Interpreting People Interpreting Things: A Heideggerian Approach to 'Experimental Reconstruction'

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This paper represents some preliminary thoughts on what one area of experimental archaeology might begin to look like if approached through the early philosophy of Martin Heidegger. The broader remit of this research seeks to re-draw experimental archaeology as a practice that is understood for its 'interpretative' character rather than as narrowly 'scientific' as conventionally portrayed. The specific subject of this paper is a development of Heidegger's notion of 'skilled coping' and the relationship between people and things in the context of the physical reconstruction of the later prehistoric roundhouse in Britain. In this paper I will argue that understandings of the reconstruction and construction of the later prehistoric roundhouse may be significantly enhanced by examining them in relation to a series of phenomena interpreted from the early work of Martin Heidegger. This perspective is intended to re-conceptualise the way in which reconstruction as an exercise is theorised by centring such projects on their human element. It gives practitioners a range of phenomena to consider or include in their research aims and projects that are other to the normal considerations of technology, material constraints, etc. In so doing it will be possible to counter some of the failings of experimental archaeology. This approach is seen as an augmentation to current theory and practice. It aims to make a broader contribution to the theory, practice and role of other 'field-based' or replicative experiments and to understandings of a human element that has been largely unexplored within experimental archaeology.

Introduction

This paper presents an experiment in archaeology. Unlike other archaeological experiments, which are concerned with materials, processes and technologies, this is an experiment in theory. The discussion presented below revolves around four main points: 1. that the actions of those involved in the reconstruction of the later prehistoric roundhouse (indeed of any so-called 'reconstruction' project) are a tacitly interpretative element of any such project, 2. that there are a number of key relationships involving individuals, others, things, and their worlds that are foundational to both reconstruction projects and 'original' construction in the past, 3. that these relationships will differ in their specific manifestations in past and present and 4. that they may be accountable for in terms of a series of phenomena that can be observed in the process of reconstruction and, in light of this, considered for interpreting past architectural construction.

The above points explore the qualitative elements of the reconstruction process. These are as much a part of the building of a roundhouse as the quantitative materials and technologies that are the focus of current approaches. I will argue that they must not be overlooked if a fuller account of the complex phenomena of roundhouse construction and reconstruction is to be created, an account more in line with recent developments in archaeological thinking. The following discussion will consider how this qualitative aspect to the reconstruction exercise is identifiable and can be demonstrated to be relevant to understanding the distinctly archaeological activity of experimental reconstruction.

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Two Traditions of Research

Construction and reconstruction are re-formulated in this approach as relation-forming interpretative exercises. This position is one that is not currently considered within the sub-discipline of experimental archaeology, and thus represents a radical departure from its normal practice and normal conceptualisation. It means that building is considered to be primarily and for the most part about interpretation and negotiation of relations between people and things; the reconstruction or 'original' construction is therefore, while not incidental, a secondary phenomenon. It also means that experimental archaeology is not an inherently scientific exercise and does not consist primarily in neutral, de-personalised deduction. Thus, two very different traditions of research are brought together: Heideggerian scholarship and experimental archaeology.

Heideggerian Archaeologies

Heideggerian archaeologies have increased in popularity from the mid-1990s, particularly in studies of prehistory. Although there are earlier uses made of Heidegger's philosophy, for example Williams' (1986) attempt at pottery classification for the royal cemetery at Qusto (Nubia), Chris Gosden's (1994) *Social Being and Time* was the first to explicitly introduce the core concepts of Heidegger's early philosophy into archaeology. Other than Gosden's work the best-known Heideggerian approach in archaeology is Julian Thomas' (1996) *Time, Culture and Identity.* As well as these key publications, there are several other volumes and papers that are either centred on, or treat in some way, aspects of Heidegger's thought (e.g. Edmonds 1997; Gardner 2001; González-Ruibal 2002; Ingold 1993, 1995; Karlsson 1998, 2000; Turner 2001). The most common issues that the various Heideggerian archaeologies address are questions of technology, the situatedness of human experience, the concept of dwelling, historicity, the task of thinking, and time.

Most of these archaeological treatments of Heidegger's philosophy are drawn from his early work, particularly from *Being and Time* (1962). This work is widely acknowledged to be his most significant contribution to philosophy, and of all his work has had the greatest impact on other disciplines such as theology and sociology. Heidegger's later philosophy has proved less influential and its ideas less durable. It becomes increasingly cryptic and poetic, and as his style changes so does his focus – away from the question of Being that dominates *Being and Time* (although it is not entirely abandoned), towards thinking and language, a shift that is known as 'the Turn' (*die Kehre*).

Despite the difficulties of Heidegger's later writings, they are helpful in ironing out some of the knots and inconsistencies in *Being and Time,* itself a notoriously difficult work. The project of *Being and Time* is essentially unfinished, however, some of its central themes can be identified in his later papers (e.g. Heidegger 1975, 1977) and lecture notes, most of which are now publicly available (Heidegger 1927-1988) although not all have been translated into English. Some 'Heideggerian archaeologists', such as Håkan Karlsson (1998, 2000), would argue that this later work is important and useful in its own right, and a balance between the influences of the earlier and the later Heidegger in archaeology is beginning to be achieved (e.g. González-Ruibal 2002).

The work presented here draws most heavily on the early Heidegger. It is in this work that a framework for interpreting the nature of relations between people and things may be discerned. These relations are presented here to the exclusion of two other major themes of Heidegger's early work: first, the relations between people, and second, time. These elements are not excluded because they are irrelevant (indeed they are being pursued as part of a broader project of which this paper represents a small part), but because experimental archaeology has long sought the separation of the subject and the object. I wish to suggest that experiments in archaeology may be made more critical, thorough and interesting if this project of separation is abandoned in favour of careful consideration of their mutual constitution. Of particular interest in this regard are ideas about how being involved in tasks or roles is the primary way that people interpret and negotiate their place in the worlds that they create.

Although very different in perspective and apparently utterly incompatible, Heidegger's early philosophy and experimental archaeology share a common concern with tools, technologies and other kinds of 'objects' or 'things', and the parts that they play in shaping the roles in which people are engaged in the worlds that they inhabit. Whereas experimental approaches take the objects as the primary entities, a Heideggerian approach is concerned first and foremost with the situated human actor and the relation-forming character of the construction and reconstruction exercises.

Roundhouse Reconstruction

The reconstruction of later prehistoric roundhouses has been popular in Britain since they were first recognised in excavation in the 1930s. The first reference to both early and late Iron Age reconstructions is from 1939 at "Abbey Falls Folk Park", New Barnet, Hertfordshire (Percival-Westell and Harvey 1939). The earliest reference to the reconstruction of a Bronze Age house is of a film made by the then Ministry of Education in 1953 entitled *How to Build a Bronze Age House*. These and other early reconstructions (see e.g. Hawkes 1946) were built principally to give the general public an idea of what prehistoric dwellings might have looked like, and in a post-war climate, very probably to foster a sense of continuity and social stability.

With the definition and development of the sub-discipline of experimental archaeology in the 1970s and early 1980s under Anglo-American archaeology's drive to be more 'scientific' and its theory to be more explicitly grounded in empirical observation, roundhouse reconstruction enjoyed a resurgence in popularity in Britain. Spearheaded by the late Peter Reynolds (e.g. Harding *et al.* 1993; Stokes 1972) these projects were to be transparently experimental on the model of the methodologies of the 'hard' sciences. Experimental reconstructions were designed to test hypotheses based on observations made of the excavated ground plans of specific examples, or to answer definitively long-standing conjecture about the mechanics of the structures in terms of engineering principles and materials constraints (Drury 1982).

In recent years in Britain, roundhouse reconstruction has seen another boom associated with heritage tourism (Piccini 1999; Smith 2000; Stone and Planel 1999), fulfilling a role very similar to the early attempts of the 1930s and 40s. Complementing this more interpretative (less scientific?) approach to the roundhouse is a prolifera-

tion of 'living history' style projects. These have their roots in Denmark in the 1960s (Hansen 1974, 1977; Rasmussen and Grønnow 1999) but have not been particularly popular in the UK until the last 10 years or so, despite the BBC's *Living in the Past* series of 1970-71 (Percival 1980). 'Living history' has become a regular aspect of education and tourism remits of "construction sites" (Stone and Planel 1999) such as Castell Henllys, Pembrokeshire and the Peat Moors Visitor Centre, Somerset and Avon. This 'experiential' focus was taken further in 2000 with the *Surviving the Iron Age* television series filmed by the BBC at Castell Henllys (Firstbrook 2001). Both Castell Henllys and Peat Moors Visitor Centre have further capitalised on this phenomenon by advertising a link with the series, despite its questionable success.

Classes of 'Data'

Experimental archaeologists worry a lot about 'data'. I will continue to use the term for the sake of expediency, but I consider 'data' as it is conventionally perceived to be a very problematic way of coming to terms with any kind of phenomena, particularly in the context of a 'Heideggerian archaeology'. If, however, 'data' means something like 'phenomena that are available to understanding', then a Heideggerian account of the reconstruction exercise draws on two different forms of such 'data'. These are not only the more familiar quantitative data such as the materials, dimensions and technologies involved in the building of a roundhouse, but also a hitherto unexplored qualitative form of 'data' that concern the sorts of relations that exist between individuals, others, things (e.g. tools) and the worlds of which they are a part (e.g. the worlds of the carpenter or the archaeologist). This second variety of information is the focus of this paper. Each of these different types of 'data' can be isolated and looked at independently because interpreting each is a methodologically distinct operation. This separability is demonstrated by the quantitative focus of past and current experimental practice. The production of the fullest possible account of the reconstruction exercise, however, demands their integration, which is also demanded by any project that is in any sense 'Heideggerian'. This is because a central theme of Heidegger's project is that the separation of 'things' and their qualities from their entanglement within the worlds of the people that engage with them, while both possible and common, allows only for an impoverished account of them. Such impoverished accounts are a major source of criticism of experimental practice and of accounts of past technologies so generated (Lucas 2001: 179).

The Quantitative Roundhouse

The quantitative element of a Heideggerian account of reconstruction is the roundhouse itself with all its physical properties. As a result of the differing 'experiential' or 'experimental' approaches to the reconstruction of the later prehistoric roundhouse, the buildings themselves tend to be of two types. The most common are representational (i.e. with little concern for the techniques or technologies used to achieve the final image), such as an example from Archaeolink in Aberdeenshire (Fig. 1), based on ground plans from the nearby site of Bellmuir, Methlick. The remainder are experimental, a class of project that is specifically concerned with technologies, materials, etc. The most famous and influential of the latter is the reconstruction of the Pimperne house (Fig. 2) at Butser Ancient Farm's old 'demonstration

Figure 1. The 'Bronze Age Smithy', Archaeolink, Aberdeenshire, based on examples from Bellmuir, Methlick.

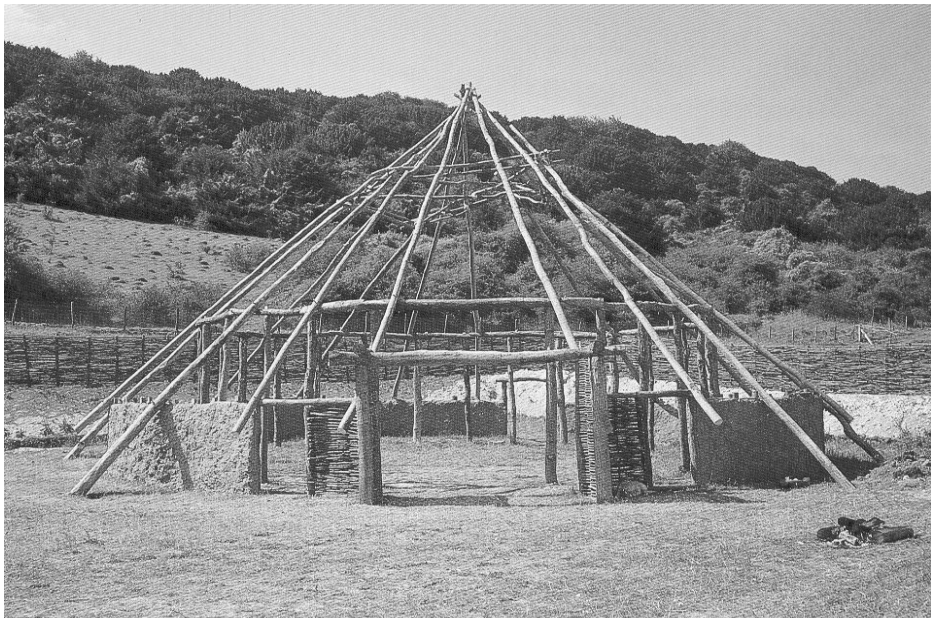

Figure 2. The Pimperne House under construction, Butser Ancient Farm, Hampshire (from Harding *et al.* 1993). Courtesy of Christine Shaw, Butser Ancient Farm.

area' at the Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Hampshire (Harding *et al.* 1993; Reynolds 1982, 1989), demolished in 1990.

Reconstructed roundhouses differ not only in terms of approach, i.e. representational or experimental, but also in form; they may be constructed of a single ring of timber posts, a double ring of posts, or of stone. They may be thatched with long straw, reed, heather or turf, and they may have porches or they may not. As quantitative data these differences of type give a range of physical objects with properties that can be measured or otherwise quantified. They are entities with which people engage during building.

Qualitative Phenomena

The qualitative data of such a project consist of a number of distinct but interrelated phenomena. These are interpretations of some of the key concepts from Heidegger's early philosophy, drawn from *Being and Time*. Heidegger's early philosophy, particularly *Being and Time,* is concerned with describing and arguing for the existence of certain 'equiprimordial' (equally foundational) structures of the Being of entities and of the world (Heidegger 1962: 226). These are expressed as ontological phenomena that structure the relation-forming character of the encounter between all kinds of entities. These phenomena can be seen in the actions that take place in the construction of a roundhouse.

In order to look at how these phenomena may be identified through such actions, this paper will use images as a means of illustration. However, this use of still images presents a problem, and shows the limitations of the medium of the paper journal or report for this kind of discussion. Actions and events are not equivalent phenomena. The still image presents an event and not an action, which has to be implied and itself interpreted from the displayed event. There is no viable way, given the format of the conventional academic paper, that the combination of video footage and interviews may be incorporated in such a way that would solve the problem of effectively illustrating the phenomena with which this paper is concerned.

Two Kinds of Entities

Two types of entities that have these structured encounters are of particular interest in considering reconstruction: *Dasein* and Equipment. Dasein describes the way of Being, or the basic ontological condition of people. It has a number of characteristics such as: Being-in, Being-with, Being-amidst, Thrown, Projecting, Absorbed, Disclosed, Fallen and Interpreting, etc. (Table 1, column 1). Dasein's spatiality is not that of a physical object, so concepts such as nearness and farness (Table 1, column 5) are expressed in terms of concern (Table 1, column 4).

There are two kinds of entities that Dasein encounters in the world. One is other Daseins, entities like itself that are encountered in particular ways (Table 1, column 2). The other is those entities that are not like itself such as tools, buildings, landscapes, stone or wood. Heidegger argues that the latter have the character of Equipment (Heidegger 1962: 96), i.e. that they are not simply neutral things but have some reference or assignment to various tasks or roles; they are always Something-in-order-to (Table 1, column 3). Equipment is therefore Heidegger's way of describing

what would normally be called 'things' (Heidegger 1962: 96), not as independently existing objects but rather as entities that are always already in some way connected or involved in a 'world'. Dasein exists as always already 'amidst' Equipment, i.e. it is surrounded by and co-existent with various entities that are inextricably involved with it.

*Dasein	*Worldhood	In-order-to	Care	Spatiality
Being-there	*Readiness-to-hand	Whereof	Existence	Directing
Being-in	*Un-readiness-to-hand • Conspicuousness • Obstinacy • Obtrusiveness	With-which	Facticity	De-distancing/ un-distancing
Being-with	*Presence-at-hand	In-which	Fallenness	
Being-amidst	Pure-presence-at-hand	For-which	About-which	
Being-towards	*Equipment	Towards-which	Solicitude	
Thrown	Equipmental totality	For-the-sake-of-which	Concern	
Projecting	Being-already			
Absorbed	Others			
Disclosed	The 'They'			* Indicates those concepts discussed in this paper
Interpreting				
Authenticity				

Table 1. The Heideggerian phenomena of relevance to a quantitative experimental archaeology.

Equipment is not a term that is usually used to refer to how one Dasein encounters another because Dasein (meaning Being-there) is a situation or condition rather than a property, but many of the properties of human beings such as their corporeality can be encountered as equipmental to some Daseins. Archaeologists, for example, regularly treat the physical remains of the human body in this way: as objects for analysis, knowledge production and career development.

Dasein and Equipment, as ontological phenomena, are not empirically observable in themselves but through the range of phenomena that characterise their encounters with one another. They better account for the character of human and non-human entities than the more familiar subject/object distinction which, if adhered to, would not allow an alternative perspective on the reconstruction exercise.

Ontological Phenomena

Heidegger identifies over one hundred ontological phenomena that are related to the ways of Being of Dasein and of Equipment. Among these I have identified 34 key phenomena (Table 1) drawn from Division I of *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962), which I interpret to be of relevance to a reconsideration of the practices of roundhouse construction and reconstruction (indeed of experimental archaeology more broadly) on the basis that they are observable in reconstruction practice, and that they can be used as tools to understand the human element of a complex activity such as building.

These 34 phenomena form a manageable corpus of phenomenological 'data' that can be examined in relation to the quantitative data and extracted from empirically derived research materials. Although they are not self-explanatory, they are far from impenetrable and all can be observed in the reconstruction of a later prehistoric roundhouse. In taking this position I am aware of hovering between a conventional analysis of practice and a more 'purely' Heideggerian interest in existential Being-in. This balancing act is in my view necessary (although perhaps not desirable in the long term) in order to make these unfamiliar phenomena accessible to experimental archaeology in such a way as they may be seen as something with which to work.

Reading Field Materials: Quantitative and Qualitative Information

The methodological aspect of this research centres on reading various media from field research for the qualitative information outlined above. These media were secured during two field seasons in 2001/2002 and were instrumental in the final selection of the phenomena listed above. One might enquire at this stage why, instead of reconstruction, one does not turn to ethnoarchaeology in order to analyse the ontological structures of this kind of engagement? The simple answer is that they are not the same kinds of engagement. The reason for this is that acts are implicitly interpretative of phenomena in a particular context. In the case of African indigenous architecture for example, African people, building African roundhouses in Africa, interpret their tradition, not a later prehistoric tradition in Britain. Construction or reconstruction always interprets that towards which its interpretation is directed, in the case of the 'experimental' roundhouse this is a later prehistoric tradition. There are two facets to this interpretation, the first is explicit, taking the form of the building itself and the second is implicit, in the form of the phenomena introduced above.

Quantitative Information

The assessment of images for information on the quantitative aspects of a building, i.e. materials and technology, is regularly practised in archaeology and considered to be relatively unproblematic. For example, the image below of the reconstruction of an Iron Age roundhouse at Flag Fen, Peterborough (Fig. 3), can be readily scrutinised for quantifiable information such as the types of materials used, the form of the jointing, what kinds of technologies have been employed, etc. The 'reading' of this information relies on the possession of certain background knowledges on the part of the interrogator; for example, to know the materials of the timbers and scantling requires first that one knows what wood looks like, second that one can identify species, or to identify this as an example of wattling one needs some knowledge of that

Figure 3. The familiar wattle wall. Materials and technologies clearly discernable and easily 'readable'. 'Iron Age Roundhouse' Flag Fen, Cambridgeshire.

technology and so on. Some of these knowledges are more taken for granted than others, but for all there are established understandings upon which to draw that are variously familiar in archaeology.

Quantitative data can be used to think about the range of 'things', objects or entities with which the people who are involved in specific roundhouse reconstructions form and negotiate relations as they interpret their way though the project.

Qualitative Information

Qualitative research in archaeology is restricted for the most part to overtly representational forms of 'data', such as some rock art. The qualitative interpretation of ostensibly 'experimental' data is as yet unexplored. The subject of extant qualitative analyses is the actions that are either present or implied in the imagery. These actions or activities, taking place as they do in the present, are seen as interpretative of the past rather than of the past *per se*. The imagery in this case is an analytical tool for studying the activities and relations that it records. For example, column 2 of Table 1 above shows the general phenomenon of *Worldhood* that as a qualitative 'category' contains phenomena that may be observed and interpreted in the action that any given image records. From this 'category' of Worldhood we can take a number of examples (Readiness-to-hand, Un-readiness-to-hand, Presence-at-hand) to demonstrate how images can be read for phenomenological data.

Figure 4. Skilled actors cutting joints. Trewortha, Cornwall.

Readiness-to-hand

Readiness-to-hand, which describes the way in which Dasein primarily and usually encounters Equipment, can be observed in the photograph below (Fig. 4) of two people cutting joints at Trewortha in Cornwall. Both men are competent carpenters and are completely absorbed in the task at hand. Their concern is directed straight through the hammers, chisels and the timber towards the outcome: building the inner ring and ring-beam. In this case each equipmental entity is revealed as Ready-to-hand. Readiness-to-hand can be seen to be revealed when Dasein is skilfully coping with the task at hand and everything is going smoothly. In this mode of engagement the Equipment with which Dasein is involved disappears from view and Dasein's concern is directed elsewhere, for example towards whatever end result is the goal of all this activity.

Observations of roundhouse reconstruction suggest that encountering Equipment as Ready-to-hand requires a very high level of skill and familiarity. This has three implications. First, that reconstruction dominated by Readiness-to-hand interprets this mode of engagement as taking precedence in the building of roundhouses in the past. Second, reconstruction by skilled people interprets a skilful past. Third, we might expect the building of a roundhouse dominated by skilled coping on the part of the craftspeople involved to be more sophisticated than one that is not. Specialism or skill may go hand in hand with the dominance of Readiness-to-hand in any engagement with tools and materials in the carrying out of a task.

Un-readiness-to-hand

A different phenomenon can be observed to be at work when things are *not* going quite as smoothly and uninterruptedly. When skilled coping (such as is evident in Fig. 4) breaks down in any way equipment is revealed as Un-ready-to-hand. This phenomenon is more involved than Readiness-to-hand and has three states, which Heidegger (1962: 102-104) calls Conspicuousness, Obstinacy and Obtrusiveness. All of these modes of encountering are deficient when compared to Readiness-to-hand. In such encounters equipment does not 'disappear from view' as we have seen with Readiness-to-hand but is rather called to one's attention in some way.

Conspicuousness

Equipment is revealed as Conspicuous when it is found not to fit the role for which it was taken up as it is being used; it is defined by momentary disruption that is easily overcome in the normal course of the task at hand. Wattling provides a good example of how Equipment (which in the following example are the rods and sails of the outer wall) may be encountered as conspicuous. In Fig 5 three people are featured constructing a wattle outer wall of a roundhouse. During this activity there will be times when they find that the rod (long horizontal element) that they are weaving between the sails (short earthfast vertical elements) either will not fit because it is too thick or too stiff, or they will find that they have mis-woven it so that it does not fit

Figure 5. Wattling: Equipment continuously encountered as Conspicuous through momentary disruption to work as a result of coping with differentially suitable materials. Experimental Archaeology Course, East Sussex, 2001.

into the pattern of the wattle. In each case either getting another rod or re-weaving

easily overcomes the state of Conspicuousness in such a way that the breakdown in their engagement is hardly noticed.

Obstinacy

Obstinacy is more of a disruption than Conspicuousness. It is revealed when Equipment 'stands in the way' of the task at hand. The equipment that one wishes to employ may require constant attention, for example, if it is not immediately right for the job. This can be observed in Fig. 6, where the uprights of the inner ring of the third roundhouse at Trewortha in Cornwall are needing to be vertically aligned.

Figure 6. Straightening upright timbers: Equipment encountered as Obstinate. Trewortha, Cornwall.

Obtrusiveness

The third phenomenon of Un-readiness-to-hand is Obtrusiveness. This is revealed when Dasein's dealings with Equipment break down completely, for example, when a tool or something that is being worked on breaks and becomes unusable or is destroyed in the course of the task (Fig. 7), or is missing or unavailable. These situations all result in overt attention being paid to all of the items of equipment With-which (Table 1) the broken, destroyed or missing Equipment would ordinarily be associated in terms of the task For-which (Table 1) they were intended.

Figure 7. Obtrusiveness: total collapse; the wall of this roundhouse, which stood near Cardiff, Wales, can no longer be encountered in the role for which it was intended. [http://www.theroundhouse.org/a/RH1/1decon/ga129lg.jpg] [accessed 17.02.2003] Courtesy of Dafydd Wiliam.

The three states of Un-readiness-to-hand: Conspicuousness, Obstinacy and Obtrusiveness, which define the breakdown of skilled coping, are useful initially for illuminating the structures by which skilled practices are negotiated. Like all of the phenomena dis-

cussed, their observability suggests that these phenomena can be interpreted as having been played out in the building of roundhouses in later prehistory. The precise pattern of such negotiations in any particular context is likely to have been highly variable, as it is in the reconstruction.

The interpretation of both the existence and negotiation of these phenomena in the past as indicated and observed in the practice of reconstruction leads to an alternative perspective on intra-regional variability in house construction. Regionality is a major theme in the study of the pre-Roman Iron Age. Within this, the question of different architectural traditions – say between Wessex and the West Country highland zones – is fairly well explored. What is little considered, however, is why, within a contemporary regional tradition, or indeed on a single site where there is a mass of houses, such as Winklebury Camp houses 3870, 3888, 3898 and 3890 (Guilbert 1982), there is constant background variability. It is not enough simply to assert that "well of course they are different, no two objects are ever the same". Neither do differing social conditions nor stratification provide the whole story. The structures of Un-readiness-to-hand indicate that these should also be taken into account as one of the reasons that things are different even within a very conservative tradition, may be because in each instance the particular negotiation of these structures is different.

Presence-at-hand

The two latter kinds of breakdown in the ways in which equipment are dealt with in the course of a task can ultimately lead to them being revealed as Present-at-hand

Figure 8. Presence-at-hand: standing back and theorising. Trewortha, Cornwall.

(the different root of this term is a simple tense distinction), which can be seen to operate in Fig. 8. For the two people involved in building the roundhouse, the inner ring and ring-beam of the house is revealed as Present-at-hand; they are not actively engaged in working on or with any of the items of Equipment that are available while still being involved with them by virtue of engaging with a task. Their involvement is of a 'theoretical' rather than a 'practical' nature, as they have a problem that they have to stand back and think about and discuss explicitly.

In most reconstruction projects Presence-at-hand is the mode of engagement that is concentrated on, as it is the type of encounter that forms the basis of problem solving, which is the overwhelming concern of most experimental reconstructions. This tacitly asserts that the building of a roundhouse was for the most part a question of problem solving. This is probably not the case within a particular tradition where Presence-at-hand is unlikely to dominate the construction process.

If the latter is the case then the role, importance and understanding of planning and design in the construction of the roundhouse may have to be re-thought. There are a number of arguments that have suggested that the form of many roundhouses indicates a sophisticated level of pre-planning. The argument for axial line symmetry is one example. This idea posits that many roundhouses can be demonstrated to be symmetrical either side of a conceptual line that runs through the house from the entrance to the back (Guilbert 1982). Orientation is another example as the vast majority of roundhouses in every region in the Iron Age can be demonstrated to be oriented to the east (Hill 1989; Oswald 1991).

The notion of planning has at its core a tendency to objectify that with which it is concerned and to lift it from its context or its world of referents. This idea of planning seems unlikely for embedded traditions, such as axial line symmetry and eastern orientation, where the layout of a building seems more likely to involve the negotiation of a tradition. The encounter between people and tools, material, landscape and perhaps a cosmological universe (all of which are Equipment in Heidegger's sense) will, in such situations, predominantly have the character of Readiness-to-hand or Un-readiness-to-hand. This would seem to suggest that planning as it is usually considered is a null concept for the building of a roundhouse, which by the Iron Age at least, interprets a long architectural tradition.

Where we have innovation on the other hand, whether it be innovation 'up' (i.e. more complex) like the large double ring roundhouses of Wessex in the Early Iron Age, or innovation 'down' where there appears to be a deliberate choice in later periods not to employ this kind of house form, Presence-at-hand, as a 'theoretical' rather than 'practical' mode of engagement, is more likely to dominate construction. This is only likely to pertain in the early stages of innovation or adoption. This may lend a different perspective to the adoption of a building tradition. Something only becomes part of a tradition when it is no longer encountered as something Present-at-hand but enters into the world of the community and is thus encountered predominantly in its Readiness-to-hand. This suggests that it is not innovation *per se* that is important (which it is typically held to be in experimental archaeology) but it is in

something's passing from being encountered as Present-at-hand to Ready-to-hand that it becomes fully meaningful.

Consideration of the structures of Unreadiness-to-hand taken together with Readiness-to-hand, as discussed above, may also help to answer the question of whether or not roundhouses were built by specialist builders. This is a question that regularly troubles the Iron Age archaeological community but is rarely formally addressed in publication. If a task is dominated by the deficient modes of Un-readiness-to-hand and Presence-at-hand, to what extent can it be considered specialised?

Specialism may be better defined in terms of the dominance of Readiness-to-hand in the execution of a task rather than the usual indicator of time available to devote to specialised tasks/roles. Taken together with the argument for the interpretation of a tradition of building it suggests that roundhouses are more likely to have been built by members of the community rather than itinerant specialists.

Acquiring and Coping with Information

The types of specific 'data' sets that one might wish to examine in light of the phenomena discussed above are video footage, to be examined for its visual content as well as its dialogue, which may be transcribed, and interview transcriptions. These materials give complementary qualitative 'data' sets that can potentially be examined in a number of ways other than those considered here. In the analysis of video footage one might look to three main aims; the first is to identify each of the tasks involved in the reconstruction such as wattling or jointing in a similar way to the examples above (Figs. 4, 5, 6 and 8). The second aim is to identify the phenomena in Table 1 as they are played out in the specific tasks that have been identified (e.g. wattling) and in the project as a whole. Third, the phenomena will be arranged sequentially in order to map out the sequence of their negotiations for specific items of equipment and for the tasks.

Methodologically, an observational strategy may best be adopted for the phenomena given in the examples above because they relate to unconscious attitudes. For other phenomena such as the *In-order-to* structure and *Spatiality,* for example, the dialogue transcription and follow-up interviews are likely to carry more information as they relate directly to an individual's own view of their position and role in something.

At the present time, the most effective way of managing a combination of empirical and phenomenological data that is comprised of a mixture of primary document types, i.e. frames of video footage, transcripts, hand drawings and possibly letters and e-mails (Fig. 9), is a qualitative data management software package. Throughout this research I have used Scientific Software Development's *ATLAS.ti*, which has proven to be very capable and user friendly, but will certainly be surpassed in the future as demand for the computer management of qualitative data becomes more widespread in the human sciences. *ATLAS.ti* is one of several software packages such as *The Ethnograph* and *NUDIST* that are designed specifically for the analysis of qualitative materials (Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Denzin and Lincoln 1998). It allows codes to be associated with selections within graphical documents and words

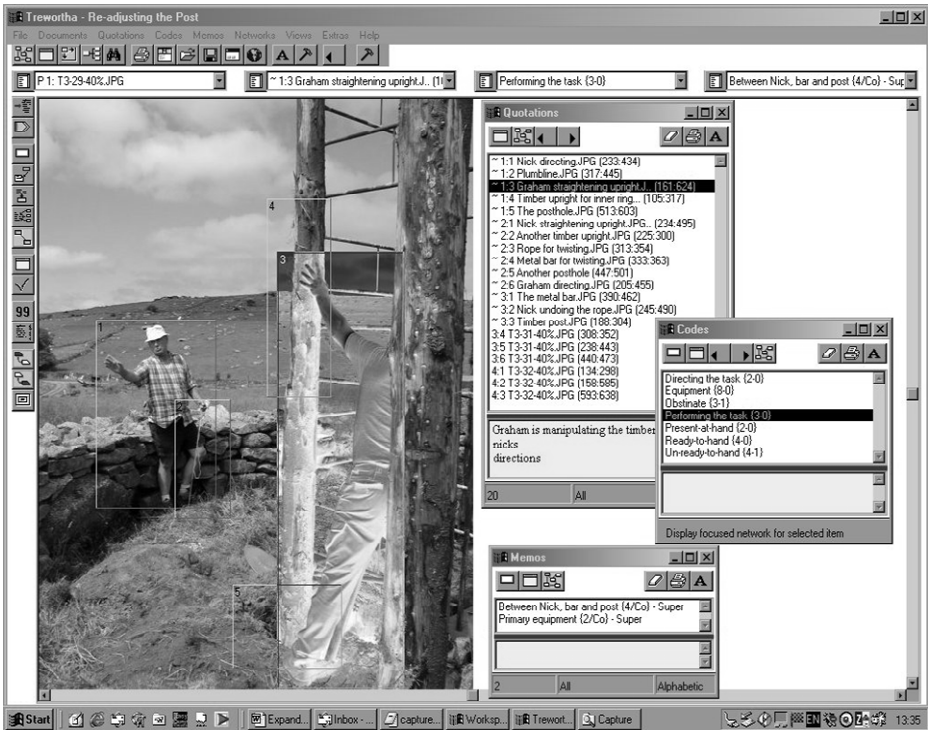

Figure 9. Sample screen capture from *ATLAS.ti* showing some preliminary analysis of T3, Trewortha, Cornwall. An interesting section of an image is selected (negative rectangle) and codes and memos (in the windows) are assigned to it, each of which can be linked or contrasted to other selections within the same image, other images, dialogue or narrative sections that refer to both the same and similar instances.

and paragraphs within textual documents. It can also cope with audio and video clips, provided that they are first digitised. It allows the identification of the elements of interest in a way similar to annotating the margin of a book. It supports code and retrieve operations to keep track of the data and manipulate any relationships identified. It allows network diagrams to be made of the relationships between phenomena for representational and analytical purposes. *ATLAS.ti* also facilitates the analysis of large amounts of qualitative data in different media from different source documents, and allows them to be integrated into a "Hermeneutic Unit" that brings the disparate parts together into one organisational and analytical workspace.

Reconstructing as Acting Interpretatively

For experimental archaeology, building is usually explored as a linear process, the primary goal of which is the production of a functional object. In contrast, I argue that building is an interpretative act. It is commonly recognised in archaeological discourse that all acts are interpretative, I emphasise this point here because the majority of experimental archaeologists do not formally recognise this to be the case and do not account for it in terms of such research as the building of a roundhouse.

While the acts are interpretative in character, the accounts that they generate typically are not. Regardless of the kind of project, whether experimental or experiential and despite differences in form, all reconstructions have two things in common. The first is that the understandings that they support, either of the finished product of reconstruction, the practice of reconstruction itself, or of the 'original' building in the past, are generated from a distanced analytical perspective.

This perspective draws attention to either the finished product as something that stands alone, which encourages the viewer to think about or theorise on the form and role of the reconstruction and/or the building that it represents (like the Bellmuir House in Fig. 1), or the focus is on explicit problem solving or theory testing in the context of the construction process (as is the case with the Pimperne House in Fig. 2). These two elements are rarely mutually exclusive, as most projects involve a combination of both, but one is usually the main focus of a project over the other (Harding *et al.* 1993; Moore 1982, 1986; Mytum 1986; Stokes 1972; Wise 1989). An analytical approach centred on objects, materials and technologies removes those involved in both the construction and reconstruction processes from any intrinsic involvement in the project, thus sidestepping building as an act (Barrow 1990). This is brought about by de-focusing or masking altogether the human actors that are necessarily involved in the activities of the construction process.

Figure 10. The 'Chieftains House', Castell Henllys, Pembrokeshire, Wales.

The second thing that all reconstructions have in common is that they are *built*. By this I mean that a number of different people, materials, situations, expectations and agendas are brought together, interpreted and re-interpreted through a non-linear, hermeneutic aggregation of acts, which result in the creation of object-object, object-person and person-person relations. That reconstructions (and indeed past constructions) are built is usually considered to be so obvious that there is nothing interesting or helpful in pointing it out. In fact, far from being trivial, the relation-forming character of building can be seen as the primary (in the sense that it occurs prior to the completion of a project) and unintended interpretative act and result of the reconstruction exercise (rather than the physical end result of the building), but it is one that has hitherto gone unrecognised.

In the case of buildings that are based on a particular archaeological example (Fig. 10), the acts of reconstruction also tacitly assert that in the construction of a particu-

lar house in the past, the phenomena that structure skilled coping and its breakdown, such as those observed in the examples given above, were negotiated in the same ways as they were in the reconstruction in the present. This is extremely unlikely to be accurate. If these phenomena are taken to structure the encounter between people, tools and materials, this is analogous to arguing that the reconstruction itself explains the engineering principles at work in a particular roundhouse in the past, as with the Pimperne House, for example. The latter is something that reconstructions are often designed to do, but in so doing they inadvertently posit the former, indicating that experimental archaeology tacitly assumes a lot more about activities in the past than current practice recognises to be the case.

Presence-at-hand, as the ontological basis for the 'theoretical attitude' (i.e. involving explicit consideration or theorising, and contrastable with a 'practical attitude') is related to the distanced analytical perspective discussed above. This mode of engagement is that from which both the theoretical knowledges of the sciences and the speculations of the lay observer are normally constructed. It is taken (both implicitly and explicitly) to be the primary way in which people engage with the things with which they have dealings and so dominate the practices and accounts of roundhouse construction and reconstruction. For example, the building of a roundhouse is fundamentally taken to involve making decisions and solving problems that are a result of either those decisions or the constraints of the materials that those decisions are enacted upon (see Harding *et al.*1993 for the archetypal account of this approach).

Heidegger argues that the 'theoretical attitude' is neither the only nor the primary way in which actions or involvements in some task or role can be understood or are understood by those involved in them. My research indicates that this situation can be observed and interpreted in the reconstruction exercise. Heidegger (1962: 67-107) argues for what might be called a 'pre-theoretical' mode of understanding which, as its designation suggests, prefigures the 'theoretical'. This mode of understanding or encounter is normally dismissed as something like 'common sense' and thus insignificant or uninteresting (if considered at all). This is certainly true for the 'traditional' approach to the reconstruction exercise, which focuses on explicit problem-solving – an extreme variant of the problem-solving research agendas that continue to dominate archaeological practice. Observation of the reconstruction exercise, however, indicates that these 'pre-theoretical' modes of understanding (as outlined in Table 1) are a powerful interpretative element of such projects, and they can be recognised and add to understandings of the building of the roundhouse in later prehistory, and the practice of reconstruction.

Re-Setting Some Difficult Questions

Shifting the focus of reconstruction from the restrictions of object and subject to a view of its practice as a relation-forming interpretative exercise allows a number of the classic questions of experimental archaeology to be re-set. Instead of, How was it made? (which we can still ask if we focus on process in the usual manner) and looking for the steps in the construction process, we can ask, for example, What engagements are involved in making something? and look for the steps in the negotiation of the phenomena that I have been outlining. How long does it take to perform a task? can now be re-set to What percentage of any given task is given over to which

phenomenon? Similarly, How many people does a task require? can be re-set to How many of those involved are encountering equipment through which phenomena, under what circumstances or in which context?

These re-set questions mean that reconstructions that are not experimental in the strict sense also have something to contribute and in fact may be more revealing. This is because experimental reconstructions, as their focus is on problem-solving, tend not to use skilled carpenters, thatchers, stonewallers or members of the community; the work is usually done by the analyst. This is a long way from what is likely to have happened in the past in terms of the ways in which the structures I have discussed were played out in any given task. Whether skilled or non-skilled individuals were involved in a building project they would never have been 'analysts' in the scientific sense. Representational reconstructions (such as the Castell Henllys house here) on the other hand often use skilled people in their construction, so the interplay between Readiness-to-hand, Un-readiness-to-hand, Presence-at-hand and Pure-presence-at-hand in the execution of tasks may to be closer to those in the past and are certainly different from those under experimental conditions.

The re-setting of these questions provides an augmentation to the role of reconstruction, which has traditionally been to explain the 'raw data' of the archaeological record to considering, in that process of explanation, how it also interprets the ways in which people negotiate their place in their worlds both in the present and in the past.

Conclusions

As scientists in a broad sense we are accustomed to thinking about *things* as objects and *people* as subjects. Above, we have discussed the notion that this received view is insufficient for accounting for all of the modes of engagement that people are capable of, particularly the 'practical' ones that are not explicitly 'theoretical' or generated as a result of explicit problem solving or a deliberate 'thinking about' something. One may go further than this to suggest that such theoretical appraisals of the objects of our concern are not usual, as experimental archaeologists in particular have come to regard them, but are in fact secondary to and derivative of what we have identified, following Heidegger, as 'everyday skilled coping'. In the above discussion I have attempted to show how non-primary the 'theoretical attitude' is and the sorts of insights that may be gained by directing research attention towards the taken for granted or 'uninteresting' 'practical' ways of dealing with things.

The phenomena that have been discussed in this paper are of considerable research interest because they are constantly being interpreted in the activity of reconstruction. Both the structures themselves and their possible implications for the understandings that they create or suggest of building in later prehistoric contexts, have never been considered.

The crux of the argument presented above is that the acts involved in roundhouse reconstruction implicitly interpret a series of structures that interpret building in the past, which themselves interpreted those structures within a cultural tradition. This occurs regardless of whether the reconstruction project is experimental or representational. In all cases, however, the reconstruction exercise is seen to be primarily in-

terpretative, any 'scientific' explanations being only secondary, derivative and always deficient.

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