Circular Ditches: Graves or Huts?

A Short Presentation and Interpretation of a Complex Monument Type

BY ÅSA PERNEBY & ELLEN STAMM FORSSBLAD

Abstract

Perneby, Åsa & Stamm Forssblad, Ellen. 2003. Circular Ditches: Graves or Huts? A Short Presentation and Interpretation of a Complex Monument Type. Lund Archaeological Review 9 (2003), pp. 33–44.

During the summer of 2001, a settlement complex at Lockarp, just east of Malmö, was investigated. Of particular interest were the remains of three circular ditches that were discovered adjoining an area, Fosie, where two remains of the same type were discovered during an investigation in 1997. These ditches were interpreted as remains of a typically Danish grave form known as *tuegrave*. This article attempts to shed light on the problem of interpreting these features where neither mound nor burial was found during the excavation. A further problem is posed by the resemblance of the feature type to wall ditches associated with huts. By comparing the ditches from Lockarp and Fosie with remains interpreted as huts as well as with the Danish *tuegrave* and graves in Scania, we have attempted to show that the interpretation of these circular ditches is far from self-evident. It is our hope that this article will spark a debate around not merely about how we interpret a certain type of archaeological remain, but also how we can best work with the material which already exists.

Åsa Perneby. asaperneby@hotmail.com
Ellen Stamm Forssblad, Malmö Kulturmiljö (Malmö Heritage), Box 406, SE-201 24 Malmö, Sweden. ellen.stamm.forssblad@malmo.se

Introduction

In the summer of 2001, an archaeological investigation of the area designated Lockarp 8:4 was carried out (Stamm Forssblad 2004). This area is situated east of the City of Malmö, about 9 km from the coast of the Sound. The area in question lies between 35–37 m above sea level, in relatively flat and, towards the north, sandy terrain. Settlement remains from the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age were present in the area. Our interest was particularly captured by three circular ditches placed in a row. The features were not visible above the topsoil, but were first noticed in conjunction with the machine stripping of the area. The ditches lay in the sandy area upon a slight rise and were interpreted as the remains of graves of a Danish type, typified by a relatively small mound with an associated circular ditch: *tuegrave*.

This type of feature had previously been found on a couple of occasions in Scania. Lars Jönsson investigated two circular ditches in the area Fosie 9A–B in 1997 in connection with the construction of a new road, *Yttre Ringvägen* (Jönsson & Lövgren 2003). These were interpreted as cremation burials on the

basis of an analogy with Danish grave types from the Pre-Roman Iron Age. The area Fosie 9B lies immediately east of Lockarp 8:4 and, together with the three circular ditches from Lockarp 8:4, constitutes interesting material as this was the first occasion that this kind of feature had been found in such large numbers in the Malmö area. The circular ditches of Fosie 9A–B will be briefly presented after the section dealing with the features from Lockarp 8:4, as these features belong to the same context. Figure 1 shows the position of the circular ditches relative to Lockarp 8:4 and Fosie 9A–B as well as their position relative to other graves in the near vicinity.

The aim of the article is to present and discuss a type of feature that has often been routinely interpreted as hut remains or occasionally completely ignored. We aim to show that the interpretation of those circular ditches that have been excavated is far from self-evident. The features are often ploughed-out and the find material in the ditches disturbed, which complicates both interpretation and dating as well as attempts to relate the finds to any activities contemporary with the ditches. We also aim to demonstrate the vicinity of the circular ditches to older graves in the area, and their connection with these, since in all likelihood they were included in a funerary context which is of significance when this type of feature occurs and needs to be interpreted. We will return to this point later in the discussion.

The circular ditches at Lockarp 8:4

During the investigation of the circular ditches, their outer parts were first excavated and documented in section along their length. After this, the remaining parts of the ditches were excavated, which also made it possible to document the ditches' cross-sections. One of the reasons we documented the sections lengthwise was to ascertain whether or not any post-holes were included in the construction, as such post-holes have been seen to comprise an important detail in the Danish *tuegrave*. After the ditches' fill was removed, a section was dug across the inner part. The reason for excavating the area enclosed by the ditches was to see if any indications of a grave or finds that could be related to one were present. The ditches and the inner area were dug with spades and wet-sieved through a 3 mm mesh. All three circular ditches at Lockarp 8:4 revealed burnt flints and burnt flint flakes in both the ditches and the inner areas. A brief description of these remains is included below. A more detailed account of the features has been published (Stamm Forssblad 2004).

Feature 1914

This was the southernmost of the three. The feature consisted of a closed ditch, measuring 6.2 x 6.4 m. The depth varied between 0.08 and 0.25 m and was deepest towards the south-west. The width of the ditch varied between 0.53 and 0.8 m. The feature was documented in 17 sections (fig. 2). The feature contained several fills, two of which (6 and 7) derived from a stratigraphically earlier feature (fig. 3). An older fill (4), which may have constituted an earlier phase, can be seen in the sections. However, the fill occurred only very sporadically. Figure 4 shows that the entire ditch has been dug (Phase A). The ditch was ^{14}C-dated to 6590–6440 BC 1s? (Ua-20470), which does not agree with the finds in the feature, which included pottery from the Bronze or Pre-Roman Iron Age.

Feature 2039

During the initial cleaning of the feature, this appeared as a horseshoe shaped ditch, open at the west. The ditch measured 5.6 x 4.8 m and was 0.02–0.18 m deep. Width varied from 0.39 to 0.61 m. The ditch was documented in 13 sections (fig. 5). Three fills were identified in the ditch, of which Fill 2 was stratigraphically earliest. Fill 4 occurred solely within Sections

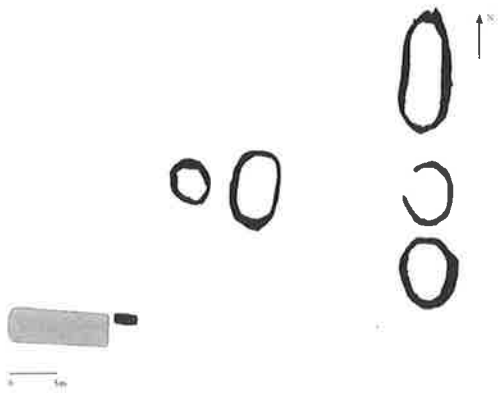

Fig. 1. Overview of the circular ditches (black), a probable long barrow (light grey), and a flat grave (dark grey)

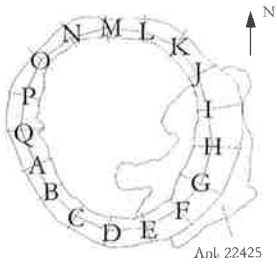

Fig. 2. Plan of section divisions, feature 1914. Scale 1:200.

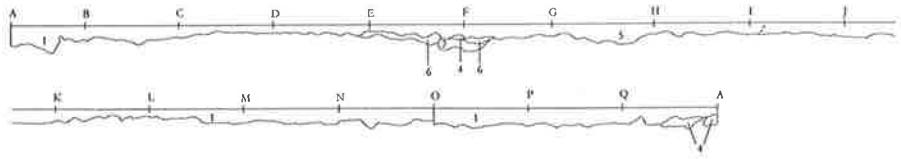

Fig. 3. Feature 1914, sections A–Q. Scale 1:80.

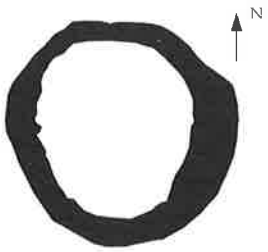

Fig. 4. Feature 1914, Phase A.

L–M and A–X and was not stratigraphically linked to the other parts of the ditch (fig. 6). Two, or possibly three, phases were identified on the basis of the stratigraphy. Figure 7 shows which parts of the ditch were dug in Phases A–C. The ditch was ^{14}C-dated to 4220–3820 BC 1s? (Ua-20469) – this does not correspond with the finds from the feature, which included Bronze Age ceramics.

Two features were found within the ditch: a pit and a post-hole (fig. 5). The post-hole

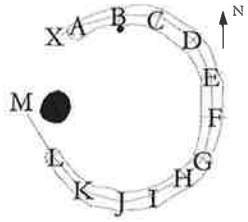

Fig. 5. Plan of section divisions, feature 2039, scale 1:200. Other features mentioned in the text are marked in black.

the context it occurred in. A diffuse discoloration was noticed on the surface within the ditch, with its "centre" lying roughly in the middle of the feature.

During the first stage, the ditch may possibly have had one entrance in the east and one in the west. The entrances may however be a result of later activity, although it seems most likely that the ditch came to an end at the west as there was no abrupt end to the sections.

Feature 9942

During cleaning of this feature, an oval ditch with no opening was discovered. The north-

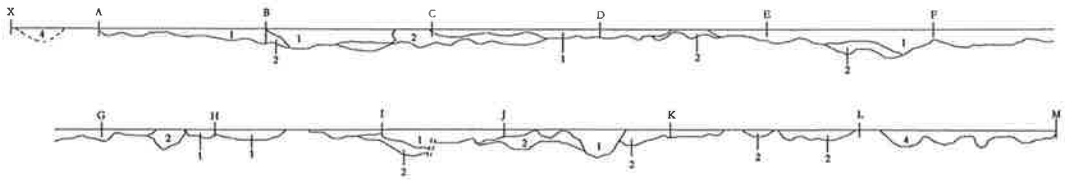

Fig. 6. Feature 2039, sections X–M. Scale 1:50.

could not be linked with the ditch in any meaningful way. The pit may however have been connected with the ditch. The eastern part of the ditch bore traces of a post-hole. Find material in the pit consisted of burnt flint. Even though no burnt bone was found in the fill, the feature could possibly have been a cremation pit, a theory which is backed up by

eastern part of the feature had been dug through an activity layer. The ditch measured 10.7 x 5.5 m, while its depth varied between 0.05 and 0.44 m. It varied in width between 0.4 and 1.4 m. The feature was documented in 16 sections designated alphabetically from A–P (fig. 8). Six fills of significance for the stratigraphic sequence could be identified.

Fig. 7. Feature 2039, Phase A (left), Phase B (middle) and Phase C (right). Seg-ments which have been re-dug at the given points in time are marked in black, the other segments ("openings") are marked white.

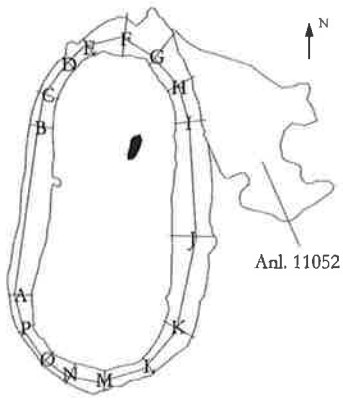

Fig. 8. Plan of section divisions, feature 9942. Scale 1:200.

The earliest fills were 3, 4 and 5, and the latest was Fill 2 (fig. 9). On the basis of the stratigraphic sequence it seems likely that the ditch was re-cut several times, Phases A–D. Figure 10 illustrates which part of the ditch was dug in Phases A and D. During Phase A there were four possible entrances into the ditch, towards the north-west, north-east and east. The entire ditch was open during Phase D. The ditch could not be dated on the basis of finds as these included pottery from the Bronze and Iron Ages in addition to the Middle Ages.

A pit that could not be linked with the ditch was discovered within it (fig. 8).

Find material

The finds that occurred in and within the ditches unfortunately could not be used for dating purposes. The pottery which was found derives from the Bronze Age up to the medieval period, but seems to have ended up in the ditches merely by chance. However, only pottery from the Bronze and Iron Ages was present within the ditches. The burnt flint present in the inner area and in the circular ditches may perhaps be the result of deliberate actions, as there may have been certain rituals associated with both the raising of the mound and the opening of the ditches. The importance of burning flint as part of a sacral ritual has been discussed in studies regarding two Neolithic sites in Scania (Larsson 2000). It is, however, difficult to assume that burning of flint during the Bronze and Iron Ages was part of exactly the same kind of rituals as in the Neolithic period. Even so, the ideas concerning fire may have been almost unchanged throughout prehistoric time, and burned flint can thus indicate some sort of sacral rituals as suggested above. The flint may of course also come from another context, such as from the material used for the construction of the mound or from hearths in the area.

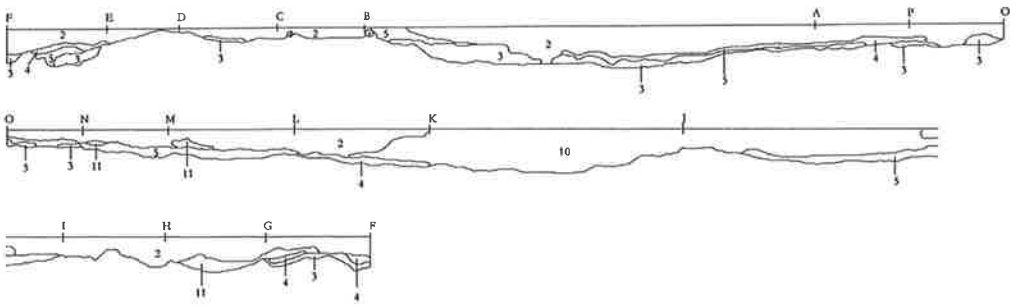

Fig. 9. Feature 9942, sections A–P. Scale 1:80.

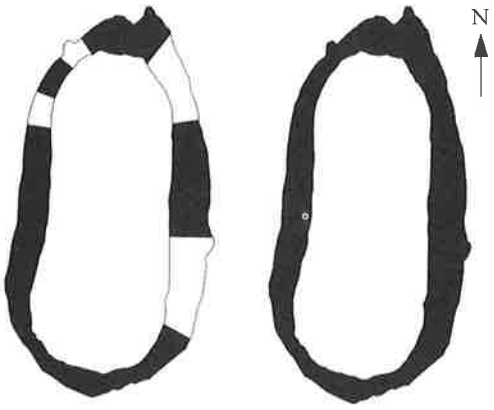

Fig. 10. Feature 9942, Phase A (left) and Phase D (right). Segments which have been dug at the given points in time are marked in black, the other segments ("openings") are marked white.

The circular ditches at Fosie 9A–B

During the 1997 excavation of this area, two circular ditches (features 2069 and 2167), placed two metres apart, were discovered – these were designated as funerary ditches in the publication. Both ditches contained pottery and flint flakes, and feature 2167 also contained burnt clay (Jönsson & Lövgren 2003, pp. 37 ff.).

The contextual method was used for the investigation of these features, so the documentation of these features differs from that of the circular ditches of Lockarp 8:4.

Feature 2069 and feature 2167

The feature furthest to the west, feature 2069, was about 4.7 x 4 m in diameter and between 0.4 and 0.62 m in depth, being deepest towards the north-west. The feature held indications of a possible opening in the south-eastern part of the otherwise completely closed ditch. Feature 2069 was ^{14}C-dated to 400–200 BC 1s? (Ua-13152), which indicates the ditch dates from the Pre-Roman Iron Age (Jönsson & Lövgren 2003, pp. 37 ff.).

The eastern ditch, Feature 2167, was about 6.8 x 5.3 m in diameter and 0.15–0.4 m deep. The ditch was completely closed. Feature 2167 was ^{14}C-dated to 770–510 BC 1s? (Ua-14684), which indicates a date during the Late Bronze Age. However, this date does not agree with the finds present in the ditch, which derived from the later part of the Pre-Roman Iron Age. Furthermore, the stratigraphic sequence revealed that as the ditch was dug through an earlier hearth ^{14}C dated to 350 BC – 40 BC, it should be dated to the Pre-Roman Iron Age (Jönsson & Lövgren 2003, pp. 39 ff.).

The circular ditches at Lockarp 8:4 and Fosie 9 A–B

The size of these circular ditches varied greatly. The largest feature was 10.7 x 5.5 m in diameter, while the smallest was 4.7 x 4 m in diameter. While the ditches showed a great deal of variation in size, when it came to shape the circular ditches could be divided into two main groups, oval and circular. In addition, the circular group can be subdivided into closed and semi-circular ditches.

The number of possible entrances into the circular ditches varies between at most four and at the fewest none at all. The ditches with entrances were also characterized by these being placed facing east or south-east, and less commonly, or never, placed facing directly north or south.

In the Danish material, the number of entrances has been revealed as having a chronological element (Jørgensen 1975). If the variation in the number of entrances can also be shown to be similarly chronologically dependent in the Scanian material, this would argue for a large chronological distance between the features at Lockarp 8:4. Feature 9942 would then be the earliest, with four entrances in the earliest phase. Feature 2039 belongs to the middle group with two entrances during

Phase A. Feature 1914 seems to be the most recent as it has no entrances whatsoever.

In this connection it is important to remind ourselves that the material is not intact, as any mounds as well as the upper parts of the ditches have been ploughed out. Another problem is that the ditches shown above have been dug more than once. No indication that post-holes may have been included as a structural feature in the ditches could be discerned.

Parallels to the ditches at Lockarp 8:4 and Fosie 9A–B

During our endeavours to find material to compare with the ditches at Lockarp 8:4 and Fosie 9 A–B we have come across quite a few circular ditches. However, these have often been interpreted as being the work of roots, or as forming wall ditches for huts.

At Saxtorp 24, Scania, circular features interpreted as hut remains were found. The huts are in plan similar to the features unearthed at Lockarp 8:4 and Fosie 9A–B. The features at Saxtorp 23 were found upon a slight slope leading down towards a stream. In two of the huts, traces of possible stake- or post-holes were found at the bottom of the ditches. The huts had an outer diameter of 4–5 m. The ditches were dated on the basis of finds in the surrounding contexts and ^{14}C tests to the period Early Neolithic II – Middle Neolithic B. The remains were considered to belong to the later part of this period (Andersson 2003, pp. 132 ff.). It should however be noted that three presumed graves were situated approximately 10-15 m northwest of the hut remains. One of these has been ^{14}C-dated to TNI (Andersson 2003, pp.66).

Bearing in mind the particular, somewhat oval shape that two of the circular ditches at Lockarp 8:4 (Feature 9942) and Fosie 9A–B (Feature 2167) had, we have also managed to find comparable features in the Danish material. One similar feature, interpreted as a hut (construction BJ), was discovered at Vadgård, Denmark. The hut was dated to the earlier Bronze Age on the basis of ceramic finds. The hut was oval, with stones placed at the bottom of the ditch. Three post-holes were also present in the southern, long side of the ditch. A possible entrance was situated in the northern part of the ditch where no stones were discovered. A hearth was placed within the ditch, in the western part of the hut. The whole hut was about 9 x 5 m in diameter. The hut lay just north of a farming complex consisting of a C-shaped hut and a long-house (Rasmussen 1992–93 pp. 99 ff.).

Graves with surrounding ditches occur in Denmark as well as in Scania. In Denmark, cremation graves in mounds enclosed by circular ditches are well known and documented from a number of large and small cemeteries. These cemeteries usually comprise 20–50 graves, but examples of cemeteries with over 1,000 graves are also known (Jensen 1998). The largest cemeteries are known from Jutland, whereas in Zealand they usually occur alone or in pairs which can partially be explained from source-critical perspectives such as the size of the investigation area and so on. In Denmark, this kind of grave is known as a *tuegrav* (pl. *tuegrave*). The name *tuegrav* derives from the Danish for "small mound". These Danish grave mounds consist in principle of two different types of structure. The first type includes, besides the ditch, a low mound without significant stone structures. The mound itself as its known from e.g. the site Arre, Jutland is constructed of sand or soil with a diameter of about 4–8 m, and seldom exceeds 0.5 m in height. The other type consists of a cairn-like mound, also with an encircling ditch (Lewring & Jørgensen 1999). There are also examples of *tuegrave* without mounds. The interesting thing about *tuegrave* is the ditch that surrounds the mound. Investigations have

shown that the earliest graves can have as many as seven entrances, while the most recent have only two, one towards the north and one towards the south. Ditches without any entrances at all have been noted, but these are an exception. Within the ditches, a stone ring has sometimes been observed. In certain cases, evidence of tightly packed vertical posts has instead been discovered within (Jørgensen 1975, pp. 6 ff.).

Chronologically, the Danish graves have been placed in the earlier part of the Pre-Roman Iron Age. In cemeteries with *tuegrave*, the central grave contained an urn with burnt bone, placed in the centre of the mound. Occasionally the urn was placed directly on the contemporary soil surface, although a placement in a shallow pit in the underlying subsoil occurs most commonly. A stone packing was sometimes present around the urn, or it was covered by a few flat stones. Usually only one grave is found in the centre of each mound. As the mounds did not have such a large mass, is it also unlikely that secondary graves were later placed in the mound's fill. However, at the major *tuegrav* cemetery at Aarupsgaard five urns were found in the same pit (Jørgensen 1971, p. 6).

Among the circular ditches excavated in Scania, remains of an inhumed individual have only been found occasionally. Recently a cremation and two inhumations were discovered within a circular ditch at Hyllie, within Area 3 of the City Tunnel Project, Malmö. It is still unclear which of the burials is the primary one. ^{14}C dating of the bone will hopefully provide an indication of this (J. Jansen, personal communication). Circular ditches with a central grave were also found in connection with the West Coast Line investigations of 1996–1997, of the two so-called Oxhögarna ("Ox Mounds"), RAÄ 2, situated in the parish of Örja, Scania. Within the perimeter ditch of Mound 1 a soil horizon was also found which has been interpreted as constituting the remains of a mound fill. ^{14}C analyses of wooden remains from Mound 1 have supplied a date from the later part of the Bronze Age. In the vicinity of the mound, cremations and settlement remains were also present (Lindahl Jensen 1997).

Discussion

Cremation graves under mounds surrounded by ditches have often been geographically linked with limited parts of Jutland, Denmark. This has meant that interpretations of this type of monument have been sparse. Furthermore, graves in this area have often been very well preserved, which means that we fail to recognize this type of feature here in Scania as so little remains of them. Isolated similar remains have been discovered in other parts of Denmark, e.g. Lille Holmegård in Zealand (Jensen & Stokholm 1992). The absence of an inhumed individual has however led to the term *ringgrøft* ("ring ditch") being used here instead of *tuegrav*.

The greatest problem in the interpretation of grave ditches and huts is that only the ditches remain today. The form of these two types of monuments is very similar and it can subsequently be very difficult to tell the two feature types apart. However, certain differences exist which can indicate different functions for the features. The huts at Kvärlöv, for example, are considerably smaller than those at Lockarp 8:4 and Fosie 9A–B. Furthermore, the dates from the ditches at Fosie 9A–B prove that this complex of circular ditches is much later than the ditches at Kvärlöv. The possible traces of post-holes in the ditches at Kvärlöv indicate that these may have had another purpose (i.e. as huts) than the remains at Lockarp 8:4 and Fosie 9A–B. If this is the case, it may indicate different traditions in the (West) Danish and Scanian areas. It is possible that these posts were included in a variant of the grave ditches seen in the Danish material,

and that this is not the case in the circular ditches in Scania. Another possibility is that variation exists within the Scanian circular ditches dependent upon (for example) size, a relation which we will examine in another context.

If our interpretation is based solely on form, then it is simple to interpret feature 9942 at Lockarp 8:4 as the remains of a hut bottom on the basis of similarities between it and the hut from Vadgård, Denmark. But if we take into account the context that the ditches at Lockarp 8:4 and Fosie 9A–B were found in, then this interpretation seems less convincing. It is our conviction that the overall context should have decisive significance for the interpretation of the circular ditches. It is therefore not reasonable to maintain that all circular ditches by definition must have been either graves or huts. It is instead important to discuss the problems surrounding the interpretation of the ditches as either parts of funerary constructions or similar constructions such as hut remains.

We have noted that circular ditches have often been discovered in areas with older graves, which seems to indicate a spatial continuity. Circular ditches intersecting Late Neolithic graves have been found at a few sites in Scania, such as RAÄ 42, Malmö municipality (Björhem, in preparation, Malmö Kulturmiljö archive). The same relationship has been observed at Area 3 of the City Tunnel project (J. Jansen, personal communication). A further example occurred at the excavation at Nummertolvsvägen, Malmö municipality, where a circular ditch was discovered in an area with eight cremations. Five of these lay within a radius of 50 m from the ditch (Siech 2002).

Our decision to interpret the circular ditches from Lockarp 8:4 and Fosie 9A–B as graves rather than hut circles depends, as mentioned above, mostly upon their overall context. The circular ditches lay grouped together not only with other features of the same type, but also close to two earlier graves. Looking at the local topography we see that the ditches were placed at the highest points in the landscape. It can also be argued that the area where the circular ditches are situated was used in a different manner from the rest of the investigated areas, as no houses were found here previous to the transition between Pre-Roman and Roman Iron Ages. The area around the earlier graves and the circular ditches has therefore probably not been used in the same manner as the other parts of the investigated area. Several hearths were situated around the graves, which may hypothetically be contemporary with them. It is tempting to interpret these hearths as evidence of some kind of ritual activity that may have taken place at the site, perhaps in connection with the construction of the graves. The hearths can also be seen as a result of people's periodic return to the site.

No trace of any kind of funerary activity was found during the excavation of the circular ditches at Lockarp 8:4. However, it is our belief that these features display so many common features with both the Scanian graves and the Danish *tuegrave* that it is also reasonable to interpret them as graves. One of the problems with the interpretation of the ditches is ascertaining for what reason and how many times the ditches were re-dug, as well as why the number of entrances varied over time. One interpretation for the re-digging of the ditches could be that the graves were used on more than one occasion. The ditches may have been re-dug every time a new grave was established there. This would therefore mean that several individuals may have been laid to rest in each mound. If this is correct, then the longest continuity would have occurred in feature 9942, where the dead would therefore have been interred beneath or within the mound on four different occasions. It is also tempting to regard the re-digging of the ditches as a religious event, with the ditch and entrance

or entrances symbolizing the transition between two worlds. The presence of several openings can be interpreted as both entrances and exits granting access to the other world for the spirits of the dead. Keeping the ditch open and occasionally adding new entrances could conceivably have been of importance for keeping the passage between the different worlds open.

We feel that the similarities between the circular ditches at Lockarp 8:4 and Fosie 9B and the other Scanian grave material strengthen the assumption that the three circular ditches at Lockarp as well as those at Fosie 9B may have had similar central graves. It is therefore also difficult to completely discount the possibility that the circular graves belong to the same class of field monuments as the Danish *tuegrave*. The differences consist mostly in the degree of preservation. The most discussed and well-published graves were discovered in an area of low-intensity agriculture. The part of Scania where the circular ditches have been found consists of a fully-cultivated landscape, a landscape which has been subjected to and changed by centuries or millennia of comprehensive and intensive agriculture. This may explain why evidence of both mounds and graves is absent within the circular ditches at Lockarp 8:4. To this should also be added that the site was used as an unloading area during the construction of *Yttre Ringvägen*. The ground was consequently solidly compressed and in places severely damaged by heavy vehicles. This is particularly noticeable as the degree of preservation was much better in the eastern part of the area than in the west where the circular ditches were situated.

The strongest doubts over our interpretation of the circular ditches as graves will of course be cast by the ^{14}C dates from these. The circular ditches from Lockarp 8:4 have been ^{14}C-dated to the Mesolithic and Neolithic. We interpret these dates as the result of contamination of the fill by earlier material. Pottery found in the ditches dated from the Bronze and Iron Ages as well as the medieval period. Another argument for regarding the ^{14}C dates from Lockarp 8:4 with a certain degree of scepticism is provided by the dates of the ditches from Fosie 9B. Both circular ditches from Fosie 9B have been dated, one on the basis of the stratigraphic sequence and pottery finds, and the other from ^{14}C samples, to the Pre-Roman Iron Age.

The circular ditches from Lockarp 8:4 and Fosie 9B were discovered together with Neolithic graves, which shows that the circular ditches exist in a funerary context. The site probably lost its significance during the transition between the Pre-Roman and Roman Iron Ages. The presumed long barrow was disturbed at this point by the construction of a triple-aisled long-house, and stones from it may also possibly have been included in the construction of the house.

The interpretation of the circular ditches at Lockarp 8:4 that we have presented here is not completely devoid of controversy. A central and unavoidable question about the interpretation is of course the absence of any actual graves. If this interpretation of these features is to proceed further then a change in how we investigate areas with circular ditches must first take place. The lack of a mound obviously makes it difficult to discover these in advance, but once a circular ditch is suspected, it becomes important to preserve a complete section through it in order to record any possible earlier soil horizons. During the investigation of Burlöv 20C within the *Öresundsförbindelsen* project, a prehistoric soil horizon was found covering half of the ditch found under the Dalby road. This had been covered by another layer, possibly a mound fill (Berggren & Celin 2004, pp. 148 ff.).

Some reflections

Both the contextual method (the so-called single context method) and the spit-based method have proven to be of use during the investigation of circular ditches. However, the contextual method gives the archaeologist greater possibilities for comprehending stratigraphical relationships than the spit-based method. This does however mean that each archaeologist must have a full understanding of the contextual technique.

As ever, our chances of recovering more information about a monument type are determined by our choice of approach, which is in turn steered by the questions we wish to answer. One issue which needs to be discussed is therefore what questions we feel are the most important to answer during the investigation of this type of feature. We believe, for example, that it is important to shed light on which function the features may have had. In order to illuminate this, it is important to investigate whether any structures and/or openings in the ditches may have occurred as well as whether any mounds may have occurred within them. Furthermore, it is important to decide whether the finds from the ditches can be directly related to their period of usage. Any usage of ^{14}C dating bears with it an obvious risk that the material being dated does not derive from the period of usage of the ditch, just as ^{14}C dating of the fill of a ditch seldom provides the correct date when the ditch was actually cut. Therefore, if the possibility of making a stratigraphic dating of the feature in question exists then this is greatly preferable. The issue of how to make best use of find material which is difficult to date nevertheless remains.

One important condition for the investigation of this kind of monument is that the feature should not be interpreted before it has been excavated. Furthermore, it is important to study the context it occurs in. If we have the opportunity to study similar features in the future, it cannot be assumed that we would choose the same approach as we did during the investigation at Lockarp. It is therefore important to further develop both our methodology and our theoretical approach to this seemingly uncomplicated feature type. It is our hope that more of our colleagues will become engaged in a debate which revolves around not only how we interpret a certain monument type but also how we make further progress with the material which already exists in our archives.

References

Published works

Andersson M. 2003. *Skapa plats i landskapet.* Acta Archaeologica Lundensia Series in 8°, No. 42.

Becker C. J. 1961. *Førromersk jernalder i syd- og midtjylland.* Nationalmuseets skrifter. Større beretninger, VI. Copenhagen.

Berggren Å. & Celin U. 2004. *Öresundsförbindelsen. Rapport över Burlöv 20C. Rapport över arkeologisk slutundersökning.* Rapport 36. Malmö Kulturmiljö.

Cademar Nilsson Å. & Ericson Lagerås K. 2000. *Grävfältet vid Häljarps mölla.* UV Syd rapport 1999:96. Malmö.

Jensen S. & Stokholm S. 1992. Lille Holmegård. *Arkæologiske udgravninger i Danmark 1991.*

Jensen S. 1998. *Marsk, land og bebyggelse. Ribeegnen gennem 10.000 år.* Vol. 1. Højbjerg.

Jönsson L. & Lövgren K. 2003. *Öresundsförbindelsen. Rapport över Fosie 9A–B. Rapport över arkeologisk slutundersökning.* Rapport 20. Malmö Kulturmiljö.

Jørgensen E. 1971. Liden Tue. *Skalk 1971:2.*

– 1975. Tuernes mysterier. *Skalk 1975:1.*

Larsson L. 2000. Axes and Fire – Contacts with Gods. In Olausson D. & Vandkilde H. (eds.), *Form, Function & Context.* Acta Arcaeologica Lundensia Series in 8°, No. 31.

Lewring A. & Jørgensen E. 1999. Høje og stentuer. *Sønderjysk månedsskrift* 1999:4.

Rasmussen M. 1992–93. Settlement Structure and Economic Variation in the Early Bronze Age. *Journal of Danish Archaeology* 11.

Stamm Forssblad E. 2004. Lockarp 8:4. Rapport över arkeologisk slutundersökning. Malmö Kulturmiljö.

Unpublished material

Björhem N. (in preparation). Senneolitiska flatmarksgravar.

Siech S. 2002. En plats på jorden – en plats i kosmos. Paper, Institute for Archaeology and Ancient History, Lund University.