

The logo for Biggar Archaeology group is located in the top left corner. It features a dark brown square with a white border. Inside the square, the text "Biggar Archaeology group" is written in white. Above the square, there is a horizontal brushstroke in shades of green and yellow. Below the square, the tagline "Bringing the past to the present" is written in a smaller font.

Biggar  
Archaeology  
group

Bringing the past to the present

The background of the cover is a photograph of an archaeological site. It shows a large number of grey, rectangular stones laid out in a grid-like pattern on a patch of brown earth. In the background, there is a grassy hillside under a cloudy sky. A white plastic bag is visible on the grass in the distance.

**Daer Valley Project**

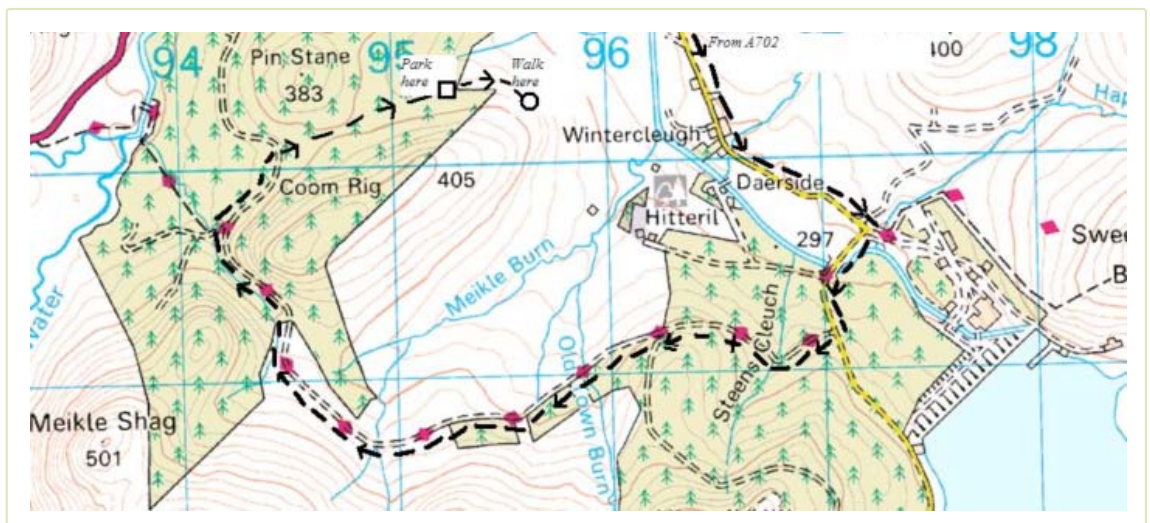
**Daer Site 126**

**June 2012**

by Tam Ward



We have been working flat out for over a year to salvage as much as possible from the Coom Rig site in Daer valley (Fig.1), where the forestry ploughing revealed an incredible and hitherto unknown archaeological landscape and one which has no parallels in the history of our work. Although we had previously surveyed many upstanding sites in the valley and excavated others under threat within the reservoir there, nothing could have prepared us for the large numbers of finds spots now recorded in the present work.



**Fig.1**

The Daer reports for each site will now come on stream but in order to gain some attention to three enigmatic sites; No's 110, 111 & 126, we are producing their reports first. Thereafter site reports will follow until all are presented and at which point all reports on the project will be amalgamated and with a common discussion conclusion added. Each report will follow the same format with Appendices for finds, charcoal and photo lists. We hope that interested readers will respond with thoughts and ideas as the reports come on stream.

### **Excavation Site No 126**

<b>Original find spot number</b>	<b>261</b>	
<b>Flat stones setting</b>	<b>360m OD</b>	<b>94942 09453</b>

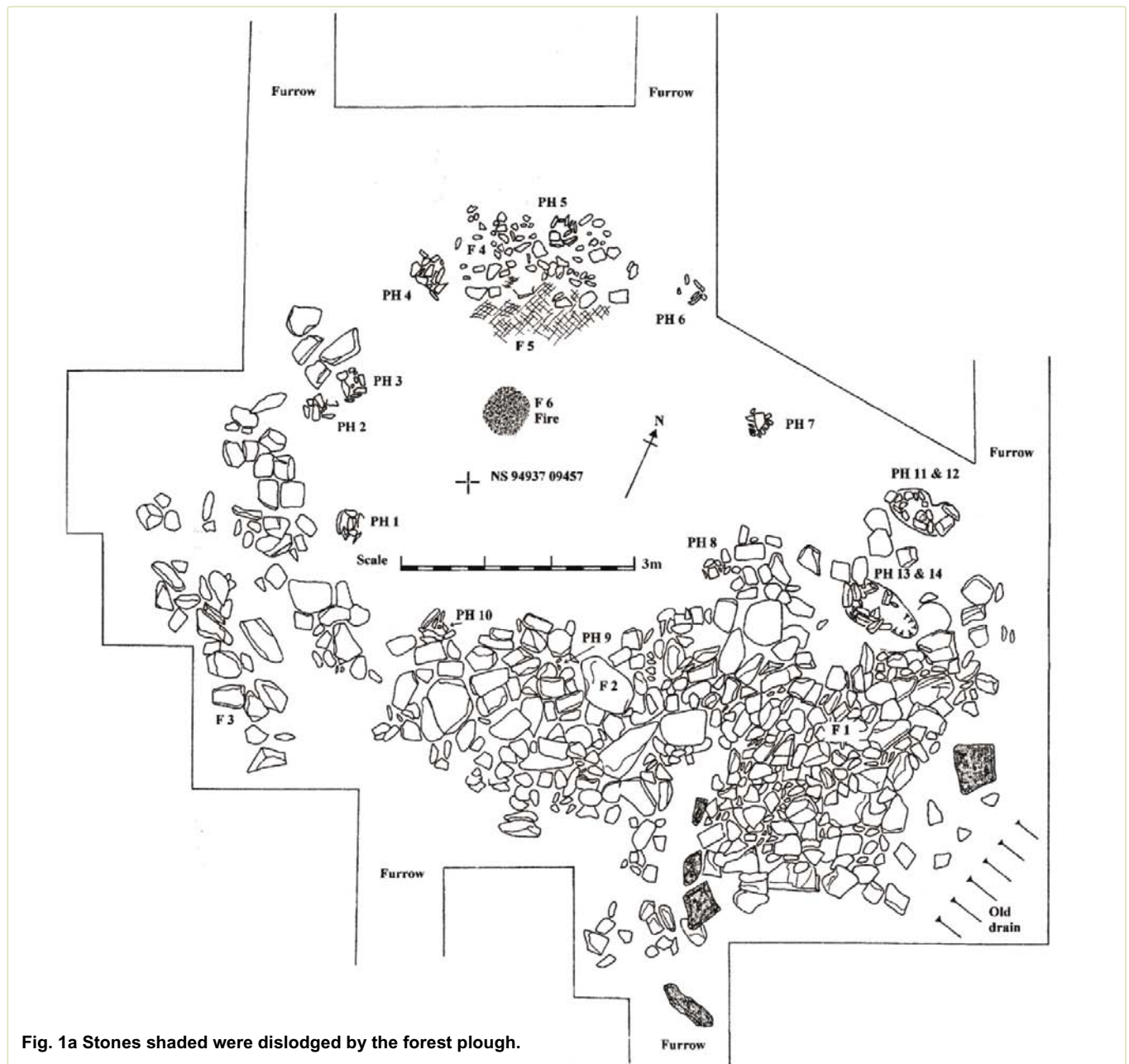
# Introduction

The site was discovered like several others by the presence of large stones lying in the furrow (PH 1). In this case they were considered unlikely to be the remains of a cairn and indeed they were suspected as being similar in nature to Sites' 111 and 110, both lying to the east, and to an extent this was shown to be the case.

The location is the western end of a natural terrace of the south flank of Coom Rig, the eastern end of the terrace is occupied by Site 111. Initially three furrows were cleared to reveal stones in each and the suspicion that the site was similar in nature to No's 111 and 110 was soon strengthened by the finding of a post hole (PH 3) in a furrow.

An area of c80 square metres was stripped of the overburden of turf and peat which on average was 0.5m deep, and which lay directly on the stones over the entire area. Charcoal fragments were seen over much of the area including above and below stones, the cairn like feature (F1) had charcoal strewn among its stones as well as around its perimeter, and under it.

The site lies on a gentle slope, having a drop of about 0.5m from the top of the trench to the bottom.



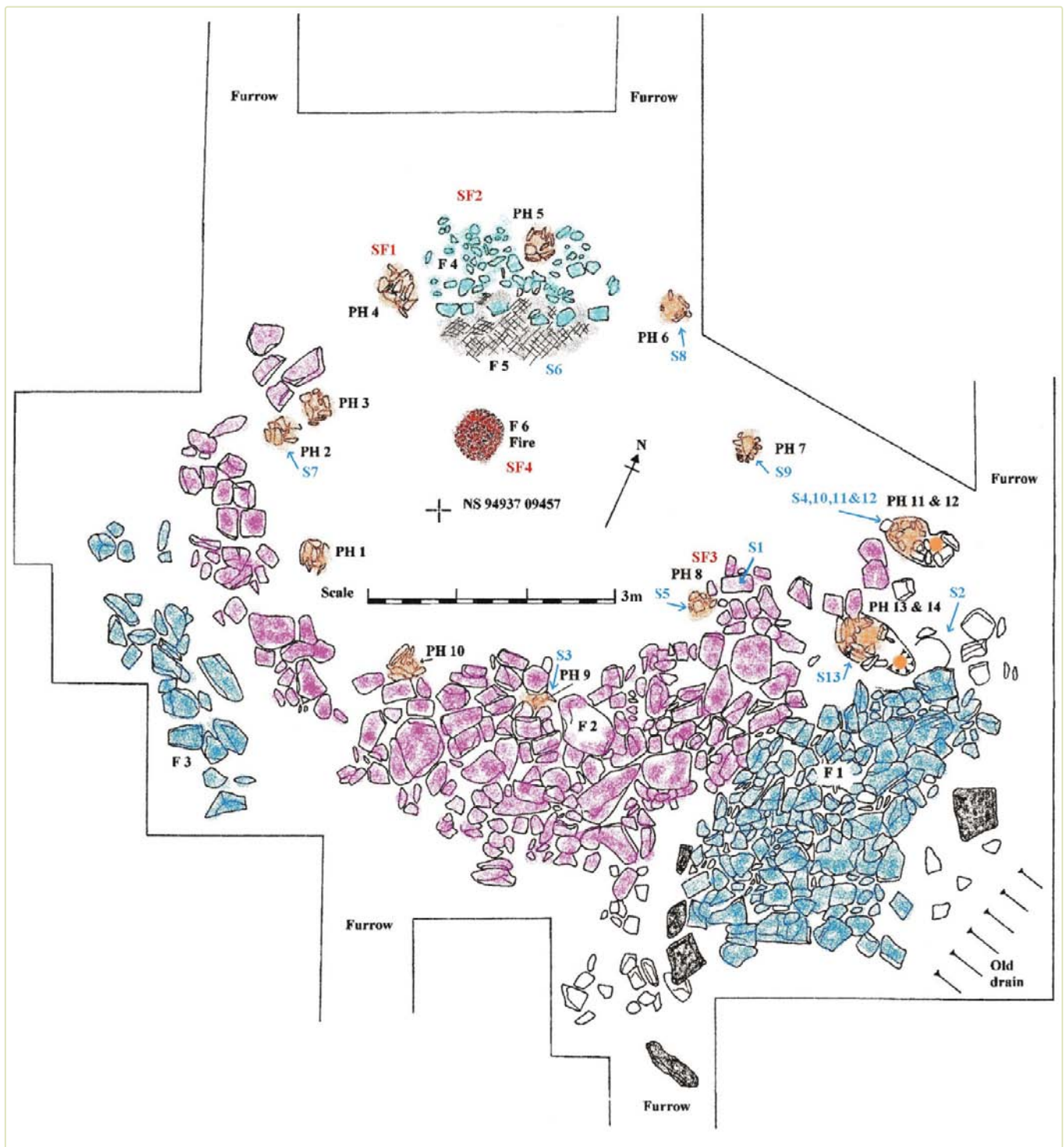


Fig. 1b Additionally shows positions of small finds (SF) and soil samples (S)





**Plate 1 The first evidence – displaced stones**

## Main features

### (Figs 1a and 1b)(PI 2)

The stone component of the monument was divided up into four zones:

#### **F1 Stones (PI 3)**

F1 appeared as an elongate cairn measuring 5m in total length and up to 2m wide; it was seen as multiple layers of stone and was up to 0.5m high (PI 4). The lozenge shaped feature, which was aligned approximately N/S consisted of angular, but not freshly angular rocks up to 0.5m long, there was no obvious pattern in their distribution except that the larger stones were at the edges. Some stones at its southern end were disturbed by the plough (shown as darker on plan). The central area of stones were removed (PI 5) and it was soon evident that apart from a sparse scatter of charcoal, similar to that found over much of the site, nothing of note lay below the stones which had been laid on a soil surface.

The stones removed from the interior area were for the most part smaller than those around the edges which in some places did appear to be edging or maybe even kerb stones. F1 appeared to be entirely separate from F2.

#### **F2 Stones (PI 2)**

F2 was an arc of stones laid flat on the ground and which may have been cleared of soil first. Several larger flat stones up to 0.8m long were incorporated in an arc which measured approximately 7.5m in diameter to the external side, the stones on the south eastern side formed a broader area up to 2.5m wide while those which seemed to extend up the west side were only two or three stones wide and up to 1m in width. It seemed obvious these flat stones were enclosing an area and this was shown by the post holes (see below) which respected the internal curvature of F2 on its entire length; which only existed on the west and south sides. All of the stones of F2 were flat and had been selected and laid for that reason. Charcoal lay over, between and under some stones on F2, the deposits below the stones seemed to have filtered under and into voids left when the stones were laid, indeed some small flat levelling stones were laid below some of the larger flat ones, the stone feature therefore pre dates the deposition of charcoal over the site.



**Plate 2 The overall site looking south**

### **F3 Stones (PI 2)**

F3 was a setting of angular boulders on the west side of the site and was seen as an alignment 2.8m long with stones seemingly just dumped on the ground. The distinction between these stones and the flat ones immediately to their east side (F2) was quite plain to see.

### **F4 Stones (PI 6)**

F4 was composed of fist sized flat stones with the exception of a few slightly larger ones and formed a level patch on the north side of the site and which measured c2.5m long by 1m wide. These stones were laid as a flat surface on a soil profile and must therefore never have consolidated, however there was a patch of compressed or rammed? stones below and on the west side of the main patch. The whole appeared as a platform overlooking the rest of the site; however, it may be that they formed a pathway leading into the

timber circle. PH 5 was obscured by the loose stones but because of their unconsolidated state, those which overlay the post hole may just have been displaced over time and therefore do not indicate phasing.

### **F5 Charcoal (Fig 1b)**

F5 was a denser spread of charcoal than the sporadic fragments which lay most everywhere. It was seen to extend for about 2m along the lower or southern side of F4 and extended out for about 0.5m. A sample (S6) retrieved from here produced 15 grammes of charcoal over 1mm in size and including two fragments of hazel nut shell. The charcoal did not extend under or over F4 stones but did abut them.

Five other samples (S1 – S5) (Fig 1b) were taken at different places on the site and some of these subsequently proved to be the locations of post holes.





**Plate 3 Cairn like feature F1**



**Plate 4 View over the site from the SE**



**Plate 5 F1 excavated**



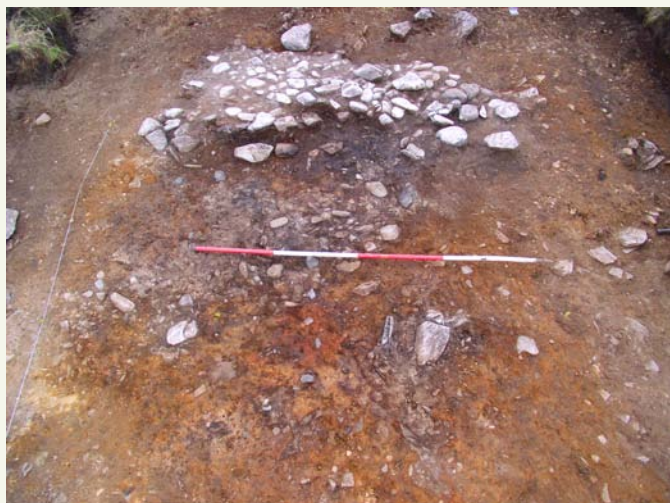


Plate 6 F4 stones and Fireplace F6



Plate 7 Post holes marked out and central fire position



Plate 8 Post hole No 1



Plate 9 Post holes 2 & 3



Plate 10 Post hole No 10



Plate 11 Post holes No's 11, 12, 13 & 14



## F6 Fireplace (PI 6 & 7)

F6 was a fire site which measured about 0.5m in diameter and was seen as scorched, reddened till, and quite distinct from the normal orange colour of the till in this area. The burning was evidently intense to scorch the till however there was no charcoal present. A fragment of a flint core was embedded in the till beside the fire place; but this object may have been residual from perhaps Mesolithic times and therefore not connected to the site.

The forest plough certainly disturbed some stone from the monument as it was this displaced material which betrayed its presence. A large block in the eastern furrow and several in the central one (Figs 1a & 1b) were thus moved, however, apart from the obvious gap left by the plough in the central furrow through F2/F3, the general picture of how the stones were originally laid was not affected to a great extent. PH6 probably was affected but No's 4, 8 & 10 had lucky escapes.

The remaining features located on the monument were a series of post holes (PH 1 – PH 14) (PI 7): their interpretation as such was easy by the presence of stone packers in each. Ten form a fairly uniform circle of 5m in diameter with two paired outliers on the east side. Each post hole was evident in the first instance by the packing stones which were either still in situ at the

edges of the original pits or had slumped into the cut features, many of the packing stones were flat stones set on edge. Charcoal was also evident around and in some of the pits. The similarity of this aspect of the monument is strikingly the same as those timber circles on Sites 111 and 110.

PH 1 – PH10 all measured c300mm across the packing stones and each was 200mm deep, cut into the till, the depths given here are therefore from the extant surface of the till.

Presumably the post would have been c 150mm in diameter. Some of the features were not completely emptied of fills or packing stones in order to preserve them. Some of the pits appeared to have been blocked with stones (see below), if so it has obviously been after the posts were removed, this phenomenon was also seen at Sites 111 & 110.

The post holes are described here in clockwise direction from PH 1 on the west side, since the post holes underwent sequences of being exposed, for example by having packing stones removed, they are probably best represented by the photographs rather than the drawing (Fig 1a) which shows them at what was considered to be most representative of the features.

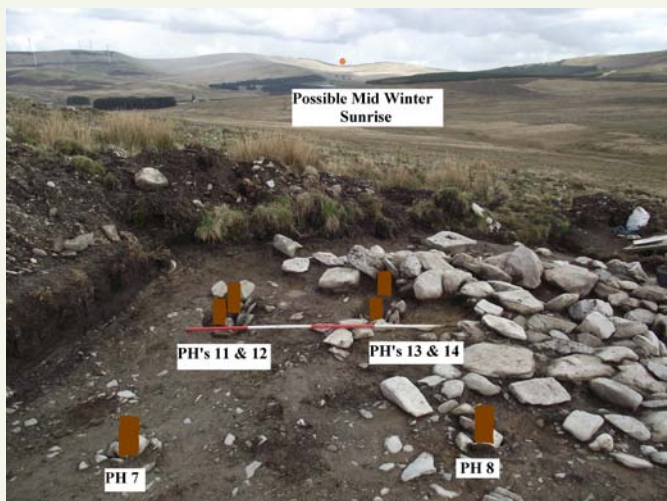


Plate 12 View through 'entrance'



Plate 13 Backfilling post holes



## Postholes

Posthole	Description	Plate
PH 1	Filled with clayey silt.	(PI 8)
PH 2	Filled with clayey silt.	(PI 9)
PH 3	Filled with clayey silt.	(PI 9)
PH 4	Filled with clayey silt.	
PH 5	Charcoal around the edge, filled with clayey silt and charcoal flecks (not sampled)	
PH 6	Filled with dark soil including charcoal (sampled)	
PH 7	Filled with dark soil including charcoal (sampled)	
PH 8	Filled with dark soil including charcoal (sampled, S5), packing stones reached the base all round the pit.	
PH 9	Filled with dark soil including charcoal (sampled, S3)	
PH 10	Filled with clayey silt.	(PI 10)
PH 11	A pit measuring 0.4m in diameter and 0.4m deep with vertical sides and flat base had packing stones in situ and also in the fill, which consisted of charcoal enriched dark soil to the base. A bulk sample was taken from the conjoining pits but it was obvious that most of the charcoal came from PH11.	(PI 11)
PH 12	The feature was seen as packing stones extending to 0.3m in diameter in a pit cut beside PH11 but not extending as deeply, being only 0.2m deep.	(PI 11)
PH 13	A pit measuring 0.4m in diameter with vertical sides and flat base, the depth below the surface of the till was 0.35m. Stone packers were in situ all around and also in the fill which was a charcoal enriched dark soil and like PH11 & 12, the majority of the charcoal came from PH13, being the larger pit.	(PI 11)
PH 14	A pit measuring 0.25m in diameter by 0.2m deep and like PH11 & 12, this pit exactly reflected the arrangement of a large post hole, being nearer the timber circle and a smaller and shallower one being cut adjacent to it. No packing stones were in situ but several had slumped into the pit.  PH14 had a loose stone from F1 lying over it, however this may have moved from its original position.	(PI 11)



## Charcoal (Fig 1b)

Small quantities of charcoal were retrieved from various parts of the sites including the general scatters below F1 and beside F4, also from some of the post holes and the quantities are given in appendix I. Two fragments of hazel nut shell are noted in the sample (S6) which was a scatter near F4 stones.

Charcoal was found between and below some stones in F2 (paving area) however that found below the stones appeared to have found its way there after the stones were laid on the ground, in some places levelling stones were laid below F1 and voids below the main stones had silted up with charcoal included. Charcoal was found as a scatter below and over F1, therefore burning had been taking place before and after the making of F1. The charcoal found in some pits may be residual from surface scatters and only analyses for species can help with further interpretation.

## Finds (see Fig 1b)

Apart from the single piece of flint (SF4) found beside the fire (F6) and which is a fragment of a core, the only other finds were chips and flakes of radiolarian chert, however, one flake (SF1) has edge wear/retouch. It is more than likely that the chert is Mesolithic material which co incidentally lies on the site, as it has been retrieved as random material over much of the enquiry area, the flint may similarly be residual.

SF1	Chert retouch/edge wear
SF2	Chert 2 of small chunks
SF3	Chert chunk/core fragment
SF4	Flint core fragment

## Post archaeology

Like sites 111 and 110 a flood had cascaded down the hill and over the site after moss had become established over it. In the case of the other two sites this was evident by a layer of fine sandy gravel sandwiched between a basal layer of peat and the bulk of the peat over it, here the deposit was a fine sandy silt. Also similar to the other two sites, an old 19th century hill drain was cut past it, luckily in this case, the drain missed the monument entirely.

## Conclusion/discussion.

Three of the four stone features appeared to have definite purpose; F1, F2 and F4. The elongate cairn like pile (F1) was distinctive from the flat 'paving' (F2) whose curvature seemed to respect the post holes. When F1 was investigated by removing the inner stones, only the same scatter of random charcoal over the site was noted below it. This would appear to indicate that burning activity had taken place before F1 was formed; however some charcoal had also found its way over the stones of F1, suggesting burning of timber had continued after F1 was made.

The flat stones of F2 did have the appearance of a walking surface carefully laid with selected stones. Similarly F4 looked as if it had also been laid for a specific reason, perhaps a path. F3 angular boulders did not appear to have been deposited with any particular purpose in mind, indeed their presence in the form as found may have been an impediment to moving around the site. It may be that they were intended to form some unfinished or demolished feature, one can only speculate in regard to these stones.

For the third time and in the same vicinity a site has been discovered with a stone setting and a timber circular structure, and an absence of meaningful finds. On the other sites (111 and 110) burning has taken place by the evidence of charcoal however only at this site was a fire place was found, although its purpose



is unknown. Given the absence of domestic evidence a cremation fire is a possible candidate for the hearth, however no burnt bone was found to support that theory. Only at this site has there been such a flat paving (?) setting of stones.

The timber structure, whatever form it took above ground is identical in terms of size and style of post holes, spacing between them and total size of the building, even the outlying pairs of post holes, although somewhat larger than at the other sites, are in the same approximate position leading to the east, and possibly forming an entrance. The fact that the outlier post holes on all three sites are aligned in a similar direction may suggest an astronomical alignment, perhaps to a solar event on the horizon, this theory will be pursued (PI 12). Strangely, two post holes No's 2 and 3 (PI 9) appeared as a pair, whether this has been a replacement or served some other purpose is unclear.

The central fireplace is significant and may account for much of the charcoal around the site, including that found in some post holes; however, as none was found on the actual site it may be that the fire was conducted on an absent upper surface with the heat penetrating down to the till. It is possible that the timber building was burned and also provided some of the charcoal.

## Purpose and date of the site.

It would appear that this site is the same age and was used for the same (unknown) function as Site's 110 and 111 nearby. The similarities in the timber structures are quite obvious. The overlying peat points to a Late Bronze Age date and as with the other sites; analyses and dating of charcoal can play an important role in providing more evidence. The flat stones of F2 are convincing as a walking or perhaps viewing area

around part of the timber circle. The cairn F1 is difficult to interpret other than as a pile of stone, it may have been created in preparation of some activity, and one thinks of burial but no evidence of that was found.

We are left confounded as to what these sites are and we are hoping that others may have some better theory than that proposed here as a mortuary or charnel house activity.

## Proposed sequence of events:

F2 was laid down on cleared ground, possibly at the same time as the timber ring was constructed.

Burning had taken place on the site causing charcoal to be dispersed; this was probably from the fire place.

Charcoal finds its way over and under F2 and also around and into some post holes, also on the area of F1 which was soil.

F1 is built over a charcoal spread in soil.

Charcoal finds its way over F1, possibly from later burning (of the timber structure?).

## Post script (PI 13)

The post holes in Sites 111 and 126 have not been fully excavated in the hope that they may survive. Packing stones were left in situ and the pits were backfilled with soil and large stones placed on top to mark the positions. The intention is to check out the possible alignments through the 'entrances' where mid winter events may be seen.

# Appendix I

The following quantities (grammes) of charcoal were retrieved from soil samples:

Site	Sample No	Feature/Location	Quantity	Description
126	S1	below flat stone east of PH8 3gms	1mm> handpicked	Hand picked 1mm>
126	S2	PH's13&14 upper	4	1mm> handpicked
126	S3	PH9	2	1mm >
126	S4	above PH11/12	7	1mm> handpicked
126	S4	above PH11/12	n/a	1mm> + root and grit
126	S5	PH8	2	1mm> handpicked
126	S6	scatter @ F4	15	1mm> + grit + 2 of hazel nutshell fragments
126	S7	PH2	6	1mm>larger handpicked
126	S7	PH2	n/a	1mm + grit and rootlet
126	S8	PH6	<1	1mm > handpicked
126	S9	PH7	<1	1mm > handpicked
126	S10	PH's11&12	10 upper spread	1mm > larger handpicked
126	S10	PH's11&12	n/a “ “	1mm> + grit and rootlet
126	S11	PH11	4 upper fill	1mm> handpicked larger
126	S11	PH11	n/a	1mm> + grit & root
126	S12	PH11 base	3	1mm> larger handpicked
126	S13	PH13/14	9 (mostly PH13)	1mm> larger handpicked



# Appendix II

## Site 126 Photographic catalogue

Names: Margaret Brown, Drew Conlon, Brenda Dreghorn, David Drury, Jacquie Dryden, Valerie Ferguson, Bill Glass, Sandra Kelly, Helen McCall, David Paterson, Jim Ness

Photo	Description
Daer Site 126.01	N. Pre excavation DC & DD
126.01a	N. ditto
126.02	S. ditto
126.04	N. first days work
126.05	F2 showing with charcoal
126.06	ditto
126.07	Post Hole No 3 showing in furrow
126.1	W.F1 showing
126.2	Post hole 3 showing in furrow
126.3	F2 flat stones showing section of peat
126.4	Section of peat showing silt layer between peat
126.5	Post hole No 1 with packing stones
126.6	Post hole No 3 in furrow showing packing stones
126.7	S. Post hole No 3 in furrow. JD, SK
126.8	Diggers. JD, SK
126.9	Diggers DD, JN, DC, HM, VF, BD, DP
126.10	ditto
126.11	Diggers DC, HM, VF, BD, DP
126.12	ditto
126.13	Digger DD
126.14	Drawing boards on F1
126.15	N. F4 stones and F6 fire site
126.16	N. F6 fire site
126.17	N. F4 stones and F6 fire site
126.18	SE, View over site. JN, DD, MB, BD
126.19	ditto
126.20	Diggers MB, BG, BD, JN, DD
126.21	ditto
126.22	NE. Fire site F6
126.23	Diggers JN, BD, DP showing post hole No 6
126.24	Diggers BD, JN at post hole No 7
126.25	Post hole No 7 showing packing stones
126.26	N. Fire site F6
126.27	N. Post holes No's 2 and 3 showing packing stones
126.28	N. Post hole No 7 with packing and blocking stone
126.29	ditto with block stone removed
126.30	N. Post holes 7 and 6
126.31	N. Post hole No 6
126.32	N. Post hole No 1
126.33	View over site with diggers

Photo	Description
126.34	N. Post hole No 8 with blocking stone
126.35	ditto
126.36	ditto with block stone removed
126.37	N. Post hole 4 with packing stones
126.38	ditto
126.39	N. Post hole No 9
126.40	N. Post hole No 10 with packing stones
126.41	E. view over site with diggers
126.42	N. Post holes 11 & 12 showing with packing stones
126.43	N. Post hole 6 in furrow, note plough line in till
126.44	N. Post holes 1, 2 3 and 4
126.45	S. Post hole No 10 with packing stones
126.46	ditto
126.47	S. Post holes no's 3 and 2 with packing stones
126.48	NW. Low level view over site and F1 stones
126.49	NE. ditto
126.50	ditto
126.51	NE. Showing fine silt below peat in section
126.52	NE. Low level view over site
126.53	ditto
126.54	N. Post hole no 10 with packing stones
126.55	ditto with stones removed
126.56	N. Post holes 2 and 3 with stones removed
126.57	ditto
126.58	S. F4 stones with PH No 3 on right side
126.59	Removing F4 stones JD, SK
126.60	ditto with Post hole 5 showing
126.61	SE. Post holes 11 and 12 showing, DP
126.62	W. Removing F4 stones with post hole No 5 showing, JD
126.63	N. F1 stone cairn
126.64	NW. Low level view over site
126.65	ditto
126.66	NE, ditto
126.67	NW ditto note flat layer of stones F2
126.68	N. Showing F4 stones removed and post holes No' 4 and 5
126.69	N. Post hole no 5 with packing stones
126.70	S. Post holes 11 and 12 showing packing stones
126.71 – 85	Showing various vertical views of entire site
126.86	S. Showing post holes 13 and 14 emerging from below stones
126.87	S. ditto



Photo	Description
126.88	N. Post No 1 showing packing stones
126.89	N. Post hole No 4
126.90	N. Post hole No 4
126.91	Post hole No 9
126.92	Post hole No 5
126.93	Post hole no 5 with stones removed
126.94	Post hole No 5 showing packing stones in situ
126.95	N. Post hole No 6
126.96	N. Post hole No 8 with blocking stone
126.97	N. ditto with block stone removed
126.98	No picture
126.99	N. Post hole No 8 with blocking stone
126.100	ditto with block stone removed
126.101	ditto showing packing stones in situ
126.102	N. Post hole No 9
126.103	ditto
126.104	ditto showing packing stones
126.105	N. Post hole No 10 showing packing stones
126.106	ditto with stones removed
126.107	ditto
126.108	S. Post holes 13 and 14 emerging
126.109	S. Post holes 11 and 12 showing packing stones
126.110	E. Post holes 11, 12, 13 and 14
126.111	ditto
126.112 – 122	S. Post holes 13 and 14 various stages in excavation
126.123 – 128	S. Post holes 11 and 12 various stages in excavation
126.129	E. Post holes 11, 12, 13, and 14
126.130 – 136	Checking below flat stones of F2, some charcoal present
126.137	S. Post holes 11 and 12
126.138	ditto showing packing stones
126.139	S. Post holes 11, 12, 13 and 14
126.140	N. F1stones removed showing till, not PH 13 and 14 on right
126.141	S. Post holes no's 11, 12, 13 and 14
126.142	E. Post holes 11 and 12
126.143	E. Post holes 13 and 14
126.144	E. View to horizon through PH's 11 – 14
126.145	ditto
126.146	S. Post holes 11 – 14

Photo	Description
126.147	E. Post holes no's 13 and 14
126.148	ditto
126.149	ditto
126.150	S. Post holes 11 – 14
126.151	ditto
126.152	Captioned photograph looking east to horizon through post holes 'entrance'
126.153	Vertical view of F1 stones, JN
126.154	Backfilling post holes, DO, DD
126.155	ditto
126.156	N. F1 stones removed note post holes 11 – 14 on right
126.157	N. Showing F4 stones and F6 fire site
126.158	E. Showing post holes 11 - 14