



BUTSER ANCIENT FARM

A Guide To The

Danebury CS1

Round-House



Danebury CS1 Round House

This house is based on an excavation at Danebury Hill Fort, nr Andover, Hampshire, by Barry Cunliff, and is designated 'CS1' in the excavation report.

This house has been chosen because of the nature of the wall, i.e. vertical plank wall in a slot trench.

This type of wall has not been tried before at Butser Ancient Farm, nor in any other attempt at reconstruction in Britain.

The house foot-print is well preserved in the excavated evidence and shows plank alignment, door layout, and floor features.



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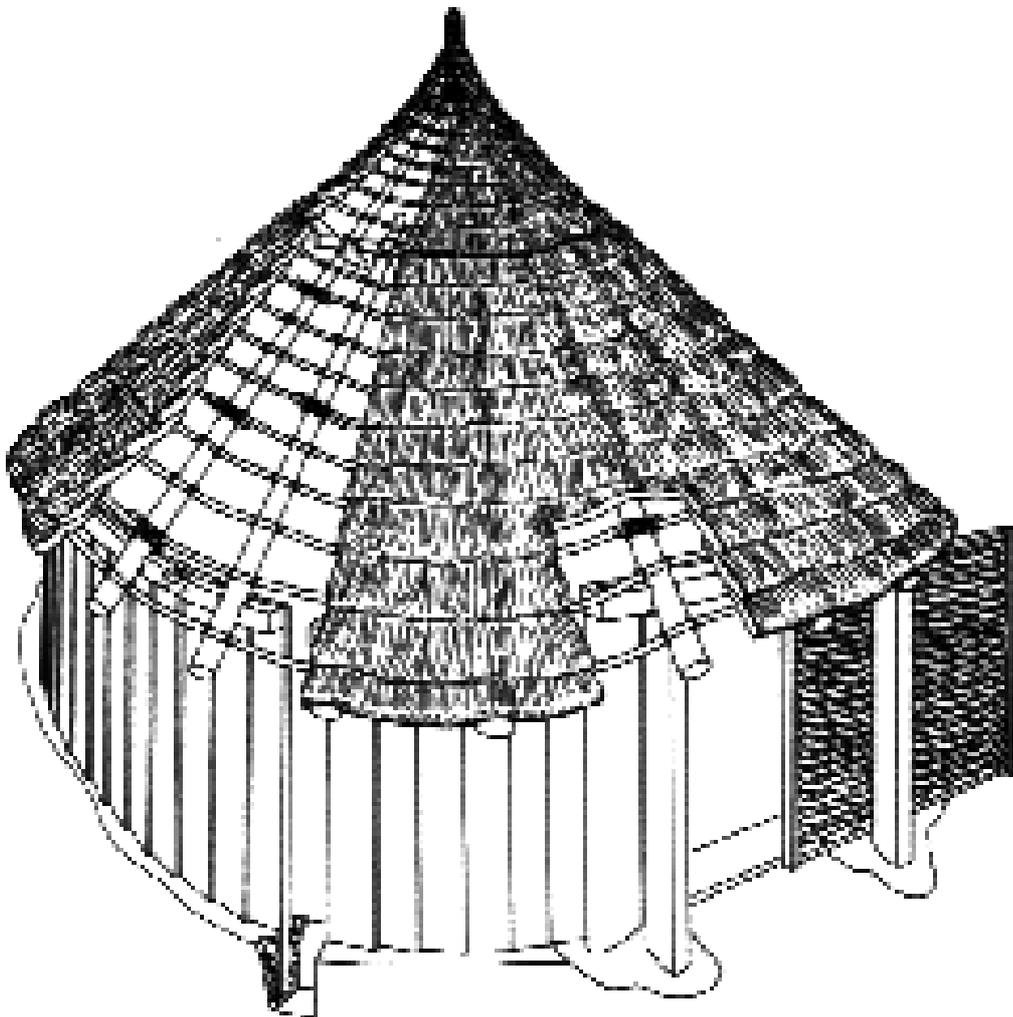
Artist's Impression of the Construction of House CS1

Because of the double set of post-holes in the doorway of this house, it was considered that it may have been possible to have had sliding doors.

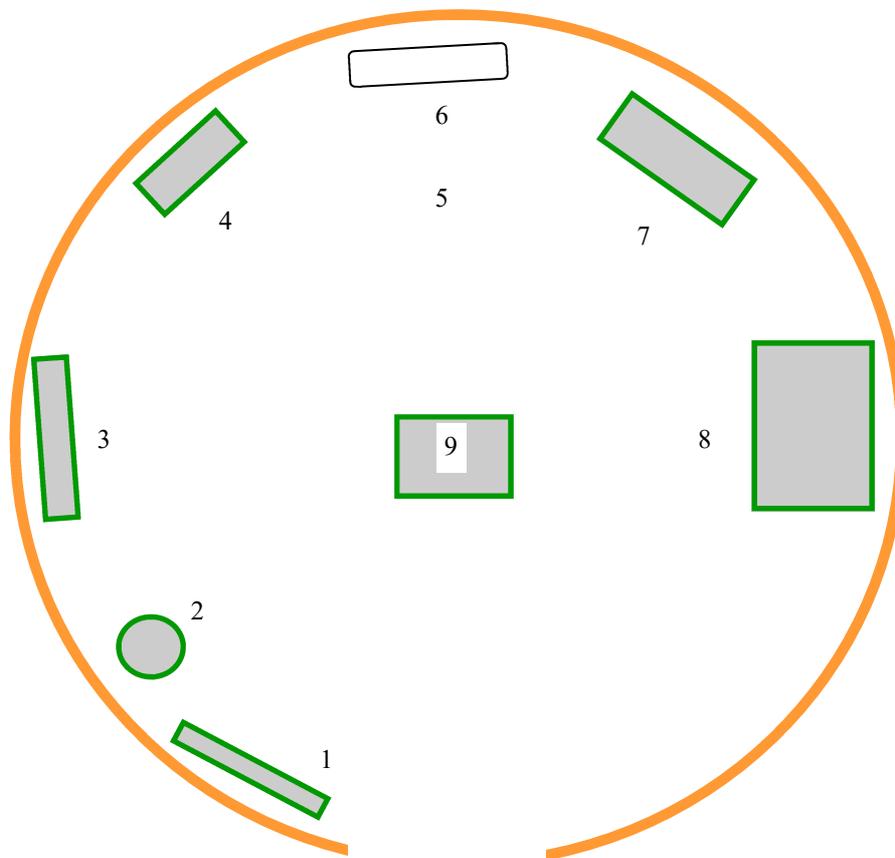
In practice we tried a single door and discovered that it fouls the roof and would not slide under the eaves. It was then tried as a pair of doors, by dividing the single large door in half, vertically.

They were kept in place for six months as a trial. Although there was more success fitting under the roof, the doors proved difficult to slide, and were unstable.

They were replaced with the doors you see now, planked, and swivelled on vertical poles.



Furnishings in the Danebury



Furnishings in the round house

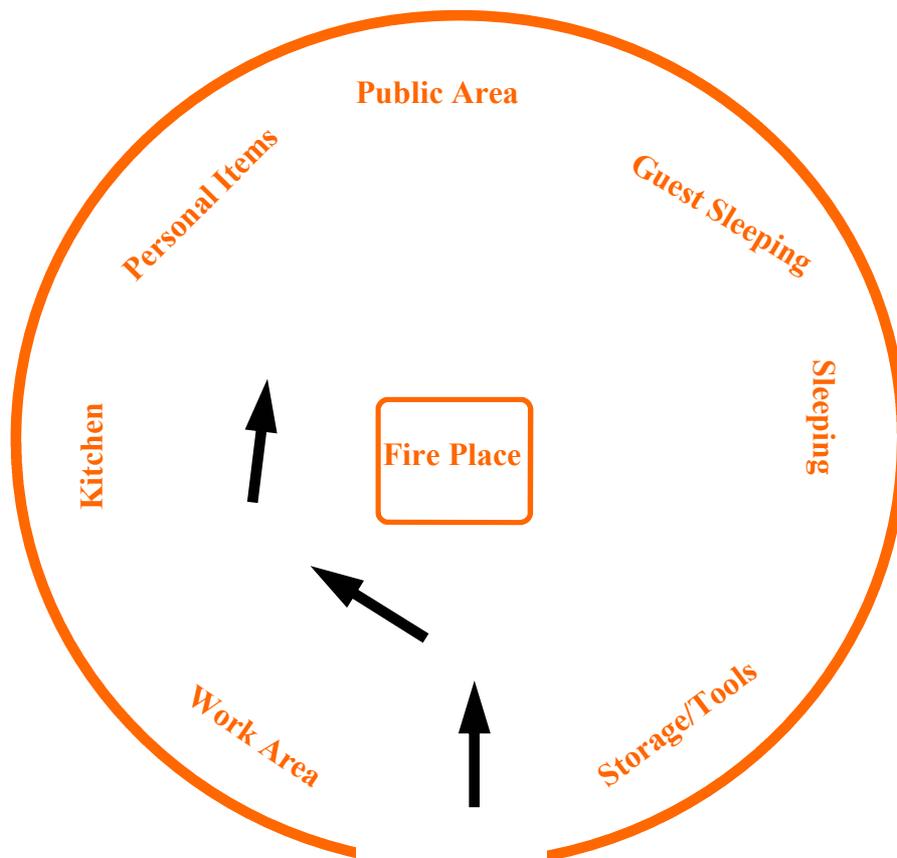
- these items will be built into the round house during the year.
- They may not all be there when you visit!

Working clockwise from the doorway

1. Loom, machine for weaving cloth.
2. Quern, stones for grinding grain into flour.
3. Dresser, storage for pots and food.
4. Chest, box for storing clothes and other items.
5. Table, used for eating from in the public area
6. Couch, for sitting down to eat.
7. Beds, single beds in the guest area.
8. Double bed, for the owner of the house.
9. Fire, surrounded by iron firedogs (Andirons)

The following pages contain a more detailed house contents.

Layout of a Round House



Over the last few years, as technology advances, more information about the interior of buildings has become available.

In the light of that knowledge it is now possible to use that information to attempt to furnish and decorate the interior of a round house to a comfortable standard of living.

Please move in a little from the doorway, otherwise you will block the light, and make it difficult to see anything in the house! Please do NOT go beyond the rope.

You will see the **kitchen** on your left, and the **sleeping area** on your right, and on the far side of the house, the **public area** beyond the fire.

The **fire place** is in the centre of the house, with the fire-dogs surrounding it, and a cauldron hanging on a chain either over or next to the fire.

Please take care if the fire is lit, and do not allow children to touch the fire!

Furnishings in the Danebury

Working clockwise from the doorway.

1. Loom, machine for weaving cloth.

Full title, an 'upright, warp weighted loom'. There are chalk weights keeping tension on the threads to make it easier to weave, and to produce a neater cloth. The two bars across the middle are for pulling the alternate sets of threads forward (to create a 'shed') to enable the weft thread (horizontal) to be woven into the warp threads (vertical).

2. Quern, stones for grinding grain into flour.

This is a 'rotary' quern, as it turns around. The grain is placed in the hole in the middle, where it drops into and between the stones. As the top stone is turned, the grain is crushed, and falls out around the edge.

The quern is operated by kneeling down (both knees on the floor), holding the pole (the one hanging from the ceiling) at a place just above the height of the stone.

Pushing the handle (the one that sticks out from the stone) with the pole. If there is grain in the stones, they will turn relatively easily.

3. Dresser, storage for pots and food.

Furniture has been found as far back as 5000 years ago, in the Neolithic (late stone age) in Skara Brae, in Orkney, and Neolithic houses at Durrington Walls. In the Danebury house we have a shelf unit of oak planks.

(The iron-age peoples had almost all of the carpenters tools that we still use)

This makes an ideal storage area for pots of food, kitchen equipment, and eating bowls and spoons.

4. Chest, box for storing clothes and other items.

This chest is made of oak planking. The lid of the chest is a copy of a find from the Glastonbury Lake Village, in Somerset. It had the peg swivels at either end, and was interpreted as a 'door'. As you can see, the pegs provide a hinge system that works well. It also provides a display area for smaller items that would be too fragile to place on the floor, such as gaming boards, and jewellery boxes, or perhaps some of the finest pottery.

5. Table, used for eating from in the public area.

(The table is on the floor in front of the couch)

The small oak-plank table is based on a find from Ireland. The Roman writers say 'they (the Britons) sit on the floor and eat from low tables'

It is more of a serving board, than a table as we would use. Bread and meat would be put on it, and carried to the seated people. The description of item #6 continues this subject.

Furnishings in the Danebury

Continued from previous page.....

6. Couch, for sitting down to eat.

The couch in the public area is an experiment. The Romans make an observation that 'they (Britons) sit on the floor and eat from low tables'.

In many cultures the seating is cushions or rugs, and some sort of backrest. We have placed a plank against the wall, and covered it with a skin. On the floor in front of it, we have put assorted skins to create a cushioned area for sitting on. This seating is used in conjunction with the low table (#5) which can be used to serve food to the eaters.

7. Beds, single beds in the guest area.

8. Double bed, for the owner of the house.

There is evidence for beds in houses as far back as the Neolithic. In the house in Skara Brae, in Orkney, there were duck feathers found in one of the bed areas!

The beds in the Danebury house are made with a wooden frame and base.

The large bed has a mattress of wool, and both beds have skins on them for extra comfort.

There may have been rolled sheepskins - used for pillows, and the possibility of duvets, or feather beds (those of you old enough will remember quilts and 'eiderdowns').

9. Fire, surrounded by iron firedogs (Andirons)

The fire is on a raised clay fireplace, with the top surface decorated with impressed rings

The fire is fronted by a decorative iron frame, called 'firedogs' or 'andirons'. It would seem that these iron frames were not used for hanging pots on, nor roasting meat on spits, as there is no wear on any that survive. It may have been a way of 'showing off' as iron was expensive, and the centre of the house was an ideal place to display wealth.

Hanging on a chain is the cauldron. Some cauldron chains are very large and fancy. These large cooking pots have been found in burials, and can be made from iron or bronze. The cauldron is a very efficient way of cooking meat, as boiling uses far less fuel than roasting.

There are fire tools in archaeology, such as tongs and pokers, that are used to manage the fire; and iron 'flesh-hooks' for removing joints from the cauldron.

There are some iron-age burials where the firedogs, and a cauldron full of food, have been placed in the grave to accompany the dead to the afterlife.



We hope you have found this guide useful in understanding how the interior of an Iron Age round house works.

If you have any questions, please ask for additional information.

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