

Jane Marchand

The cist and the stone row at the top of Lakehead Hill.

At the top of Lakehead Hill we've got a number of ceremonial ritual sites and it does seem that this area was actually reserved for those, we've got an assortment of stone rows, we've got a number of burial cairns and we've got this very large cist, in fact there are four burials cists within the immediate area, but this one is particularly interesting because of its size and I don't know if you know what a burial cist but basically it's a stone chest which worked like a coffin in which either a body or ashes were laid, the size of this one suggests that this was probably actually an inhumation rather than a cremation. We've got over 200 burial cists on Dartmoor, the strange thing about them is that over 95% of them are actually on the same orientation, they point north-west, south-east, we don't begin to understand why that was important to them but it is just a fact that that is the orientation they are set on. This one is interesting because it was actually restored in the 19th century by the Dartmoor Excavation Committee and I think they probably have restored it not as it was, they reported finding it as a pile of stones, moss covered stones, so we should be grateful to them that they actually saved it, but most cists are actually sunk into the ground and as you can see with this one it is actually proud above the ground so it does look rather strange, leading off from it we've got a stone row, one of a number of stone rows up in this area and the stone row, again, is probably the result of their reconstruction because it's got a definite kink in it and the one thing you can say about Dartmoor stone rows are that they are fairly straight, they're fairly linear and you can see this one actually kinks off to the north.