The Delancey Park Monument, St Sampson, Guernsey: A reassessment of a Late Neolithic Gallery Grave

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Abstract
There are a number of significant burial-ritual monuments on Guernsey each representing different phases of Neolithic and Bronze Age activity. One of these phases includes the gallery grave tradition. This unique architectural building for the dead is usually characterized by two parallel lines of stones, forming uprights that create a monument length of up to 20m. These uprights would have once supported a line of capstones which were probably the only exposed elements when the monument was in use. Based on archaeological evidence from elsewhere, it is likely that stone outliers may have flanked each side of the uprights, thus delineating the width of the monument and serving to retain the mound.

The geographic range of the gallery grave tradition is limited to the Atlantic coastal regions of Europe including the Channel Islands. In Jersey there are two passage graves – Le Couperon and Ville-ès-Nouaux, whilst in Guernsey there is Delancey Park, a monument that measures around nine metres in length. Delancey Park is one of the last monuments on the island that has not yet been fully excavated, although human remains, along with grave goods were found during several investigations of the monument in 1919 and 1932. This paper, the first of three interim reports will discuss the survival, condition and context of the Delancey Park monument, focusing on its ancient development, its recent past and demise.

Key words: burial, capstone, gallery grave, Neolithic, ritual, uprights

Introduction
This paper forms part of a series of studies that investigates the origins, use and recent history of the Delancey Park Neolithic gallery grave. It is a much-ruined monument that is sited on a north-facing slope within the NE section of Delancey Park (Figure 1). In the recent past, the chambered monument and the immediate area has been cleared of scrub vegetation in order to conduct a proposed archaeological excavation (Philip de Jersey pers comm.). Prior to this, the site had been landscaped with much of the natural slope on which the monument stands removed, replacing it with a semi-circular mortared stone wall constructed on its southern side. Since its discovery, only limited references have been made to the monument (Stevens-Cox 1976; Johnston 1981; Kendrick 1928; Kinnes & Grant 1983; Sebire 2005). Arguably, much of the information within the later references relies heavily on the summary by Kendrick (1928, 174-5). As far as the authors are aware, little primary documentation concerning two previous excavation projects exists.

Delancey Park was created around 1890, so-named after Oliver de Lancey Jr. (c. 1749-1822), who was appointed Adjutant-General of British forces in North America in 1781 and Barrack Master General in Guernsey from 1794 until 1804. Based on late 19th century mapping, the park was formally designed and laid out with a central pedestrian walkway snaking its way from the Mont Morin on the north side to Rue Des Monts at the southwest. From its conception, the park was designed with sport and recreation in mind; within the western section of the park was and still remains, a football ground, whilst in the eastern section were tennis courts, putting green and a bowling green.

The late 19th century mapping indicates that the area around which the Delancey Park monument stands was covered by rough pasture. To the west of the monument in 1876 a 27m high stone obelisk was erected, dedicated to Admiral Lord James de Saumarez (1757-1836) who defeated a combined force of French and Spanish navies at the Battle of Algeciras in July 1801 (Figure 2 - Aerial image of Delancey Park and the obelisk). This impressive monolith was demolished by the German occupation force in December 1943 as it obscured a clear line of sight from one of their gun batteries and now only the stone base survives, comprising two courses.

Figure 1. The GIS location of the Delancey Park monument (Courtesy of the Guernsey Museum and Galleries Service)

Monument in detail
The Delancey Park monument, discovered in June 1919, consists of two W-E parallel rows of granite blocks extending for some 9.5m. The site was later investigated in 1932 under the direction of Miss Vera C.C. Collum. Based on two
photographs, the excavation apparently was confined to the removal of the upper soil stratigraphy around the stones (Figures 3a & 3b). As far as the authors are aware, no extensive excavation was undertaken. Indeed, the only excavation was of the soils that lay in-between the fallen stones. Tantalisingly, possible in situ [unexcavated] prehistoric deposits may exist directly underneath these stones.

A menhir known as La Rocque Pointue could have been associated with this monument (Figure 4), supported by comments from Kendrick (1928, 173-4); it is now quarried away along with one other megalithic site, possibly a small cist or earth-fast monument located on the summit of Grosse Hougue (Figure 5). La Rocque Pointue menhir once stood close to the western gate of Delancey Park and a water colour drawing is in Lukis’ Collectanea Antiqua [Vol. 4]. According to the historian Edith Carey (1914), the stone formed part of a procession belonging to La Chevauchée de St. Michel ceremony. This ceremony occurred every three years during mid-summer, when the Fief Court would have processed around the island. It is possible that this ceremony may have represented pre-Christian fertility rites and sun worship (Johnson 1981).

Since 1932, the immediate area around the site has been landscaped with pine trees occupying the northern flank of the monument; these were planted around 1985 (Philip de Jersey pers comm.). Planning permission was given in 2009 to have these trees removed in order to prevent tree-root damage to the northern side of the monument. Until recently, the site had been colonised by scrub vegetation, but during 2008 this was cleared and loose gravel around the monument removed. As a result of this clearance all the surviving upright stones have been exposed.

Figure 4. The La Rocque Pointue menhir, once standing west of the park (Lukis Archive, courtesy of the Guernsey Museum and Galleries Service)

Figure 5. The ‘demi-dolmen’ located on Grosse Hougue, probably once associated with the Delancey Park monument (Lukis Archive, courtesy of the Guernsey Museum and Galleries Service)

Due to the prior investigations in 1919 and 1932, little of the original morphology of the monument is clear. Furthermore, and based on initial ideas the interpretation of this monument has ranged from it being a passage grave to an
allée couverte with dates ranging from the Neolithic to the Iron Age (e.g. Archive Doc. 192).

From the available archive, one would have thought that the Delancey Park monument would reveal more in terms of archaeology. However, there are several pieces of evidence to suggest otherwise. The excavations undertaken during the early 20th century are believed to have been limited to selected areas of the monument, and in the case of the 1932 excavation only the [stratified] soils between the stones were excavated (see Figure 3). As far as the authors are aware, no detailed archaeological plans exist of the site and accordingly the authors initiated a full survey in October 2009 ahead of any future excavation of the site. The survey will be followed by an evaluation programme which will commence in June 2010, followed by targeted excavation in 2011. All stages of this phased approach will be recorded in future interim reports.

Geology & topography
Within this part of Guernsey the underlying naturally deposited geology comprises wind-blown sands; the result of primarily easterly prevailing wind [loess] deposition (Smith 1981, 132). The upper deposit is intermixed with dark-brown humic earths (established from surrounding recent accumulative vegetation cover). The depth and extent of these soils (A and B horizons) are as yet unknown but the underlying solid geology comprises the St Peter Port gabbro. This small layered intrusion of hornblende gabbro and bojite (calcium plagioclase - hornblende rock) is local to this part of the island and consists of small magnetite and sulphide-rich segregations (mineralisation: Magnetite, ilmenite and pyrite).

Concerning the topography, the site occupies an intermediate north-facing slope position, approximately 370m from the present shoreline at Spur Point (SE of the site). Immediately south, the land rises some 30-50m forming a short east-west ridge that extends along the NE corner of the park. This area of the park is locally known as Le Monts. Although the area around the site has been infiltrated by scrub vegetation and trees, there would have been clear visual access to the sea (e.g. see Figure 3); this conforms to other Neolithic burial-r ritual monuments that occupy Guernsey’s coastal fringes.

Cartographic evidence
Three maps, two of which were published prior to the discovery of the monument show the development of the area, from enclosed fields in 1787 to Public Park in 1898. The 1787 Duke of Richmond map shows a set of rectangular and sub-rectangular fields that were probably delineated by turf banking. This field system was later incorporated into the park space (Figure 6). The road (lane) network around this field system and the later public park still survives. Access into the central field is from the north and west via Mont Morin and Rue des Monts. Within the central field and occupying a slight south-facing slope was a windmill. The

Saumarez Monument, erected in 1876 marked the location of this windmill.

Geo-referencing of the 1787 map over the Ordnance Survey map of 1938 shows that the Delancey Park monument lay close to, if not underneath an E-W field boundary (Figure 7). Johnston (1981, 99) supports this and suggests that a drystone [field boundary] wall may have extended over the structure, thus affording the monument some protection, although it is argued that the capstones were removed and broken-up for the nearby military barracks which were constructed in 1799 to house Russian soldiers who had been fighting with British soldiers in Holland and Belgium. Around the turn of the century the barracks were demolished to make way for St Sampson’s school which was built around 1906.

Figure 6. A section of the 1787 Duke of Richmond map showing enclosed landscape of Delancy. The Delancey Park monument, marked in blue stands 60m NE of the windmill (Courtesy of the Guernsey Museum and Galleries Service)

The Ordnance Survey map of 1898 clearly shows a nearby disused artillery battery. The map also shows that the Delancey Park monument is located in what appears to be rough pasture. Marked to the south and west of the site are a series of isolated stones which delineate an area of land that was ceded to the States of Guernsey for the Saumarez monument, dating to around 1876 (Figure 8).

Figure 7. The possible remains of an east-west field boundary lying c. 5m south of the monument
The earliest cartographic reference to this site is the Ordnance Survey map of 1938 where the site, arranged in a series of dashed lines, was designated as a passage grave and referred to as *ruins* (Figure 9). At this time the site was located within rough pasture, north of an enclosed trapezoidal-shaped putting green. To the north there are tennis courts, currently disused. This map also shows most of the area east of a centrally cut north-south path is marked rough pasture with only the Saumarez Monument marked.

**Early Excavation History**

The site was discovered in early 1919 following the removal of bracken and gorse⁶ and ground levelling work within the NE corner of the park. Workmen clearing the vegetation discovered initially two large stones lying side by side. The States Architect, a Mr T.J. Guilbert instructed the workforce to treat this discovery with great care, thinking that the stones formed part of a dolmen. Further stones were uncovered, nearly all ‘oblong’ in shape and in a ‘perfectly natural condition’. Following the discovery, a report outlining these points was made in the *Guernsey Star* dated 12th June 1919 and a short paragraph in the *Société Guernesiaise* of the same year (Appendix 1). The report not only detailed this discovery but also noted a nearby semi-circular arrangement of smaller stones, many according to the report had been broken up. Experts of the day – a Mr A. Collinette and Mr T.W.M. de Guerin suggested that the larger stones incorporated into the Delancey Park monument formed the remains of a dolmen, the capstones being already removed and broken up to construct a military barrack building nearby. It is not clear if an official excavation took place, and if it did, how detailed this action was. A small number of artefacts, many probably contemporary with the construction and use of monument were recovered following its discovery.

Reported in Kendrick (1928, 174-5) was a small assemblage of finds recovered from the 1919 investigation including fragments of bone belonging to an ox, a few limpet shells, stone and pottery.⁷ The pottery comprised undecorated course gritty red and brown wares of varying thicknesses. Several pieces were burnished. The stone tools included a fragment of a greenstone axe (or rubber) which had been cracked by fire, a small collection of flint chips and four gunflints (probably 18th century). Based on the presence of a (questionable) axe fragment, the monument was probably in use around c. 2,500 cal. BC. However, the original whereabouts of this material is unclear.

Lying immediately underneath these stones and recorded during the *La Société Guernesiaise* excavation in 1919 is a series of stones, some of which appear to have once supported the granite blocks. During the 1932 excavations it was considered by the excavator, Miss Collum, that the remains of a chamber was present at the western end, although based on the site images the excavation consisted of recording the deposits between the stones (see Figure 2).

In a letter dated 21st October 1932, Miss Collum refers to Delancey Park as an *allée couverte* (Museum Ref: 192). This type of monument is usually found in central and northern France and generally comprises a rectangular chamber delineated by a series of large uprights (there are some instances of smaller antechambers leading off around the main chamber entrance). The monument type is relatively common in Brittany and around the Paris Basin, present within the Seine-Oise-Marne Culture and dating to the 3rd millennium cal BC. Found within several examples have been the remains of hundreds of individuals. Daniel (1960, 215) has suggested that some of the *allée couverte* group of monuments did not contain human remains and therefore may have acted as a form of temple, commemorating the dead rather than housing the dead.

Evidence of the excavation and its results are contained in a short letter to Colonel de Putron (member of the excavation committee of the *La Société Guernesiaise*). Apparently, the site had been cleared ‘ready for digging’ for excavation by two labourers employed by the State earlier that week. According to Miss Collum the clearance revealed nine overthrown props on the north side whilst of the southern side four props remained. The term *prop* used by Collum probably refers to what the modern literature calls an

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⁶ Also referred to as *furze.*

⁷ A small assemblage of material is housed within the Guernsey Museum archive.
upright. Also noted was a probable entrance corridor (or gallery section) at the NW end leading to a possible chamber which was still buried by made earth. However, when excavation commenced Collum recorded not a NW chamber but a splayed entrance (or façade). This splaying (away from the monument) was delineated by a series of fallen stones and the respective socket holes; Collum suggests that they were [deliberately] tipped over.

The finds from this excavation included a small collection of animal bone, found within a disturbed [cultural] black soil deposit that directly overlay the natural light yellow clays. Within the same deposit, around the socket holes within the northern part of the monument was also found a number of sherds of thick well-fired brown to red course gritty pottery representing at least eight vessels. According to Collum the interior (gallery) had been cleared out. However, based on the archive photographs of the site, taken in 1932, excavation was limited to the removal of deposits around the stones. It appears that none of the larger stones were removed off site for this excavation. Their in situ position in 1932 is supported by digital images that were taken in April 2009 and the subsequent survey of the site in October of the same year. According to both sets of images and the plan, only one large stone, on the southern side has been removed; its whereabouts is currently unknown. At the eastern end of the monument at least two large stones, probable capstones, had been dragged from their original positions to the south; their removal is almost certainly the result of excavation of a section of the chamber.

Although the monument appears to be largely intact, Collum does suggest that a number of the capstones were removed and broken up around 1876 for foundation material to support the nearby de Saumarez monument, however, it is not clear which ones were removed. This being the case it could be that the monument was much longer and extended further east and west!

Preparing for modern excavation
As part of the initial programme a detailed measured survey of the monument was undertaken in October 2009 by the authors. It was a complete stone by stone plan examination of the 24 stones that form the monument (Figure 10).

Most of the stones are roughly the same size and shape, at about 1.5 x 1.0m. Remarkably, this is the first ever survey that has been undertaken of the site. The survey included a tape and offset plan of the site, initially establishing a base line along the axis of the monument and then measuring off the distance of features from this known line. To assist in greater accuracy of the final plan, several additional tapes were laid out parallel and at right angles to the baseline to form a grid. A planning frame was used to ensure further accuracy in those areas where the tape and offset method could not be used. The monument was recorded onto a series of permatrace sheets at a scale of 1:20 along with additional details such as stone slope and damage (shearing and cracking of the stones). Spot heights at various points were taken with staff and level. A temporary bench mark (TBM) was established at an absolute value of 28.62m, initially attained from a known bench mark located on the base of the nearby Saumarez monument.

All survey records were subsequently transferred to a CAD format with details being separated into layers to allow specific drawing attributes to be produced as required.

It was noted during the survey that many stones lie recumbent and several have been fire-cracked, damaged from illegal fires around and inside the monument in recent years. Due to the present arrangement of stones it is difficult to ascertain how many represent capstones or uprights and despite their present parallel alignment, there remains a chance that this may yet prove to be misleading; possibly some have been moved from their original position during the 1919 and 1932 investigations. In addition, underlying some of the surface stones are others, almost completely buried, that could be in situ uprights to the chamber.

Discussion: towards Late Neolithic monumentality
Based on the morphology of the two stone alignments it is more than probable that the Delancey Park monument is a gallery grave and possibly has parallels with the gallery grave component at Ville-ès-Nouaux and Le Couperon on Jersey (Figures 11 & 12). Despite this initial classification, Kinnes & Grant refer to this monument as ‘unclassified’ [1983, 48]. The gallery grave at Ville-ès-Nouaux, discovered in 1869, is associated with a nearby cist-in-circle and has similar architectural features to Le Couperon, a second gallery grave located on the north-eastern coast fringe of Jersey. At Les Pourciaux North on Alderney, F.C. Lukis sketched a monument in 1853 which suggested superficially from its two c. 8.5m long parallel lines of upright stones that it too could have been a gallery grave (Johnston 1981, 131); unfortunately the monument was largely destroyed when a gun emplacement was built into it during World War II.

The two Jersey gallery graves, the Delancey Park monument and an uncertain one on Alderney possess similar landscape and morphological attributes and lie on or close to the shores of their respective islands, points that are closest to their cousins on the Armorican peninsula of France.
It is hoped that the 2010 campaign will reveal enough significant archaeological material to provide the impetus to fully excavate the monument in 2011. The survival of the stonework, the artefacts recovered in the two early 20th century excavations and the location of the monument suggests that an important piece in Guernsey’s prehistory will reveal more of its secrets.

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References


Appendix 1. Archive material describing the two excavation programmes

Report of the Archaeological Section, 1919.

The past year has been full of interest to the archaeologist. The existence of rude sculptures on the underside of the second capstone of the Dolmen of Déhus has been established beyond all doubt, and the interest arising therefrom brought a request from the Prehistoric Section of the British Association to the discoverer, Col. T. W. M. de Guérin, to read a paper before the Association during its meeting this autumn at Bournemouth. This was done, the lecture being illustrated by lantern slides and diagrams. It will be interesting to read the remarks and criticisms in the official account of the meeting. The paper will be printed in this year's Transactions together with the diagrams and slides.

Another extremely interesting event was the discovery of what may prove to be a cromlech at Delancey Park. The States of Guernsey were employing some out-of-work labourers in clearing a forecourt on June 9th when they came across some large stones laid in order horizontally. They continued the clearing and laid bare what appears to be an oliff cromlech. Unfortunately the stones are not set up, and it is difficult to say what they actually were; there are no stones more than 4 feet long, and therefore it is improbable that they were either props or capstones, and they were too large for filling in between the props. Part of this filling-in wall still remains in situ. Probing with a sounding rod to the westward however has indicated some large capstones about 3 feet under the soil, and there will be no doubt an opportunity at no distant date to investigate still further on the site.

Correspondence between Miss Vera C.C. Collum and La Société Guernesiaise