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THE LONG BARROW IN WESTERN EUROPE

BY

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It was John Aubrey, in his *Monumenta Britannica*, who first distinguished between circular and oblong barrows, and his classification formed the basis of the accounts of British barrows given by Edmund Gibson in his edition of William Camden’s *Britannia*, and by William Stukeley in his *Stonehenge* and *Abury*. These early accounts were elaborated by R. Colt Hoare and J. Thurnam, and it is the latter’s work, summarized in his great paper ‘On Ancient British Barrows, especially those of Wiltshire and the adjoining counties’, ² and published in *Archaeologia* in 1869 and 1870 that must form the starting-point of all subsequent work on barrows. Thurnam stated clearly once for all the distinction between round and long barrows which is now a commonplace of European archaeology, and which represents real archaeological differences, despite Llewellyn Jewitt’s assertion that the form of long barrows is the result, not ‘of original design, but of accident, through additional interments’, ³ and C. Daryll Forde’s insistence on ‘the marked instability of barrow form associated with collective tombs’. ⁴

As far as any forms of man’s material culture can be described as functional, the round barrow appears a functional form; that is to say, it is related to the circular form which any pile of earth or stones naturally assumes, but, at first sight, there seems no obvious functional reason for the shape of the long barrow. Yet there can be little doubt that the elongated form was one of deliberate design. Some of the long barrows in Caithness are 240 ft. in length and contain some 135,000 cu. ft. or 8,000 tons of stone—‘enough’, writes V. Gordon Childe, ‘to build five parish churches’; ⁵ while some of the south English long barrows are even bigger, West Kennet being 340 ft. in length by 75 ft. in breadth and East Kennet 350 ft. by 100 ft. While we marvel at the labour involved in the construction of these huge funeral monuments, we must surely concede that their form was planned and purposeful, and of

¹ My thanks are due to M. Louis Balsan of Rodez for placing at my disposal the results of his field survey of Aveyron megaliths, to Dr Savory for information about some south French sites, and to Professor Stuart Piggott for helpful criticism in the preparation of this paper.

² *Archaeologia*, xliv (1) and xlvi (2).


⁵ *Progress and Archaeology*, p. 91.

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special significance to the people who constructed them in the early years of the second millennium B.C. Indeed, as shown by the V-shaped cutting in the soil discovered by Mrs E. M. Clifford at Notgrove and Nympsfield, and the small triangular marking stones found by Grimes at Ty-Isaf, the plan of these long barrows was carefully laid out on the ground before building began.

Long barrows—and the term is here used for any elongated funerary mound whether it be built of earth or stones—occur in five areas in prehistoric Europe and the Mediterranean, namely Egypt, the west Mediterranean islands, France, the British Isles, and the north German–Scandinavian Megalithic area. Whatever views we may hold regarding the origin of the mastaba, and its relation, if any, with the European long barrows, we cannot deny that it is, formally, a long barrow—a fact sometimes forgotten in studying the excavational reports and section drawings of mastabas, but brought out very clearly in any vertical air photograph of mastaba cemeteries.

The existence of the long barrow in the Scandinavian–north German Megalithic province has been well known since J. J. A. Worsaae divided his Stenodysser class of Megalithic monuments into Langedysser and Runddysser,¹ a classification adopted by A. P. Madsen.² We are not concerned here with the north European long barrow, a problem involving the whole vexed question of the north European megaliths, but we must note that there appear to be two types: (1) the long barrow incorporating more than one passage grave side by side, and (2) the long barrow containing a short or long closed rectangular chamber; and that type (1) is almost always a parallel-sided structure with the passage graves opening into one of the long sides, while type (2) is usually rectangular in form but occasionally wedge-shaped. Even in the wedge-shaped barrows the chamber is not placed terminally nor are there any forecourts or other formal features at the broader of the two narrow ends; as far as available published plans go, the ovate long barrow typical of western Europe does not occur in south Scandinavia and north Germany. Type (1) might perhaps be regarded as a long barrow by accretion similar to the Breton barrows to be discussed below. Type (2), while possibly connected with the west European long barrows, is more probably to be connected with the unchambered long barrows of northern Europe—the flat earth graves that occur in northern Germany, at Jordansmühl,³ among the Kujavian


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graves of Poland,1 and in Denmark and Slesvig-Holstein with typical ‘dolmen’ or rather ‘dolmenzeit’ (i.e. Montelius Period II) grave goods such as thin-butted axes, collared flasks, funnel-necked beakers, and amphorae.2

This is only a suggestion about the origin of the north European long barrows: our concern here is with the long barrow in western Europe where, in the British Isles, France and the west Mediterranean islands, we do not find forms like type (2) in northern Europe. With a few exceptions the chambered long barrow in western Europe has three characteristics: (i) it is ovate or shaped like a truncated wedge, (ii) the broader of the two narrow ends is the ‘business’ end of the barrow where the chamber is placed (or some formal feature such as a forecourt or dummy entrance when the chamber is elsewhere in the barrow), and (iii) the chamber is generally open and rectangular in form, being either a rectangular dolmen or a gallery grave. The two main exceptions are some of the long barrows of Brittany and northern Scotland, where parallel-sided long barrows comparable with the northern type (1) occur, and, in both cases, as we shall see, these are probably to be connected with developments of Passage Grave funerary architecture in the same way as are the north European long barrows by accretion.

In the west Mediterranean islands the navetas of the Balearics and the tombe di giganti of Sardinia are long barrows. The navetas of Es Tudons and Rafael Rubi no. 1, figured by W. J. Hemp,3 are heel-shaped or boat-shaped barrows 50 ft. in length by 25–30 ft. in width, with a straight façade on to which the gallery grave opens. The Sardinian Giants’ Graves are best known through plans of some of their horned examples, but, as the present writer has pointed out elsewhere,4 there are three types of long barrow among the Sardinian Giants’ Graves—type I, such as s’Enna sa Vacca and su Coveccu, which are heel-shaped barrows very like the navetas of Es Tudons and Rafael Rubi no. 1; type II, such as Paulillatino South (Goronna) and Corogianus (Coloru) with curved or V-shaped forecourts; and type III—that most frequently figured—such as Srighidanu, Muruguada, and Sella Fontana Binu, with well-developed semicircular forecourts and pronounced horns. Whatever views we may hold about the relative chronology of these types, and their place in any typological sequence, we cannot deny their objective existence.

1 Childe, op. cit. p. 184.
2 J. Brøndsted describes the Danish Jordgraven in his Danmarks Oldtid, 1 (1938), 162–6.
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In addition to these navetas and Giants’ Graves, attention is drawn to the unmistakable traces of a long barrow noted by Hemp over the rock-cut tomb of son Caulellas 14 in Majorca, and to the distinctly long barrow appearance of many of the Maltese Megalithic monuments such as Mnajdra, the gigantei of Gozo, and the Hal Tarxien monuments. Indeed, the south-westerly of the four Megalithic monuments of Hal Tarxien—that known as Temple 3—is most remarkably like a heel-shaped long barrow with semicircular forecourt and horns, while the most easterly monument, the so-called ‘Bronze Age Temple’, is, superficially, very like a transepted gallery grave with shallow forecourt in an ovate barrow, and would cause no surprise if planned as a monument from the Cotswolds or the Pays de Retz. The Maltese Megalithic monuments are now generally accepted as temples, and we are not suggesting here that they are really transepted gallery graves, but it is impossible not to see in features such as the semicircular forecourts, horns, transepts, elongated mounds, portholes, and the deliberate use of megaliths, just as strong influences from the west Mediterranean on early Maltese culture as the east Mediterranean or even north Syrian influences shown by the spirals, friezes, steatopygous earth-mother goddesses, conical-necked jars, tunnel handles, pedestalled bowls, and stone phalli.

In France there are both chambered and unchambered long barrows. The term unchambered long barrow is here used for a long barrow which at present has no trace of a stone burial chamber and which we have no reason to believe ever contained one. At present the unchambered long barrow in France is known only from Brittany where the sites of Manio 1, Manio 2, Manio 3, Manio 5, Mané-Poëchat-en-Yieu, Mané-Clud-er-Yer, Mané-Tyec and Kerlescant have been published by Miln, le Rouziec, and Piggott, who also refers to the unchambered long barrow on La Grée de Cojou, St Just, Ille-et-Vilaine.

The chambered long barrow is widespread in south and north France. Hemp has published a long barrow in Provence and drawn attention to

1 Archaeologia, LXXVI, 140. The El Rafel navetas figured by Hemp (Antiq. J. (1933), p. 40) also appear to cover subterranean chambers.
2 For a good recent plan of the Hal Tarxien monuments, see Antiquity (1942), p. 23.
3 On the external relations of the Maltese Megalithic culture, see Hawkes, Prehistoric Foundations of Europe, pp. 153-4; and Ward Perkins, Antiquity (1942), p. 28.
7 Planned by Lukis and Dryden. Plan in the Lukis MSS., Lukis and Island Museum, Guernsey.
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other long barrows in Var and in the west of the Alpes-Maritimes described by Goby.\(^1\) De Mortillet published the plan of a long barrow at Chenegève (Balsièges) in the Lozère,\(^2\) and Dr Savory has drawn my attention to another long barrow, the Tumulus de la Pegoulière, in Bouches du Rhône.\(^3\)

Although the south of France is so rich in burial chambers, modern systematic field surveys of these monuments are lacking, except in the Aveyron, where the work of Pierre Temple, and, more recently, that of Louis Balsan, has given us detailed knowledge of the chambers and barrows in that department which itself has over 350 Megalithic tombs—more than are now known to exist in the whole of England and Wales. It is interesting that in this one department of southern France, whose megaliths are now becoming reasonably well known to us, the long barrow is a well-attested and frequent antiquity. The present writer has elsewhere drawn attention to eight chambered long barrows in the Aveyron, namely the sites of Bennac, St Antonin, Vayssettes, Vitarelle III, Lissalinie I, Sannes, Bourines, and Capdenague.\(^4\) We publish here plans of some of these long barrows (Fig. 1).\(^5\) Balsan’s recent field work during the war enables us to add a further six sites, namely Grioudas III, Bozouls (22 m. by 8/9 m.); Gages, Montrozier (15 m. by 6/7 m.); Cadayrac, Salles-la-Source (19 m. by 11 m.); Caramel I, Salles-la-Source (10 m. by 6 m.); Puechamp II, Sébazac-Concourès (16 m. by 7/8 m.); and Labro I, St George-de-Luzençon (14 m. by 6 m.).\(^6\) All these six newly described long barrows are chambered; five of the six are orientated east-west with chambers at the east end, and two of the chambers (Caramel I and Labro I) are gallery graves 16 ft. in length.

In northern France chambered long barrows occur in Poitou, Anjou, Touraine, Brittany and the Paris Basin. In Poitou there are two long barrows at Le Maupas (St Martin), 15 miles E.S.E. of Poitiers, one of which measures 30 m. long by 10 m. wide, and three at Bougon (Deux Sèvres) some 20 miles east of Niort, one of which was 80 m. by 20, while on the Île d’Yeu off the

\(^3\) V. Cotte, *Documents sur la Préhistoire de Provence*, p. 87.
\(^5\) The plans are by M. Balsan by whose courtesy they are reproduced here.
\(^6\) *Fouilles Archéologiques* (1939–40), pp. 41–3. (Published at Rodez as extracts from the *Procès-Verbaux de la Société des Lettres, Sciences, et Arts de l’Aveyron.*) In a letter dated 28 May 1946, M. Balsan describes eleven more chambered long barrows in Aveyron as follows: Maymac III, Dolmen de la Baume, Cazejoure, Combecrose, Labro II, Combuejouls, Mas Mignon II, Montalies, Caramel II, Vitarelle IV, and Puechamp IV.
Fig. 1. Ground plans of six long barrows in Aveyron, France.

I. Dolmen sous tumulus de Vaysettes (commune Montrozier, Aveyron).
II. Dolmen sous tumulus No. III de la Vitarelle (commune de Muret, Aveyron).
III. Dolmen sous tumulus No. I de Lissalinie (commune de Valady, Aveyron).
IV. Dolmen sous tumulus No. I des Horts (commune d'Aguessac, Aveyron).
V. Dolmen sous tumulus de Sannes (commune de Salles-la-Source, Aveyron).
VI. Dolmen des Bourines (commune de Bertholène, Aveyron).
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west coast, is the site of Les Tabernaudes, closely resembling the Sardinian Giants’ Graves of type I.¹

Among the many Breton chambered long barrows we may distinguish three types: (1) those such as Keriaval, Mané Kerioned and Rondossec which are like type I in northern Europe and contain several passage graves set side by side and opening on to one of the long sides of the barrow; (2) the extremely large long barrows such as Le Moustoir and St Michel which contain closed chambers and are dated by Le Rouzic to the Bronze Age;² and (3) the ovate barrow with a gallery grave. This third class is the most common in Brittany; the gallery grave may be untranssepted as at Er-Bé, or transepted such as Grah Nioi, Herbignac, Klud-er-Yer and Er Ro’h, Keriaval. In a few sites, such as Kerlescant, the gallery grave is closed and set in a parallel-sided barrow, and there are two examples (Mané Lud and Penhapp), of passage graves set at the end of long barrows.

In the Loire valley are many gallery graves similar to those covered by long barrows in Brittany and south France, and some of these Anjou and Touraine sites (e.g. Mettray) are set in ovate long barrows. In the Paris Basin the gallery graves are usually sunk in the ground and the capstones laid level with the ground, but in a few tombs there are clear traces of long barrows. The gallery grave of Le Couperon and the southern monument at Ville-ès-Nouaux in Jersey—both outliers of the Paris Basin–north French gallery graves—are set in long barrows.³ These north French galleries extend into Westphalia and Hesse-Cassel where they are covered with low long barrows, and are probably the ancestors of the south-west Swedish ‘long stone cists’ such as Skogsbo and Karleby.⁴

The long barrows of the British Isles have for long been better known to European archaeologists than those of France and the west Mediterranean, owing to the early descriptions of Thurnam, Rolleston, Greenwell, Bryce, and Anderson and the more recent work of Crawford in southern England and

¹ For the Le Maupas sites, see Tartarin, L’Age de la Pierre Polie à St Martin la Rivière (Vienne), 1885; for Bougon, Mémoires de la Société de Statistique des Deux-Sèvres, iv (1839–40), 139 ff.; v (1840–1), 55 ff.; vi (1844–5), 97 ff. I am indebted to Dr Savory for these two references.
² The Tabernaudes sites are described in Proc. Prehist. Soc. (1941), p. 29.
³ L’Anthropologie (1933), p. 251.
⁴ For plans, see J. Hawkes, The Archaeology of the Channel Islands, ii (The Bailiwick of Jersey), 94, 254–62.
⁵ Accounts of the south Swedish galleries do not describe any traces of long barrows, but it is possible that some of the galleries are covered with barrows and if so, this is a third type of north European long barrow and one certainly derived from the west.
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Estyn Evans and Oliver Davies in northern Ireland. We may distinguish five groups among the British long barrows:

1. The Medway Group, consisting of a few sites such as Coldrum, Addington, and Kit’s Coty House in the Medway valley of Kent. These sites are rectangular barrows surrounding rectangular chambers.

2. The Severn–Cotswold Group in south-east Wales, Gloucestershire, north Wiltshire, west Oxfordshire and north-east Somerset. These sites may, following Thornham and Crawford, be divided into two types: the terminally chambered sites agreed by most writers on these matters to be earlier than the laterally chambered types. The chambers in the terminally chambered long barrows consist of gallery graves such as Heston Brake, transepted gallery graves such as Parc le Breos Gwm, Notgrove and Hetty Pegler’s Tump; and rectangular dolmens such as Tinkinswood, Manton Down and Randwick.

3. The Clyde–Carlingford Group in south-west Scotland and northern Ireland with outliers in southern and eastern Ireland, the Isle of Man, the Peak district, north-west Wales, south-west Wales, and south-west Britain. Excluding the laterally chambered sites such as Capel Garmon, Tyddyn Bleiddyn, and Aachoish, and the so-called ‘lobster-claw derivatives’, we may distinguish three common types: a long barrow without horns and forecourt, containing a plain gallery grave (e.g. Dunteige–Moylisha–Curramoney); a long barrow with horns and forecourt and gallery grave (e.g. Brownod–East Bennan); and the long barrow with no horns or forecourt and a simple rectangular chamber (e.g. Kilfeagahan). The distribution of Clyde–Carlingford sites in England and Wales is plotted on the map (Fig. 2).

4. The north Scottish group forming part of Child’s Pentland Megalithic culture. Here there are three types of long barrow: the familiar ‘horned cairn’ of Caithness and Sutherland, with a few examples in the Hebrides and two in Orkney; the remarkable parallel-sided long barrows such as that on the Holm of Papa Westray in Orkney; and the ‘stalled chambered cairns’ (as Callender has called them) of Orkney such as Midhowe, Blackhammer, and the Knowe of Yarso.¹

5. The unchambered long barrows occurring in two main groups in England: the south English group in Dorset, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Sussex, and Gloucestershire with a few sites in Berkshire and Somerset, but concentrated

¹ The so-called heel-shaped cairns of Shetland, recently described by Bryce (Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland, lxxiv, 23 ff.), can hardly be described as long barrows. Like the Caithness ‘short-long’ horned barrows such as Garrywhin they seem to include elements from both long barrow-gallery grave and round barrow-passage grave traditions.