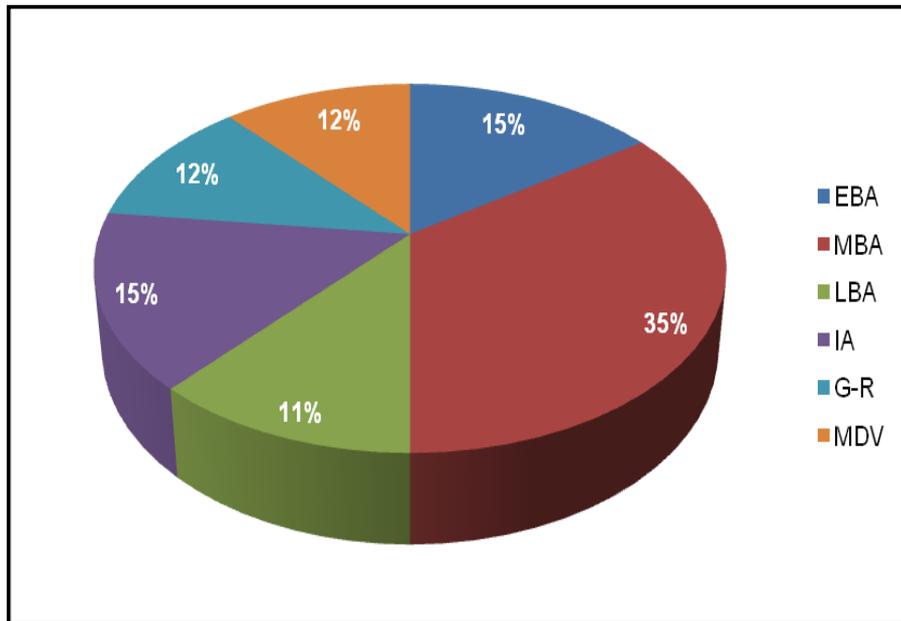


Chart 2: Bronze Age to Gallo-Roman reuse

The chronological sequence for reuse within the archipelago is intriguing. 59% of monuments with evidence for activity in more than one period were reused within the Bronze Age (see chart 1), although it is intriguing that the megalithic monuments with potential Early Bronze Age material have no later occupation during any period. Reuse of megaliths reached its zenith during the Middle Bronze Age, when 35% of monuments in the study were revisited, although the purpose of this re-use is not very clear. Only a few sites (Ville-ès-Nouaux and Les Platons for example) contained any human remains suggestive that they were being used for burial purposes. This may be more to do with the highly acidic nature of Channel Island soils which often destroys bones that may have been interred within such structures.

An increase of maritime traffic is prevalent during the Middle Bronze Age, signified by the presence of metalwork deposits in wreck sites off the coast of England such as at Langdon Bay and Moor Sand (Muckelroy, 1980) and the existence of the Dover Boat (Clarke, 2004). There is pitiful little evidence to suggest that the Channel Islands received any of these cross-channel commodities, apart from the small hoard of Middle Bronze Age palstaves from beneath the menhir of La Sergenté. The Late Bronze Age, conversely, saw a reduction in the reuse of megaliths. Funerary monuments ceased to be reoccupied and only Ville-ès-Nouaux can be said to clearly fall within that category. However, the fact that material culture from all phases of prehistory occur at Ville-ès-Nouaux may suggest that this site continued in use (rather than being returned to) and that an entirely different appreciation of its symbolism existed. The decline in the use of funerary structures during the Late Bronze Age occurred at the same time as the rise in the number of hoards, which may have become the dominant means of expression on

Driscoll – The Past in the Prehistoric Channel Islands

Jersey and Alderney, but not on Guernsey where no hoards have yet been found. But even in these deposits the past was a powerful influence and objects, perhaps as much as 1000 years old, formed part of the metalwork collections. Further work is needed on this context of reuse within the islands, but it is of interest to note that, apart from Mont Ubé on Jersey (which is contentious) and La Rocque Qui Sonne on Guernsey, the monuments chosen for reuse on both islands during the Bronze Age all occupy positions in very close proximity to the sea/coastline.

Mark Patton (1997) has previously established a dichotomy between Jersey and Guernsey whereby he claimed that Neolithic monuments on Jersey all occupied elevated coastal positions (contrary to Guernsey where they were also found in the lowlands along with settlement) and suggested that this may have represented a segregation of the landscape between religious and secular. Unfortunately, this failed to take into account the loss of megalithic remains that occurred in the last 400 years (cf. Hibbs, 1986) and it is conceivable that the 40-50 sites in Jersey and the 80 or so in Guernsey that were destroyed during this period could have been positioned inland. Such an argument could counter the Bronze Age coastal positioning, as it is possible that the destroyed megaliths may also have contained intrusive Bronze Age deposits reducing the coastal impact. But it is worth considering the absence of later material at the most dominant prehistoric site in the Channel Islands (and indeed much of NW France).

La Hougue Bie is a Neolithic passage grave constructed between 4366 and 4046 cal. BC (Patton, 1995b: 582). It is one of the largest and best-preserved passage graves in Europe and would have been a dominant marker within the prehistoric landscape and certainly the most visible monument prior to the building of the medieval castles. Within the tomb were found broken quern fragments, the remains of at least seven individuals and some fragmentary (and intrusive) Beaker material. The monument appears to have been sealed in the middle of the 3rd millennium BC and no later visitations were undertaken. The omission of this monument for later reuse is puzzling, considering that it would have been a clearly visible site on the island. Unless there was a specific taboo prohibiting the use of La Hougue Bie, concepts of reuse may not have been focused solely upon what a monument was (ie burial structure) but also its position within the island landscapes.

Island archaeology has developed rapidly in the last fifteen years with a series of publications that have highlighted the significance of the sea as a medium for interaction (eg Broodbank, 2000; Rainbird, 2007). As such, the assumption in any discourse on island history must begin by accepting that islands were “open” systems capable of interacting, with their inhabitants making choices and being influenced by external ideas and other people. ‘Seascapes’ have helped to redefine approaches to maritime and island archaeology and considering the sea as “contoured, alive, rich in ecological diversity and in cosmological and religious significance and ambiguity provides a new perspective on how people in coastal areas actively create their identities, sense of place and histories” (Cooney, 2003: 323). The sea is an embodied component of the cultural landscape and forms a part of the ideological, physical, political worlds of prehistoric island inhabitants (Rainbird, 2007). It is a part of the island, not a separate entity and is perceived as an extension of land whilst differing in its properties. It is conceivable (although not provable) that the use of these ancient monuments was a way of displaying connections to the sea at a time of increased use of waterways. By appropriating ancient structures, these islanders reinforced their identity and their connections to the sea, whilst demonstrating to others that they were a people of Channel.

Conclusion

The results of this paper are observations rather than conclusions and more serious analysis of the data is necessary before any firm interpretations are offered. Although thirteen Neolithic-Chalcolithic monuments were reused in the Bronze Age; this is only a small proportion of the total megaliths within the archipelago and the majority have Neolithic and Chalcolithic activity only. The question then is: what made the monuments remarked on in this paper special and why were they appropriated? It is possible that their landscape setting with views over and/or access to the sea made them important places for the Middle Bronze Age occupants of the islands, enabling them to claim land and sea at a time of increased maritime movement. Whatever the causes, the appropriation of ancient monuments was clearly an important practice in Channel Island prehistory, but one that is only just being identified. As such, the potential for further evidence relating to intrusive activity in monuments may still be awaiting reassessment, whilst later activity occurring around such monuments (eg within the landscape) is also a factor that needs to be more fully understood.

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Driscoll – The Past in the Prehistoric Channel Islands

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