
Materiality, Personhood and Monumentality in Early Neolithic Britain

Trevor Kirk

Archaeological studies of the material and historical conditions of life have in recent years stimulated discussion of the relationality of people and material culture. Engagement with the material world is one context in which senses of personhood and identity emerge and are transformed. People and materiality are interanimated in the more or less transient events and actions of daily life. Personhood and the material world are loaded with sense and made meaningful through citation and reanimation of cultural values and tradition. This contribution discusses the contingent and possibly transient senses of personhood that may have been constituted in some specific material and historical circumstances relating to early Neolithic monuments in southern Britain. A case study focuses on the relationality of people, animals, earth, stone, architecture and material culture.

Personhood and materiality: relationality and interanimation

This article seeks to contribute to a growing debate on the dialectical relations in which materialities and human identities are enmeshed.¹ I argue that archaeological interpretation is essentially a reflection on the historical and material conditions of human life (Barrett 1994, 166; Patrik 1985). Archaeology is concerned with the processes whereby people's identities and social relations emerge and are renegotiated through immersion in specific material, cultural and political worlds. Archaeological data are not so much a record of past events as they are a cultural resource with which people work, both in the past and in the present. It is through people's engagement with the world that materiality is imbued with meanings. Acts of engagement are also the moments in which identities and social relations are confirmed, renegotiated, challenged or dissolved. As John Barrett (1994, 33) has argued 'Building an understanding of the situated relationship between social practice and material conditions is not an option, it is *the* intellectual demand of archaeology' (original emphasis).

This article addresses this theme by considering ways of being human in the British early Neolithic.²

More specifically it discusses the constitution and transformation of identities and ways of living — what have come to be called senses of personhood (Battaglia 1990; Douglas & Ney 1998; Fowler 2004; LiPuma 1998) — through people's engagement with monuments. It is now almost universally accepted that the modernist individual — bounded, autonomous and fixed — is the product of specific historical circumstances in post-Renaissance Europe (Meskell 1999, 11; Thomas 2004, ch. 2). Archaeological studies of the material and historical conditions of life therefore have the potential to reveal ways of being human that are specific to different times and places. While most archaeologists writing on the subject of personhood would probably agree with my comments so far, personhood is a concept about which archaeologists frequently disagree. For some colleagues the concept of the individual is central to most if not all senses of personhood in past and present societies (Meskell 1999). Meskell does not colonize the past with the modernist, bounded and autonomous individual, but she is concerned that studies which question individuality (e.g. Thomas 1996; 2004) deprive people in the past of their agency and an ability to act. I do not deny the possibility that some historically-specific forms of individuality may have existed in some past societies (Meskell 1999). Nor

do I suggest that the categorical distinction between individual and *dividual*³ is absolute (LiPuma 1998, 57). However, I do feel that the weight of ethnographic evidence (e.g. Battaglia 1990; LiPuma 1998; Strathern 1988) suggests that radically different forms of personhood are possible and should at least be entertained by archaeologists. More specifically, we might profitably consider fragmented, dispersed and temporary senses of personhood, based not on bounded individuality but on the relationality of people and materiality, a relationality played out in relation to specific cultural values, concepts and beliefs (Strathern 1988). This article seeks to examine some of the material and cultural conditions of life in early Neolithic Britain and, based on the empirical evidence, to suggest ways in which different kinds of personhood may have emerged in such circumstances.

I have already alluded to the prominent position of relationality in many recent studies of materiality and personhood (Fowler 2001; Jones 2005; Strathern 1988; Thomas 1996; 1999). Archaeologists are interested in the meanings that are drawn out through people's relationships with the material world. These relationships — played out in the past and in the present — are indeed experiential and sentient; but experience is also socially and historically constructed. There is no essential or universal human experience of the material world on which we can ground our archaeologies of embodiment (Brück 1998). Human life is political as well as experiential: it is culturally situated rather than given. People are able to adopt an almost infinite number of attitudes towards an object, place, building or monument. For women, men and children of different backgrounds and dispositions meanings in the material world are fluid, multiple and ambiguous. A further dimension of relationality is drawn out by Shanks in his evocation of Latour's idea of symmetry between people and materiality (Mackenzie & Shanks 1994, 33). Symmetry in this context connotes indivisibility; it argues that personhood, social interaction and the creation of meaningful worlds are fused in a single seamless process. People do not inhabit two domains: one of intersubjective social relationships and another of relationships with materiality. In short, materiality, social relations and identity only become truly meaningful in their mutual relationality. In an ethnographic context Basso (1996) argues the case in rather different terms, using the concept of interanimation to capture the essence of people–place relations among the Western Apache. Basso suggests that 'As places animate the ideas and feelings of persons who attend to them, these same ideas and feelings animate the places on which attention has

been bestowed' (Basso 1996, 55). I suggest that processes of interanimation may be characteristic not only of people–place relations but of other people–material relations too. For example, interanimation may be the essence of people–object and people–building relations, just as Basso suggests in the case of people–place relations. Later in this article I consider some examples of the interanimation of people and materiality in relation to early Neolithic monuments in Britain. However, before doing so I need first to consider some further aspects of relationality and personhood which illustrate the nature of interanimation.

Relationality reminds us that personhood spills out beyond the physical body and personal psyche: personhood forms, transforms and is transformed, according to the relational matrices in which people are situated, out of the relationality or interanimation of people and materiality. Personhood shifts form and focus in time with the changing structure and emphases of our relationships with other people and with the material world. Such understandings stretch out through time and space. They reside in the interstices of experience and pre-understanding (Gadamer 1975); in the invocation of places, people, actions and memories (Williams 2003); in the proximate and the distant; in recent personal memory and in the distant past of societal myth and history (Hodder 2000; Whittle 2003). Meanings are brought forward from other times and places: 'people encounter several parallel experiences of reality that relate to different aspects of their social identity' (Brück 2001, 657). An interest in the construction of personhood — an openness to other ways of being human — requires us to tack back and forth between the long-term and the short-term (Hodder 2000), as well as between historically received circumstances and human action (Barrett 1994).

If personhood is in a constant state of becoming within the context of historically-specific networks of relationality and interanimation, then personhood may be a fluid, flexible and shifting phenomenon rather than a fixed and stable form. Responsibilities and interests shift according to the context in which people find themselves. In short, human life has a messy quality. What we do, think and say fluctuates day-on-day, minute-on-minute as we move from one social arena to another. To act, successively or simultaneously, as parent, child, sibling, partner and worker demands a flexibility of character. Self-evaluation, relationships with other people, thoughts about the world in which we live: all of these things are in a state of flux. To be human is to be engaged in a process of becoming. The relationality, historicity and contingency of personhood are elegantly illustrated

in many anthropological studies (e.g. Descola 1994; Hoskins 1998; Ingold 2000a). Marilyn Strathern's (1988) work on Melanesian exchange and engendered identities has rightly attracted much attention. For Strathern, Melanesian identities are contingent and fluid; they form transient and unstable arrangements through people's 'interanimated' relationships with objects, with other people and with their own bodies. Melanesian people do not see themselves as bounded autonomous individuals from whom agency, action and meaning emanate. Rather, the objects that people temporarily hold make manifest genealogies of exchange relations in which people briefly reside. Aspects of the person originate in another context – that of past exchange relations – and may be extracted and transferred from person to person in the form of objects. Strathern further argues that Melanesian body parts are differently gendered and that people consider themselves to be cross-sex, with men's bodies incorporating female elements, and women's embodying male substances (Strathern 1988, 122–3). Furthermore, women and men emphasize or underplay their maleness or femaleness according to the demands of social context (Strathern 1998, 64). Melanesian engendered identities are flexible and fluid; all are in a constant state of becoming. The contingency of identity emerging in exchange relations is therefore mirrored in Melanesian attitudes towards the human body. Melanesian identities are complex yet transient matrices linking multiple cultural concepts, material resources and bodily substances. Adapting Basso's (1996) terms people and materiality are interanimated; they emerge in actions and events that work upon cultural resources and tradition.

Early Neolithic monuments in Britain: citation and transformation of tradition

How might these general thoughts about relationality and the interanimation of personhood and materiality inform research into British early Neolithic monuments? One way forward may be to look at citation and transformation of tradition. Lived experience entails a passing down of tradition (of customs, oral tradition, personal experience, institutional convention and cultural practices). However, people reflect on tradition; they manipulate existing material and cultural resources to produce particular desired effects. Some archaeologists (Fowler 2001; Jones 2001; 2005) have used Butler's (1993) metaphor of citation to examine this process. Jones (2001, 340) argues that 'the performance of a citation both encapsulates previous ideas or things while also rearticulating them afresh

in order to create or define novel categories'. Citation may therefore allow further insight into the working of interanimation. The 'ideas and feelings' that for Basso (1996, 55) animate and are animated by place are not fixed cultural resources. Rather, they emerge and are transformed in the flow of social life that is played out in a specific material world.

Citation is a useful concept when thinking about monument building and the life-histories of monuments. Formality of design and repetitive patterns of behaviour are commonly noted at British early Neolithic monuments. Obvious examples include segmentation and hierarchies of space at causewayed enclosures (Evans 1988; Renfrew 1973), the selection of certain human body parts for deposition at enclosures and barrows (Thorpe 1984), and the building of chambered tombs in locations already replete with cultural meaning (Britnell & Savory 1984; Saville 1990). Archaeologists have long argued that formality of design is evidence of a pre-existing mental template translated into material form. It is this train of thought that underpins culture historical narrative (Childe 1940; Piggott 1954) (see Harding 1998 and Kirk 2000 for critiques of the 'design as mental template' perspective). Here I want to retain the idea that monument building was historically situated and that, in buildings, people cited earlier events. Yet at the same time I want to move towards interpretation of monument building, monument use and material deposition as interpretations of tradition carried out in practice. Practice returns us to real people acting within specific historical and material circumstances, within webs of relationality that do not determine action but which allow people to rethink and reformulate their relationships with other people and the material world. The remainder of this article seeks to envisage the kinds of practice that might have been played out at some early Neolithic monuments and, by extension, the forms of personhood that may have been produced through these practices. The case study that follows focuses on the Cotswold-Severn tombs of Hazleton North and Gwernvale (Saville 1990; Britnell & Savory 1984) within their social and landscape contexts.

Citation of soil and stone at Cotswold-Severn tombs

The relationships in which a sense of personhood is constituted include people's engagements with materiality. At Cotswold-Severn tombs Neolithic people handled, moved, modified and deposited substances such as soil, stone, plants, animals and human bodies. At Hazleton North monument building begins with

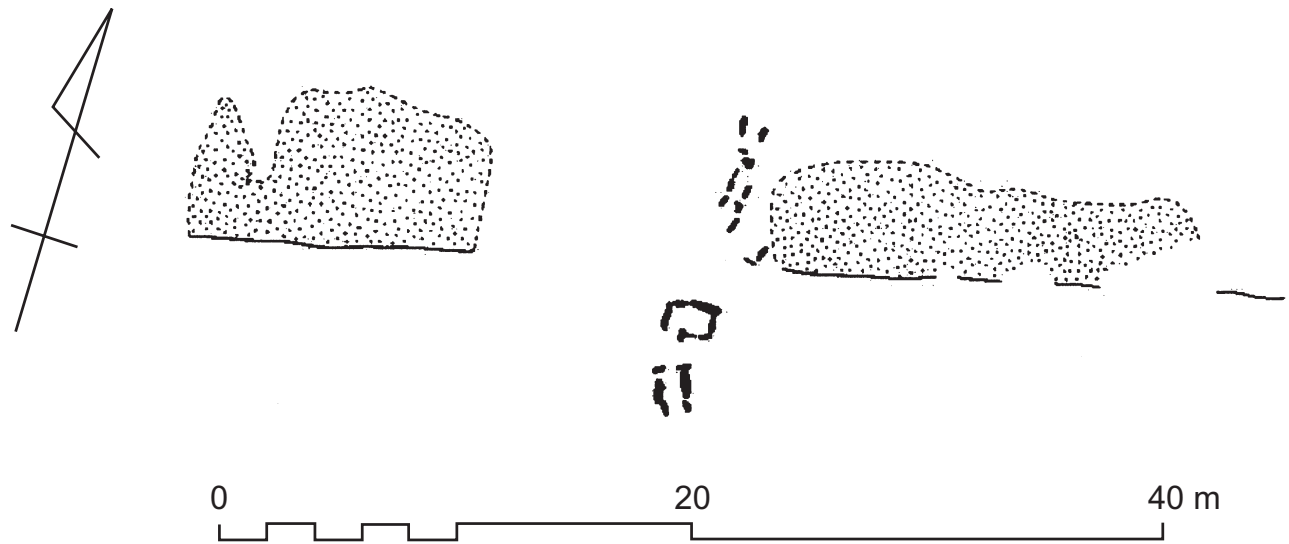


Figure 1. Primary dumps (stippled) in relation to the two chambers at Hazleton North. (After Saville 1990: reproduced by kind permission of English Heritage.)

the quarrying of earth and limestone from ditches that ultimately flank the cairn. Two primary dumps of cairn material comprise soil to the northeast and rubble to the northwest (Saville 1990, 243) (Fig. 1). This distinction may reflect the succession of building activities. That is to say, soil stripping and early quarrying produced material for the northeast dump, and later quarrying the northwest rubble deposit. However, both primary dumps are keyed into an axial alignment of limestone slabs, which suggests that both were deposited when quarrying was sufficiently well advanced to produce large limestone slabs. Furthermore, the axial alignment is demonstrably part of the initial building phase as it fixes the alignment of the cairn itself and forms the southern limit of both northeast and northwest primary dumps. It is therefore likely that building materials were sorted at Hazleton North: soil to the northeast, rubble to the northwest. The context for these activities can be further assessed. Soil, pollen, seed and charcoal analyses indicate that monument construction at Hazleton North took place in a mosaic landscape of woodland clearances, small cultivation plots and regenerating hazel-scrub (Macphail 1990, 224–6; Scaife 1990, 218–19; Straker 1990, 215–18). Pre-cairn Neolithic activities, all of which probably pre-date monument building by no more than 50–100 years (Saville 1990, 268), include forest clearance (a process probably begun in the late Mesolithic: Macphail 1990, 225); gathering (hazelnuts are common: Straker 1990); some hunting (wild species are represented by one auroch bone and one roe deer antler: Levitan 1990); the building of a small rectangular timber structure; the deposition of mid-

den material including charcoal, pottery, flint, quern fragments, animal bone, wheat seeds and hazelnuts; and tillage, the latter perhaps relating to on-site cereal production (Macphail 1990, 225). The midden and timber structure (Fig. 2) were probably situated in a small clearance, with Neolithic cultivation leading to progressive dispersal of midden material.

I suggest that when monument construction began (c. 3800–3600 BC) Hazleton North evoked no single sense of place. The history of the Neolithic landscape was already complex and multi-faceted. Hazleton North may have evoked settlement (including acts of building and midden deposition), cereal cultivation, animal and woodland management (including clearance and coppicing, provision of building materials), gathering and hunting. Handling, moving, separating and depositing soils may therefore have been an opportunity to cite and rework the earlier biography of soil itself. Soil and people entered into a wide range of relationships. Soils were stripped of vegetation cover, broken by tillage, charged with midden debris, left to develop turf and scrub cover. Traditional archaeological narratives on the relationship between Neolithic people and soil emphasize the control exercised by people over natural resources (e.g. Ashbee 1966; Barker 1985; Mercer 1981). However, I suggest that the importance of soil did not necessarily lay in its perceived value as a resource controlled by people in the context of emerging Neolithic practices of domestication. Understanding domestication as a process whereby people transform nature into cultural form may be a particular world-view that has emerged in post-Renaissance western thinking (Ingold 2000b, 80).



Figure 2. Pre-cairn midden and timber structure at Hazleton North. (After Saville 1990: reproduced by kind permission of English Heritage.)

Ethnographies remind us that in many non-Western societies cultivation is not a transformation of nature; it is not a process that brings nature under the control and productive regime of people (Ingold 2000b, 77–84; see also Pálsson 1996 on the more general field of human–environment relations). For example, the Dogon of Mali believe the bush to be the source of all power, wisdom and knowledge. The bush is the source of life itself. However, the bush is also the domain in which social life and reality are transformed; animals change body parts with humans; trees and rocks become animate; horizons of past and present blur. The Dogon fear the bush, yet ‘Dogon cosmology envisages a kind of entropic system in which the maintenance of the village depends upon a continual inflow of vital force from the bush, which is worn down and used up in the process’ (Ingold 2000b, 84). The Dogon use up resources by clearing and maintaining cultivation plots. In Dogon cosmology cultivation does not simply produce food. Cultivation also consumes the vital life forces of the bush.

The Dogon case suggests that farming societies do not necessarily perceive soil solely as an economic resource, the fertility of which is controlled by human agency. From an archaeological perspective, it is necessary to assess the contextual evidence relating to people–soil relationships. In the context of this article, do the historical circumstances of early Neolithic life in southern England suggest a belief in human control of soil fertility? Or may the handling and manipulation of soils at sites such as Hazleton North have produced other kinds of understanding of the cultural significance of soil? And how were those meanings and associations cited and reworked in monument building? The range of contextual evidence is currently very limited. Consequently only the most provisional and tentative suggestions can be made. However, the associations of soil appear to be cited and reworked in specific contexts at Hazleton North; a place where, amongst other things, relations between the living and dead were mediated. Hazleton North is also a setting for reworking the meaning of place itself. For example,

the pre-cairn timber structure and midden influence the orientation of the mound and are formally cited by architectural devices within the fabric of the cairn. It is in this context that soils were handled, moved and manipulated. Neolithic cultural values may have extended beyond pragmatic concerns with maintaining soil fertility through human agency. That is not to deny that practical strategies such as middening and manuring took place. Archaeological evidence suggests that they did. Rather, my argument is that people may have perceived substances such as soil in ways that are not identical to or, indeed, easily reconciled with modern western world-views. Soils deposited at the base of the Hazleton North cairn are not rich in midden material. However, they are the product of clearance, cultivation and other daily activities. Redeposited soils may therefore be a symbolic reference to clearance and cultivation, though they may not evoke domestication of the landscape in ways that would be familiar to modern European minds.

The early Neolithic context in which soils were cited may be one in which farming was not widespread (Barrett 1994; Thomas 1991). Indeed, sites such as Hazleton North may have been special places precisely because they witnessed new practices such as tillage and plant processing and new substances such as domesticated plants, animals and pottery. It may also be significant that soils charged with midden debris are associated with some Scottish Neolithic chambered tombs (Henshall 1972, 87–90), southern English long barrows (Ashbee 1966, 7; Piggott 1962, 26–30) and causewayed enclosures (Smith 1971, 100). Soils may therefore have been appreciated as symbolic substances in some Neolithic contexts,⁴ and especially in contexts concerned with the transition between life and death, or with graded movement through hierarchies of monumental space. Digging, handling and depositing soils may be one of the practices through which Neolithic people cited knowledge. People may have drawn on patterns of relationship between different substances, linking people and substances into webs of experience and knowledge. The fields of discourse and knowledge may have included concepts of transition and transformation. For example, soils are manipulated and strategically deposited at chambered tombs and other Neolithic monuments at which rites of passage of death were mediated. Practices associated with the transition from life to death may also be the context in which other forms of transition were mediated and legitimated. For example, differential access to new substances and material culture (domesticated animals and plants, pottery, quernstones) was a process that potentially led to transformation

of Neolithic social relations. A degree of formalized societal control over changing social relations may have been exerted through reference to major rites of transition, such as that between life and death.

The handling of soils at Hazleton North may also facilitate a reworking or citation of earlier chapters in the biography of soils themselves. Cultivation practices such as vegetation stripping, middening, tillage, cereal production and processing — practices that gave rise to both the physical substance and the cultural associations of the soils redeposited at Hazleton North — may have been recontextualized and thereby imbued with new meanings. In Jones's (2001) terms existing ideas were encapsulated and explicitly referenced, yet in ways that rearticulated them in order to create novel categories that were meaningful and appropriate to a new cultural context. In the case of Hazleton North, the meanings and associations of soils are renegotiated in relation to novel practices carried out at the site: primarily the monumentalization of place, the memorialization of earlier practices at Hazleton North, and a concern with rites of passage of death. These three themes — monumentalization, memorialization and rites of passage — are possible contexts for the interanimation of people and materiality. That is to say, some aspects of Neolithic personhood may have emerged through practices of monument building, memorialization, and the sanctioning of social change through rites of passage. For example, monument building has several potentially contradictory effects. It changes, and perhaps even seeks to fix, the meaning of place. Monument building may seek to foreclose the range of traditional associations of place by locating in centre stage certain preferred fields of discourse (most notably ideas about the transition from life to death). Yet at the same time, monument building may also have commemorated and memorialized some of the traditional associations of place. If, as I have argued here, soils have complex biographies that speak of a multitude of social and economic practices (for example, clearance, middening, cultivation, hunting, gathering), then the act of handling and redepositing soils at Hazleton North may have brought back into focus these traditional associations at a time when these same meanings were also potentially being pushed into the background. In terms of the constitution of personhood, I suggest that tensions between remembering and forgetting (Forty & Küchler 1999) may have allowed people to create a range of understandings of a world in transition and, by extension, of people's place within that world. My aim is to consider the processes whereby personhood may have been produced in the Neolithic. It is not

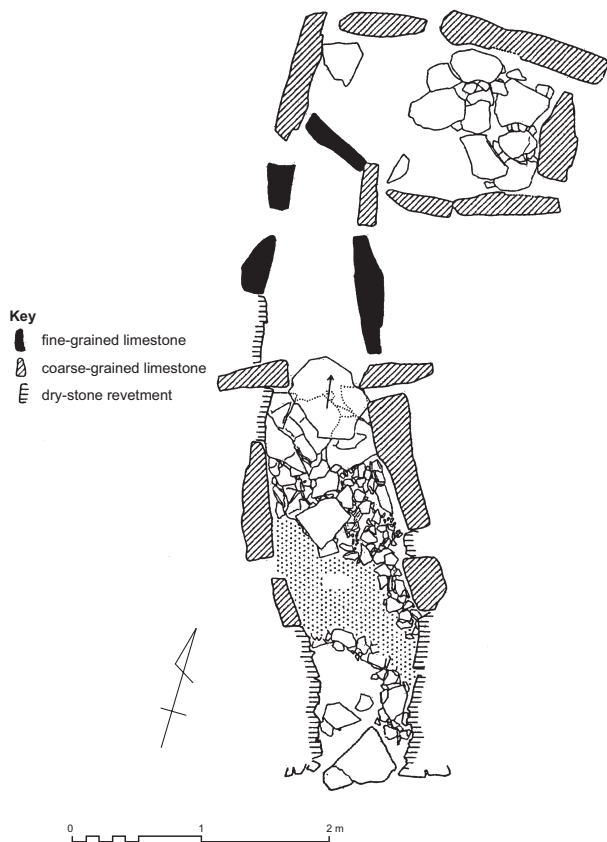


Figure 3. Building materials used in southern chamber at Hazleton North. (After Saville 1990: reproduced by kind permission of English Heritage.)

to suggest that discrete, singular and self-contained forms of personhood were produced. To the contrary, the diverse associations of place, soil and, as I shall later discuss, stone, animals and human bodies, suggests that social identities may have been diverse and that several parallel experiences of reality may have been possible (Brück 2001, 657). The interanimation of people and materiality may have variously stimulated a focus on traditional knowledges and experiences and/or quite radical revisions of a world in which monumentality, memorialization, commemoration and forgetting were prevalent. As Brück has argued elsewhere in relation to personhood in the British Neolithic, 'The process of interpretation, of constructing meaning, involves sorting through a web of ideas and associations which provide a wide range of ways of thinking about a particular object or activity' (Brück 2001, 663).

Citation of stone

At Hazleton North limestone, like soil, may have been located in relational matrices of activity. Two

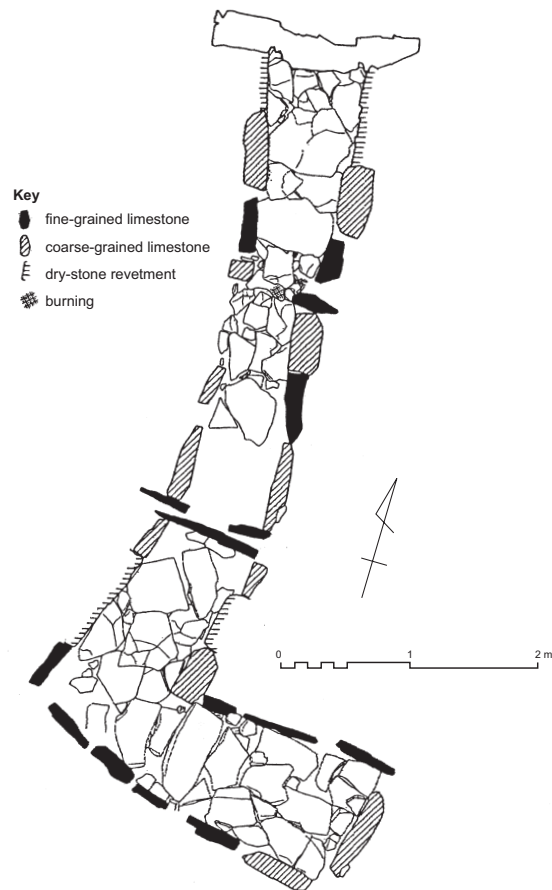


Figure 4. Building materials used in northern chamber at Hazleton North. (After Saville 1990: reproduced by kind permission of English Heritage.)

building materials are used in the chambered areas at Hazleton North: fine-grained angular limestone slabs quarried on site, and larger slabs of coarse-grained, weathered limestone known to outcrop a few kilometres to the east-south-east (Saville 1990, 229). It is notable that fine-grained limestone orthostats are used only in the south passage, north chamber terminal, and transitions of north chamber-passage and passage-entrance (Figs. 3 & 4). The different textures of stone (Fig. 5) may have prompted an appreciation of transition in people's movement through the chambered area (Cummings 2002). Thresholds between architectural units – perhaps symbolically marking transitions between states of being of the living and the dead – were therefore made evident to sight and/or touch as people negotiated the architecture of the chamber-passage-entrance. It is also notable that the coarse-grained slabs at Hazleton North are unworked, rounded, weathered and contain shells, fossils and natural perforations. Stones may have



Figure 5. Terminal of northern chamber at Hazleton North. Note contrast in texture of terminal slab and chamber orthostats in foreground. (After Saville 1990: reproduced by kind permission of English Heritage.)



Figure 6. Gwernvale cairn from southeast. (After Britnell & Savory 1984: reproduced by kind permission of the Cambrian Archaeological Association.)

been chosen not only for their properties as building material but also because of their distinctive forms, textures, colours and inclusions. The incorporation of these stones into the monumental architecture may be an instance of citation, as existing meanings were reworked in new contexts. It may be significant that these slabs were not worked or dressed by people in the Neolithic. Rather, it may be the stone's natural form that is cited in the architecture of Hazleton North. That is to say biographies, myths and stories may have

built up around stones in their native landscape context. Stones already replete with meaning may therefore have been gathered from the surrounding landscape (see also Gillings & Pollard 1999 on Avebury where the scale and complexity of later Neolithic practices of citation in a major open-air 'public' monument contrasts with citation in early Neolithic Cotswold-Severn tombs where the accent is on mediation of localized social relations within enclosure chambers). The incorporation of selected stones into the Hazleton North monument was therefore potentially a citation of the sacred and political geography of the region. Citation is a material manifestation of changing relationships between people, substances and place. Citation of the relations in which people and materiality are composed and transformed (Strathern 1988, 131) may have infused the architecture of Hazleton North with power and significance.

Juxtaposition of stones with distinctive form, texture and colour occurs also at Gwernvale (Britnell & Savory 1984). Weathered, rounded sandstone blocks were moved around the terrace on which the cairn is built, the stone being shifted to form the core of the cairn (Fig. 6). This process is in itself unremarkable: it may be no more than adventitious use of resources. However, the cairn is bonded with a reddish-brown fine sandy clay loam which 'differed from the underlying soil and had presumably been dug from a local clay-rich band' (Britnell & Savory 1984, 57). The source of this soil is local; but its form and properties are particular. A functional explanation can be offered: the selection of a clay-rich bonding material to ensure the cairn's structural stability. However, broader patterns of material selection at Gwernvale suggest that building materials were perhaps selected because of their biographical associations rather than (or in addition to) their ready availability or functional suitability. Four points illustrate the argument. First, white quartzitic sandstone — a material not used in cairn construction at Gwernvale — was introduced

onto the site solely as forecourt blocking (Britnell & Savory 1984, 64) (Fig. 7). Second, the cairn material surrounding Chambers 2 and 3 is angular quarried sandstone. This stone, also used as chamber and passage orthostats and as dry-stone cairn revetment, probably derives from surface outcrops to the north of the site (Britnell & Savory 1984, 55–7). Though not transported more than a few hundred metres, the stone is notably used only as cairn fabric to encase Chambers 2 and 3 (Fig. 7). Third, cairn revetments are, as noted earlier, built almost exclusively of angular quarried sandstone slabs. However, some sections of the northern revetment are grey and yellow sandstone (Britnell & Savory 1984, 57). Fourth, a natural sandstone monolith around which pre-cairn activities may have focused was incorporated into the only internal dividing wall within the Gwernvale cairn (Barrett 1988; Britnell & Savory 1984, 58–9) (Fig. 8). Perhaps already replete with meaning, the natural monolith also lies halfway between Chamber 1 and the forecourt portal. The natural monolith may have been a focal point around which architectural features of the cairn were laid out. As has been argued for Hazleton North, materials and substances incorporated at Gwernvale may effectively cite from other places, times

Figure 8. *Monolith and axial structure between forecourt and chamber 1, Gwernvale. (After Britnell & Savory 1984: reproduced by kind permission of the Cambrian Archaeological Association.)*

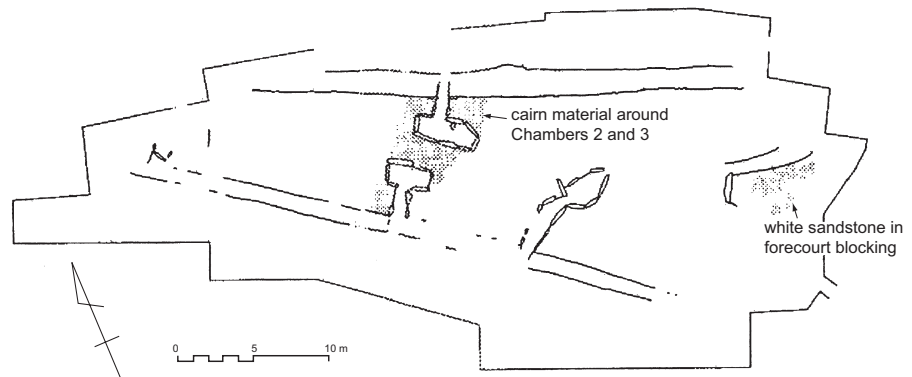


Figure 7. *White sandstone in forecourt blocking and quarried angular sandstone encasing chambers 2 and 3, Gwernvale. (After Britnell & Savory 1984: reproduced by kind permission of the Cambrian Archaeological Association.)*



and contexts. Engagement with these materials and substances is one field of relations in which personhood may emerge and be subsequently reproduced or transformed.

Animals, people and Cotswold-Severn tombs

Notwithstanding problems of preservation, sample size and statistical analysis, plants and animals are archaeologically visible aspects of the world in which Neolithic people lived. Continuity and change in people–animal–plant relationships are potentially important routes into the study of historically-situated ways of living. People's relationships with plants and animals may be especially significant at the beginning of the Neolithic when new species of plants and animals first appear on the scene.

In the pre-cairn horizon at Hazleton North domesticated cattle, sheep and pig occur in roughly equal number (Levitan 1990, 200). That radius and tibia bones are well-represented may reflect survival of large robust bones rather than cultural selection. However, animals were treated in particular ways in specific contexts. Cattle, sheep and pig were all killed at the prime meat-bearing age (Levitan 1990, 203). Presumably animals were butchered and eaten, but the resulting bones were then further transformed by burning (46.5 per cent of the pre-cairn animal bones are burnt). The pre-cairn phase is characterized by the consumption of meat from domesticated animals. Hazleton North was a place where people engaged with new resources and enjoyed new experiences in the early Neolithic world. It is not clear whether the burning of animal bone is a deliberate act of transformation, emphasizing the management of transition and change in the Neolithic world. However, the existence of pre-cairn hearths and burnt deposits (the latter possibly relating to either woodland clearance or the destruction of earlier built structures: Saville 1990, 16) may indicate a concern with the symbolism of fire and not least its transformative qualities. Construction of a cairn over the midden suggests that the midden and its associated material culture came to be meaningful. It may be that the midden containing burnt material, pottery, flint, quern fragments, domesticated animal bone and wheat was effectively a microcosm of key early Neolithic substances and values.

In contrast to the pre-cairn context, domesticated sheep and/or goats are preferentially selected for deposition in the two chambers at Hazleton North. Furthermore, animals are not only regarded as sources of meat in the period of monument use. Most notably a complete perinatal sheep is deposited in the South

Chamber (Saville 1990, 105). Deposition of a young animal, perhaps during the spring, in a chamber that also housed the human dead, may be symbolically significant. The changing season and the onset of animal breeding may be homologous with cycles of transition leading from life into death.

During the period of monument use cattle and pig remains were deposited in the Hazleton North forecourt. Probably representing no more than two individuals of each species, it is primarily skulls, jaws and teeth that appear in the forecourt. In contrast to pre-cairn meat consumption, deposits in the Hazleton North forecourt suggest selection of specific animal body parts – ostensibly the head – for display and deposition. The relationship between people and animals was, in this instance, possibly very different to that in the pre-cairn context. Animal deposits in the forecourt and chambers may make symbolically present a set of relationships resulting from the tending of herds or from the exchange of animals as gifts. Animals may, like stone and earth, be resources for citation in the Neolithic world. Bone-tempered pottery deposited on top of hearth embers at the base of the southern quarry (Smith & Darvill 1990, 146) suggests a further way in which animals may have been immersed in relational contexts, by literally being incorporated into portable objects that may have been the subject of gift exchange and also associated with the transformative powers of fire.

Citation of substances may also have extended to the human body. The bodies of men, women and children were disarticulated, handled, sorted, and even re-assembled. For example, two adult skulls are placed on a ledge in the Northern Chamber entrance at Hazleton North (Saville 1990, 125). Long bones are ranged along the northwest wall of Penywrlod NEII Chamber (Britnell & Savory 1984, 19–20) and at Ascott-under-Wychwood a composite body is constructed from the disarticulated remains of two people (Ches-terman 1977, 27–31). In death, if not also in life, the human body had permeable boundaries. People were dismantled and fragmented in death. This attitude towards the body may also have extended to other aspects of personhood. The permeability of bodily boundaries may be homologous with the mutability of social identities. However, attitudes towards the human body were not singular and one-dimensional. Some bodies are interred intact, most notably the final adult male burial in the Northern Chamber entrance at Hazleton North (Saville 1990, 125). Contextual factors may have affected decisions about the appropriate treatment of the body. The association of bodies with other substances – animals (variously deposited in-

tact and disarticulated), pottery, stone artefacts — may be part of this contextual scene. The association of the human dead with animals has already been discussed. In terms of material culture, the only pottery in the chambers at Hazleton North is a simple, roughly-worked thumb pot in the Southern Chamber (Fig. 9). While the fabric is similar to that found in some of the pre-cairn pottery, the form is idiosyncratic and ‘represents a minimum expenditure of effort, time and skill’ (Saville 1990, 151). Though the product of banal everyday activities, this pot’s idiosyncratic form suggests that it makes reference to a very specific set of actions and social relations. Selection of this distinctive pot may be a citation of specific human relationships, the context and importance of which may not have been widely known. The fields of action and discourse that are cited at Cotswold-Severn tombs therefore vary widely. Some fields are relatively common and widespread such as the preferential deposition of cattle and pig in forecourts. Others such as the Hazleton North thumb pot speak of highly localized actions and fields of discourse.

Summary and conclusions

The aim of this article has been to outline some of the material and social circumstances — especially as they relate to monument construction and use — in which people may have lived in the early Neolithic of southern England. The types of personhood that may have emerged in this Neolithic world are multi-faceted, contingent and subject to transformation. That is to say, personhood was neither fixed at any particular point in time nor did the sense of personhood remain stable through time. Awareness of the different temporalities at work within Neolithic social practice is a major factor in understanding the emergent and transient nature of personhood. For example, the idiosyncratic thumb pot at Hazleton North may have had limited citational potential for people unaware of the specific and highly localized events behind its making, use and final deposition in the Southern Chamber. Conversely, it may have had rich citational power for those people intimately connected with it (those who made it? those who knew its history? those who may have used it, owned it, or passed it on through exchange?). The localized and specific fields of discourse in which the thumb pot was immersed contrast with the longer term and spatially more expansive practices such as the exchange of cattle or the persistence of hunting techniques and flint knapping technologies from the Mesolithic. In other words, the relational networks leading to the

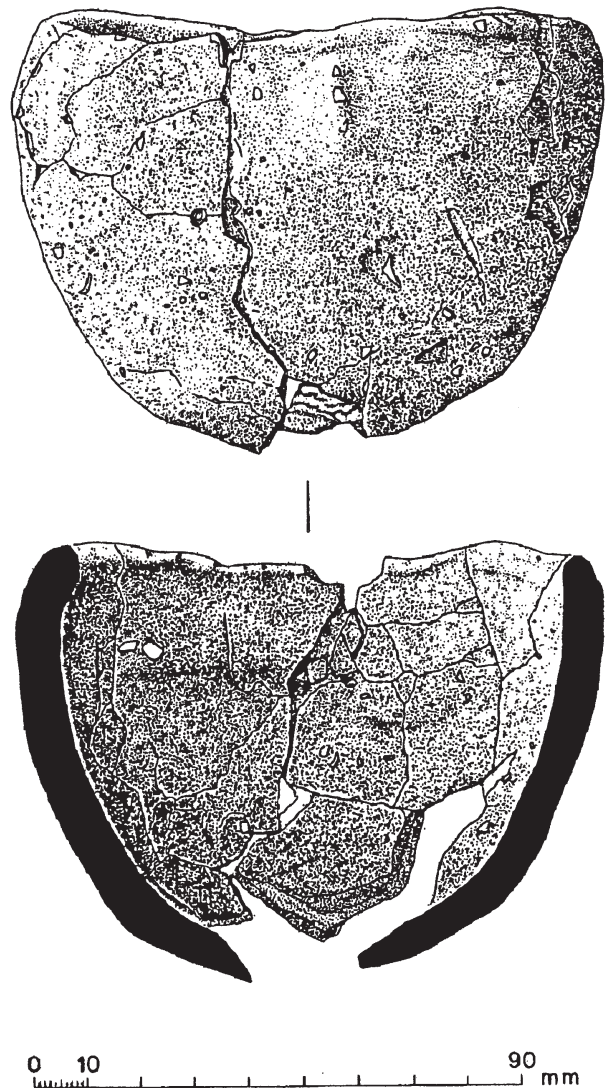


Figure 9. Thumb pot from southern chamber at Hazleton North. (After Saville 1990: reproduced by kind permission of English Heritage.)

interanimation of people and materiality varied in both their temporal and spatial scale. Different aspects of personhood may have emerged and shifted form at different rates according to the scale and temporality of the fields of practice in which people were engaged. For example, it has been argued that Hazleton North has a relatively short chronology. Radiocarbon dates suggest that pre-cairn activity and ensuing periods of monument building, use and abandonment may have been played out over as little as 100 years (Saville 1990, 268). Also, animal bone in the forecourt was rapidly sealed by wall collapse. This suggests that the monument was neither repaired nor maintained, and that

the process of monument decay may have begun during the monument's relatively short use phase. Play on memory was therefore of a particular kind and had a characteristic temporality at Hazleton North. Monument building and use is a relatively short and discrete chapter in the Hazleton North biography. However, it is possible that some of the ideas and traditions cited by incorporation of stone and earth into the monumental architecture may be of greater antiquity. Hazleton North may have been a place where old and new worlds met. Occasional auroch and deer bone and abundant hazelnut fragments suggest that traditional practices persisted into the Neolithic. Mesolithic flint assemblages at Hazleton North and Gwernvale may also add further biographical depth. The associations of soil – woodland clearance, cultivation, middening, cropping, scrub regeneration – were also reworked and rethought through the incorporation of soil into monuments. People's sense of personhood and identity may have shifted according to the relational matrices of people–materiality–place–monument in which people found themselves. Personhood may have shifted form and focus in time with the changing structure and temporality of people–materiality relationships.

Cotswold-Severn tombs, in common with other earlier Neolithic monuments such as causewayed enclosures, were probably used periodically, with sporadic visits embedded within broader patterns of movement through the landscape (Edmonds 1993; 1999). These movements pulsed to a variety of rhythms and flowed at various rates. Movement probably revolved around the tending of herds, the production, circulation and use of objects, the collecting of food, water, fuel, building materials, clays, and flints, and the building of houses and monuments. The temporalities of these activities are diverse; they are momentary, daily, seasonal, annual, or once-in-a-lifetime. Actions also variously reference the local and the far distant. The monuments built, experienced and remodelled in the ebb and flow of Neolithic life were therefore in a constant state of becoming. While I am seduced by the idea that multiple shifting meanings emerge in the symmetry between people and things, the recursive and repetitive nature of many activities at Neolithic monuments must also be taken into account. Structured deposition and regularity in the design and execution of monumental architecture seem to indicate some degree of formalisation. Here may be seen something of one political context in which the symmetry of people and materiality was played out at early Neolithic monuments. Monuments may have witnessed the performance and potential transformation of traditional, formalized practices.

Each performance may have seen established values and practices differently evaluated by different people. Changing circumstances and priorities may also have led to new ways of citing traditional values and practices, recasting them for new times and for different purposes (Kirk 2000). Social relations and senses of identity may from time to time have been consolidated or reworked. More specifically, the recurring theme of transformation – decaying bodies, burnt material, multiple episodes in the biography of a locale – might suggest that periods of transformation in social relations and personhood (rites of passage) may have been formally mediated at early Neolithic monuments (see also Fowler 2003). People and objects were often dismantled and reordered; their identities reworked; shifting identities emerging in more or less transient moments of building and deposition. While transformation is most obviously manifest through rites of passage of death, transformation is also the essence of the biography of places such as Hazleton North where the locale changes form and meaning: from forest to clearance to cultivation plot to midden to house site to regenerating woodland to monumental site. Citational practices drawing on the symbolism of soil may have been one way in which Neolithic people sought to deal with the diverse range of potential meanings associated with Hazleton North. While the time, place and context are different, I am reminded of Strathern's summary of personhood in Melanesia: 'what is drawn out of the person are the social relationships of which it is composed: it is a microcosm of relations' (1988, 131).

If archaeology is the study of the material conditions of human life (Barrett 1994; Patrik 1985), then it is a discipline with potential to interrogate the interanimation (*sensu* Basso 1996) of materiality and personhood. Fine-grained study of the historically-specific material circumstances in which people lived opens up the possibility of evoking something of the values, concerns and motivations of people in the past. People are immersed in networks of relationship with other people and also with the material world. For instance, in some parts of early Neolithic Britain people cited and reworked ideas and meanings through production, circulation, consumption and deposition of material culture; through engagement with substances such as earth, stone and animals; and through the building, use, remodeling and abandonment of places, building and monuments. The relationality of people and materiality, itself the context of citation of the material world and its associated values, gives rise to various senses of being or personhood. Personhood is rarely fixed; it is transient and mutable, it is a process of

becoming. Transformation of personhood pulses to a variety of tempos and rhythms. Quotidian adjustment to the material and social relationships in which people engage at the micro-level is balanced against and is itself contextualized by the slow-moving shifts of societal values and traditional practices. Senses of personhood may not be identical to or compatible with modern Western notions of bounded individuality.⁵ Several disparate and possibly competing senses of personhood may emerge. Indeed, the places discussed in this article witness actions and processes that, through their formalization, seek to foreclose some of the ambiguities of life, though never entirely succeeding in precluding unexpected and alternative readings of tradition.

Trevor Kirk
 University of Wales Lampeter
 Trinity College
 Carmarthen
 SA31 3EP
 Wales
 Email: t.kirk@lamp.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Eleanor Breen, Vicki Cummings, Lesley McFadyen and Paul Rainbird for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Thanks also to two anonymous referees for their insightful, productive and encouraging comments. I am also grateful to John Robb for his support and advice as journal editor.

Notes

1. Various perspectives on these matrices are offered by Barrett 1994; Butler 1993; DeMarras *et al.* 2005; Dobres & Robb 2000; Fowler 2001; 2004; Gosden 1999; Ingold 2000a; Jones 2005; Karlsson 1998; Shanks & Tilley 1987a,b; Thomas 1996; 2004.
2. The focus on British early Neolithic monuments reflects the origin of this article in a day conference on Monumentality in Early Neolithic in Britain at Cardiff University in January 2002. I have been highly selective in my treatment of British Neolithic data and have not attempted to deal with issues of regionalization. However, I hope that it is implicit in my approach that I celebrate the diversity and contingency of human experience.
3. The term 'dividual', as coined by Marriott (1976) and reworked by Strathern (1988) in the field of anthropology and by Fowler (2004) in archaeology, refers to a state of personhood that is 'composite and multiply-authored. People are composed of social relations with others to the degree that they owe parts of themselves to others' (Fowler 2004, 8). In contrast to the fixed 'indivisibility' of

the western individual, dividuality emerges in people's interaction with other people and with the material world.

4. See also recent work on the symbolism of soil in prehistory (Boivin & Owoc 2004; Brittain 2004; Owoc 2002).
5. The bounded individual, a classic marker of modernity, may well arise in post-Renaissance Europe in the context of early capitalism (Thomas 2004; Weber 1930). However, it would be naïve to embrace the fiction of fixed identity; that view of modern European subjectivity as singularly constituted, stable and fixed throughout a person's life. Personhood in modern Europe is constituted in matrices of knowledge, power and politics (Foucault 1977; 1979) and as such is characterized by processes of becoming, ambiguity, contradiction and change.

References

- Ashbee, P., 1966. The Fussell's Lodge long barrow excavations, 1957. *Archaeologia* 100, 1–80.
- Barker, G., 1985. *Prehistoric Farming in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barrett, J., 1988. The living, the dead and the ancestors: Neolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices, in *The Archaeology of Context in the Neolithic and Bronze Age*, eds. J. Barrett & I. Kinnes. Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 30–41.
- Barrett, J., 1994. *Fragments from Antiquity: an Archaeology of Social Life in Britain, 2900–1200 BC*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Basso, K., 1996. Wisdom sits in places: notes on a Western Apache landscape, in *Senses of Place*, eds. S. Feld & K. Basso. Santa Fe (NM): School of American Research Press, 53–90.
- Battaglia, D., 1990. *On the Bones of the Serpent: Person, Memory and Mortality in Sabarl Society*. Chicago (IL): Chicago University Press.
- Boivin, N. & M.-A. Owoc (eds.), 2004. *Soils, Stones and Symbols: Cultural Perceptions of the Mineral World*. London: UCL Press.
- Britnell, W. & H. Savory, 1984. *Gwernvale and Penywyrlod: Two Neolithic Long Cairns in the Black Mountains of Brecknock*. (Cambrian Archaeological Monographs 2.) Bangor: Cambrian Archaeological Association.
- Brittain, M., 2004. Layers of life and death: aspects of monumentality in the early Bronze Age of Wales, in *The Neolithic of the Irish Sea: Materiality and Traditions of Practice*, eds. V. Cummings & C. Fowler. Oxford: Oxbow, 224–32.
- Brück, J., 1998. In the footsteps of the ancestors: a review of Tilley's *Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments*. *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 15(1), 23–36.
- Brück, J., 2001. Monuments, power and personhood in the British Neolithic. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 7, 649–67.
- Butler, J., 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. London: Routledge.

- Chesterman, J., 1977. Burial rites in a Cotswold-Severn long barrow. *Man* 12, 22–32.
- Childe, V.G., 1940. *Prehistoric Communities of the British Isles*. London: Chambers.
- Cummings, V., 2002. Experiencing texture and touch in the British Neolithic. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 21, 249–61.
- DeMarrais, E., C. Gosden & C. Renfrew, 2005. *Rethinking Materiality: the Engagement of Mind with the Material World*. (McDonald Institute Monographs.) Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.
- Descola, P., 1994. *In the Society of Nature: a Native Ecology in Amazonia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dobres, M.-A. & J. Robb (eds.), 2000. *Agency in Archaeology*. London: Routledge.
- Douglas, M. & S. Ney, 1998. *Missing Persons: a Critique of Personhood in the Social Sciences*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.
- Edmonds, M., 1993. Interpreting causewayed enclosures in the past and present, in *Interpretative Archaeology*, ed. C. Tilley. Oxford: Berg, 99–142.
- Edmonds, M., 1999. *Ancestral Geographies of the Neolithic*. London: Routledge.
- Evans, C., 1988. Acts of enclosure: a consideration of concentrically organised causewayed enclosures, in *The Archaeology of Context in the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age*, eds. J. Barrett & I. Kinnes. Sheffield: University of Sheffield, Department of Archaeology and Prehistory, 65–79.
- Forty, A. & S. Küchler (eds.), 1999. *The Art of Forgetting*. Oxford: Berg.
- Foucault, M., 1977. *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. London: Allen Lane.
- Foucault, M., 1979. *The History of Sexuality*, vol. I: *an Introduction*. Harmondsworth: Peregrine Books.
- Fowler, C., 2001. Personhood and social relations in the British Neolithic with a study from the Isle of Man. *Journal of Material Culture* 6(2), 137–63.
- Fowler, C., 2003. Rates of (ex)change: decay and growth, memory and the transformation of the dead in early Neolithic southern Britain, in *Archaeologies of Remembrance: Death and Memory in Past Societies*, ed. H. Williams. New York (NY): Kluwer Academic/Plenum Press, 45–63.
- Fowler, C., 2004. *The Archaeology of Personhood: an Anthropological Approach*. London: Routledge.
- Gadamer, H.-G., 1975. *Truth and Method*. London: Sheed and Ward.
- Gillings, M. & J. Pollard, 1999. Non-portable stone artefacts and contexts of meaning: the tale of Grey Whether. *World Archaeology* 31, 179–93.
- Gosden, C., 1999. *Anthropology and Archaeology: a Changing Relationship*. London: Routledge.
- Harding, J., 1998. An architecture of meaning: the causewayed enclosures and henges of lowland England, in *Understanding the Neolithic of North-western Europe*, eds. M. Edmonds & C. Richards. Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 204–30.
- Henshall, A., 1972. *The Chambered Tombs of Scotland*, vol. 2. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Hodder, I., 2000. Agency and individuals in long-term processes, in *Agency in Archaeology* eds. M.-A. Dobres & J. Robb. London: Routledge, 21–33.
- Hoskins, J., 1998. *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People's Lives*. London: Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (ed.), 2000a. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge.
- Ingold, T., 2000b. Making things, growing plants, raising animals and bringing up children, in *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, ed. T. Ingold. London: Routledge, 77–88.
- Jones, A., 2001. Drawn from memory: the aesthetics of archaeology and the archaeology of aesthetics in the Earlier Bronze Age and the present. *World Archaeology* 33, 334–56.
- Jones, A., 2005. Lives in fragments? Personhood and the European Neolithic. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 5(2), 193–224.
- Karlsson, H., 1998. *Re-thinking Archaeology*. (GOTARC Series B, Gothenburgh Archaeological Theses 8.) Göteborg: University of Göteborg.
- Kirk, T., 2000. Ritual process and social practice: monuments and the dead in Neolithic Normandy', in *Neolithic Orkney in its European Context*, ed. A. Ritchie. (McDonald Institute Monographs.) Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 223–31.
- Levitan, B., 1990. The non-human vertebrate remains, in *Hazleton North: the Excavation of a Neolithic Long Cairn of the Cotswold-Severn Group*, ed. A. Saville. (English Heritage Archaeological Report 13.) London: English Heritage, 199–213.
- LiPuma, E., 1998. Modernity and forms of personhood in Melanesia, in *Bodies and Persons: Comparative Views from Africa and Melanesia*, eds. M. Lambek & A. Strathern. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 53–79.
- Mackenzie, I. & M. Shanks, 1994. Archaeology: theories, themes and experience, in *Archaeological Theory: Progress or Posture?*, ed. I. Mackenzie. Aldershot: Avebury, 19–40.
- Macphail, R., 1990. The soils, in *Hazleton North: the Excavation of a Neolithic Long Cairn of the Cotswold-Severn Group*, by A. Saville. (English Heritage Archaeological Report 13.) London: English Heritage, 223–6.
- Marriott, M., 1976. Hindu transactions: diversity without dualism, in *Transaction and Meaning*, ed. B. Kapferer. (ASA Essays in Anthropology.) Philadelphia (PA): ISHI Publications.
- Mercer, R. (ed.), 1981. *Farming Practice in British Prehistory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Meskill, L., 1999. *Archaeologies of Social Life*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Owoc, M.-A., 2002. Munselling the mound: the use of soil colour as metaphor in British Bronze Age funerary ritual, in *Colouring the Past*, eds. A. Jones & G. MacGregor. Oxford: Berg, 127–40.
- Pálsson, G., 1996. Human–environmental relations: orientalism, paternalism and communalism, in *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*, eds. P. Descola &

- G. Pálsson. London, Routledge, 64–81.
- Patrik, L., 1985. Is there an archaeological record? *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 8, 27–62.
- Piggott, S., 1954. *The Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Piggott, S., 1962. *The West Kennet Long Barrow Excavations, 1955–1956*. London: HMSO.
- Renfrew, C., 1973. Monuments, mobilisation and social organisation in Neolithic Wessex, in *The Explanation of Culture Change: Models in Prehistory*, ed. C. Renfrew. London: Duckworth, 539–58.
- Saville, A., 1990. *Hazleton North: the Excavation of a Neolithic Long Cairn of the Cotswold-Severn Group*. (English Heritage Archaeological Report 13.) London: English Heritage.
- Scaife, R., 1990. Pollen analysis, in *Hazleton North: the Excavation of a Neolithic Long Cairn of the Cotswold-Severn Group*, by A. Saville. (English Heritage Archaeological Report 13.) London: English Heritage, 218–19.
- Shanks M. & C. Tilley, 1987a. *Re-Constructing Archaeology. Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shanks, M. & C. Tilley, 1987b. *Social Theory and Archaeology*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Smith, I., 1971. Causewayed enclosures, in *Economy and Settlement in Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Britain and Europe*, ed. D. Simpson. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 89–112.
- Smith, I. & T. Darvill, 1990. The prehistoric pottery, in *Hazleton North: the Excavation of a Neolithic Long Cairn of the Cotswold-Severn Group*, by A. Saville. (English Heritage Archaeological Report 13.) London: English Heritage, 141–52.
- Straker, V., 1990. Carbonised plant macrofossils, in *Hazleton North: the Excavation of a Neolithic Long Cairn of the Cotswold-Severn Group*, by A. Saville. (English Heritage Archaeological Report 13.) London: English Heritage, 214–18.
- Strathern, M., 1988. *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.
- Thomas, J., 1991. *Rethinking the Neolithic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomas, J., 1996. *Time, Culture and Identity: an Interpretive Archaeology*. London: Routledge.
- Thomas, J., 1999. An economy of substances in earlier Neolithic Britain, in *Material Symbols: Culture and Economy in Prehistory*, ed. J. Robb. Carbondale (IL): Southern Illinois University Press, 70–89.
- Thomas, J., 2004. *Archaeology and Modernity*. London: Routledge.
- Thorpe, I., 1984. Ritual, power and ideology: a reconstruction of earlier Neolithic rituals in Wessex, in *Neolithic Studies: a Review of Some Current Research*, eds. R. Bradley & J. Gardiner. (British Archaeological Reports, British Series 133.) Oxford: BAR, 41–60.
- Weber, M., 1930. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Unwin.
- Whittle, A., 2003. *The Archaeology of People: Dimensions of Neolithic Life*. London: Routledge.
- Williams, H. (ed.), 2003. *Archaeologies of Remembrance: Death and Memory in Past Societies*. New York (NY): Kluwer Academic/ Plenum Press.

Author biography

Trevor Kirk is Senior Lecturer in Archaeology at Trinity College Carmarthen/University of Wales, Lampeter. His main research interests are monumentality and society in Neolithic Britain and northern France. His recent publications have centred on themes of dwelling, building, materiality and personhood.

