Five Bronze Age Round Barrows
at Ponton Heath, Stroxtton,
Lincolnshire

Ernest Greenfield


Summary

In 1959 a group of eleven barrows was recognised within a kilometre square at Ponton Heath, 5 km south-west of Grantham. This report gives such details, as could be recorded, of the five barrows which were subsequently destroyed by quarrying. A primary inhumation with wooden ‘coffin’ as a silhouette was found in Barrow 2, a primary cremation with an inverted collared urn and seventeen secondary cremations in Barrow 3 and a primary cremation with a collared urn in Barrow 5. Finds from the barrow group comprised six flint artefacts (some possibly part of a ‘typeworker’s tool kit’) and a number of fragmentary pottery vessels, among them a Food Vessel and Bucket Urns.

THE EXCAVATION by Ernest Greenfield

The barrows were situated about 5km (3 1/2 miles) south-west of Grantham on the northern fringe of Ponton Heath at SK 896303 (see Fig. 1). The Heath area had been under cultivation for some time and the barrows were reduced in height and spread by ploughing. At the time of discovery the cutting of a railway line was in preparation as part of the expansion of the Hungerton quarry. The discovery of burials exposed by earth-scrapping was reported to the City and County Museum, Lincoln which notified the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments at the Ministry of Public Building and Works (now the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission). The writer was asked to visit the site to examine the area involved and this report is the result of that visit in April 1959 and a small excavation carried out for the Inspectorate in July 1959. Before their examination in 1959, the barrows were unrecorded.

The writer would like to thank the landowner, the Welby Estates Company and its lessees, Messrs Stewarts and Lloyds for their co-operation at the time of the excavation, and the specialists for their contributions. The plans and flint drawings have been prepared for publication by the Illustrators Section of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, and the pottery drawings by Mr S. Ford. All the finds have now been deposited in the City and County Museum, Lincoln.

GEOLOGY

Messrs Stewarts and Lloyds (now BSC) kindly provided the detailed local information and annotated map on which this note and Fig. 1 are based, and valuable comments by Denis Robson (Soil Survey) which are incorporated here and on pp. 43-44 are gratefully acknowledged. The barrow cemetery lay within the limits of a large glacial washout which has scored the country rock to a depth of some 12-15m. The washout, at the base, had completely removed the ironstone and cut through to the Upper Lias Clay. A bore-hole roughly in the centre of the area revealed the following sequence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>Depth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plough soil</td>
<td>0.3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder Clay</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincolnshire Limestone</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estuarine Clay</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironstone</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The scraped surface beneath and around the barrows revealed the Boulder Clay, containing broken limestone and small boulders, with high spots of the underlying limestone at intervals. The Geological Survey map (Sheet 143, Bourne) indicates the presence of glacio-fluvial sandy clay loam and gravel on the surface in the area of the site. The gravel consists of ironstone, flint and quartzite. ‘White’ sandy clay loam may occur within or near the base of the sand and gravel.

THE BARROWS (Fig. 1)

Barrows 1-4 were positioned roughly in a straight line on an east-west alignment, with another barrow (5) south of Barrows 3 and 4. Although the top soil had been removed barrows 1 and 2 were not damaged in the scraping. Barrows 3 and 4 were partially destroyed, their southern halves being stripped down to the underlying subsoil. It was the discovery of cremations beneath Barrow 3 that led to further examination during an interim visit in April 1959. Barrow 5 had been completely destroyed by scraping and it was only the exposure of its primary burial which indicated the presence of a barrow. Barrows 1-4 were of large circular type without an encircling ditch. No details as to size and shape could be recorded for Barrow 5 and no encircling ditch was seen. Barrows 2, 3 and 5 contained a primary burial; Barrows 3, 4 and 5 revealed secondary burials. Scattered deposits of sooty material on the surface of the site of Barrow 5 suggested additional secondary burials but these were not proved. Barrows 3 and 5 were examined during April 1959, and Barrows 2 and 4 were the subject of the excavation in July 1959. Although the writer had planned to examine Barrow 1 in July 1959, the barrow was covered by spoil from the quarry sometime between April and July, making further investigation impossible. Barrows 6-11 were not affected by the quarrying programme and were not examined.

N.B. All features were recorded using imperial measurements. The measurements have been converted to metric throughout this report.

Barrow 1

The barrow was over 30 m in diameter and between about 0.5m and 1m in height. Only preliminary observations were made in April 1959 since it was planned to investigate the barrow further in July, 1959 (see above).

Barrow 2

This barrow was the best preserved of the group. It had an east-west diameter of about 37m and its height above the surrounding field surface was about 0.45m to 0.6m. In view of the imminent threat of destruction, a trench 6m east-west by 3m north-south was dug through the approximate centre in search of the primary burial. The stratification in the centre of the barrow from the surface downwards, was as follows:

1. 23cm of plough soil (brown sandy soil and pebbles)
2. 25cm of ‘curves’ apparently laid grass-downwards forming the barrow make-up (mainly buff-brown in colour with pebbles)
3 - the old ground surface, about 5-8 cm deep (this was found preserved over the whole of the grid area and showed mainly as a grey surface which was soft and sandy; it was streaked with black to orange mineral pan)

4 - natural subsoil, comprising hard, compact buff sand and pebbles.

The primary burial was not found within the trench limits, and therefore a mechanical excavator was used to remove the barrow make-up down to the old ground surface on the south-east part of the mound. The primary burial (Burial 1) was located in this area with its west end only c. 0.3 m south-east of the south-east corner of the original trench. No bones were found in the grave and there was no cremation.
Excavation revealed that the grave was orientated east-west and cut into the old land surface. It was 2.5m in length, and tapered from east to west. Its external width was 1.1m at the east end and about 1m at the west end (the south-west corner of the grave had been disturbed by the machine, and measurements here are approximate). The floor of the grave at the west end was roughly flat and was black; its internal width at the base of the east end was 20cm. The grave fill consisted of medium brown sandy soil and pebbles. Within this fill, a dark brown/orange/purple stain (‘pat’) was found. Examination of a sample of this stain showed it to be consistent with the manganese/iron silhouette of an organic container, such as a wood ‘coffin’ (see p. 43). The east end was square in plan with rounded corners. The coffin was apparently boat-shaped, and in section the sides sloped at the east end to a rounded base; the west end had been destroyed by the machine. The depth measured 2.1m east-west by 0.7m at the east end and 0.6m in the middle; the width was not determinable at the west end. The depth from the old ground surface was 22cm at the east end, 19cm in the middle and approximately 18cm at the west end. The average thickness was between 4 and 7mm, but greater in places where the pan had ‘bubbled’.

A Fine Food vessel (see p. 39 and Fig. 3.1) which was disturbed by the machine originally lay in the south-west corner of the grave; none of it was seen in situ. Midway along the north side of the grave filling were two flint tools, a fabricator and a knife (see p. 41 and Fig. 5) resting on a small area of mineralised wood. This was ginger-yellow in colour and the grain of the wood could be clearly seen; it overlay the purple-brown staining. The implements were very close together. There were two patches of white substance on the north and south slopes of the grave about 0.6m from the east end. A sample of this was shown to be a ‘white clay’ (see p. 43). Finds from the barrow mound consisted of three flint implements (two scrapers and a saw fragment, see p. 42 below) and a Beaker sherd (see p. 40 below).

Barrow 3 (Fig. 2)

The scraped southern half of this barrow showed a primary cremation burial within a small pit (Burial 1) roughly in the centre of the barrow and seventeen secondary cremation deposits (Burials 2-18) in a rough arc round the southern periphery. All the burials, with the exception of the primary, had been mainly scraped away and only the bases of the secondaries remained for examination. The machine operators noted a number of pottery vessels associated with the deposits but these were subsequently destroyed. The deposits were disturbed by persons unknown and their contents somewhat confused. On examination only the deposits 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 18 were found to contain fragments of bases and lower parts of vessels, and even here the rims and upper portions had been destroyed in the scraping.

The Primary Burial (Burial 1)

This was contained in a small pit of roughly circular plan dug into the subsoil. The top of the pit had been removed by the scraper and showed, when first seen, as a circular patch of dark grey-black soil with a reddened edge. When cleared the pit sides were seen to be vertical and the base concave. The dimensions were 0.6m north-south by 0.58m east-west, with the vertical walls about 15cm deep and the depth in the centre 18cm. The sides of the pit, with embedded pebbles, were burnt red to a thickness of 2.5 to 5cm.

The pit contained the collapsed remains of a large Collared Urn (see p. 39 and Fig. 3.3), which was inverted over a large deposit of cremated bone. The base and part of the lower half of one side of the vessel had been removed by the scraper. The deposit comprised cremated bone and black sooty, charcoal-flecked soil with burnt pebbles and a few scraps of burnt clay. Professor Causey has suggested that the bones are the remains of an individual aged between 16 and 20 years (see p. 42). The vessel was too fragmentary and friable to permit removal on its own so it was removed together with the cremation in a block of soil.

The Secondary Burials (Burials 2-18)

These were lifted as and where practicable and submitted to Miss R. Powers whose report appears in Table 2. The pottery from the deposits is reported on by Mr S. Ford (see pp. 39-41). Table 1 (on page 38) contains details of the burials recorded in the field.

Barrow 4

This barrow was the most easterly one of the group and was in the main east-west line of four barrows (see Fig. 1). It had been half destroyed in the scraping, the northern half remaining intact in April 1959. The south half of the barrow had been scraped down to the surface of the underlying sub-soil which was part limestone and part glacial drift. At its centre the barrow was about 0.45m in height and about 30m in diameter east-west.

No primary deposit was seen and it seemed likely to be under the intact part of the barrow. One burial, assumed to be secondary, was found by Mr D. W. Haw during April 1959. It was examined by the writer in July and found to consist of a shallow oval-shaped depression in sandy buff soil containing many pebbles. It was orientated east-west and measured 0.7m by 0.6m north-south; the depth from the bulldozed surface was 15cm maximum. The edge, sides and base were burnt red and many pebbles embedded in the side and base were red-blue; the sides sloped to a concave base. Before disturbance, the filling of the pit was black, sooty, burnt sandy silt mixed with pebbles, charcoal flecks, and many pieces of calcined bone. The cremated bone has been identified as the remains of an adult, probably male (see pp. 42-43). No pottery or other finds were located.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Outline</th>
<th>Dimens. (cm.)</th>
<th>Sides</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Depth cm.</th>
<th>Matrix: colour of soil</th>
<th>Filling: calcined bone</th>
<th>Contents: pottery</th>
<th>other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2   | outer: roughly circular  
    inner: oval | 20-25 (E-W)  
    13(N-S) | sloping | roughly pointed  
    (10 dia.) | 20 | outer: dk. brown  
    inner core: dk. brown-black | sooty* | frags. | assoc. | pebbles |
| 3   | circular | 34(E-W) | vertical | concave | 23 | black-brown | charcoal | fair amount |       |       |
| 4   | circular | 43(E-W) | vertical | concave | 14 | dk. grey | charcoal** none* | | | pebbles limestone |
| 5   | roughly circular | 36(N-S) | sloping | concave | 9 | dk. brown | * | small quantity | pebbles | small pieces limestone |
| 6   | 20(N-S) | | | | 6.5 | * | small deposit | assoc. | | |
| 7   | oval | 25(N-S) | | | 5 | med. brown disturbed | a little | scatter on surface, none in situ | | pebbles |
| 8   | roughly circular | 53(N-S) | saucer-shaped | concave | 15 | dk. grey | * | few scraps | assoc. | many pebbles |
| 9   | 20(N-S) | | none | | | dark disturbed | none | a few sherds in disturbed surface | | pebbles |
| 10  | irregular | 25(N-S)  
    30(E-W) | | | 2.5 | grey-brown streaked with soot | a few scraps | | pebbles, small limestone |
| 11  | roughly circular | 36(N-S) | triangular: vertical E side, W side slopes from surface to base | | 11 (E) | med. brown | charcoal | few frags. | | pebbles |
| 12  | oval | 25(N-S)  
    18(E-W) | sloping | roughly concave | 8 | black sooty | charcoal present | part of vessel base seen by quarrymen | | pebbles |
| 13  | irregular | 32(N-S)  
    23(E-W) | sloping | concave | 4 | black sooty* | none* | | many pebbles, some burnt red |
| 14  | oval | 30(N-S)  
    36(E-W) | sloping | concave | 6 | black sooty* | none* | | |
| 15  | oval | 38(NW-SE)  
    17(NE-SW) | sloping | concave | 13 | grey-brown | a little soot | none | | |
| 16  | circular | 24(N-S) | vertical | roughly pointed | 28 | some pieces of charcoal | large quantity, both large & small frags. | | | |
| 17  | circular | 18(N-S) | sloping | concave | 11 | dk. grey | a few scraps | | | |
| 18  | oval | 25(E-W)  
    19(N-S) | sloping | steeply | 8 | in pot: ginger-brown | in top of pot fill | part of lower half of Bucket Urn in situ, lying on side, base to W | | pebbles |

*Some diagnostic material noted either by Miss Powers (Table 2) or at AM Lab.  
**Identified by Jacqui Watson (AM Lab) as probably Wild Cherry (Prunus sp.)

38
Barrow 5

This barrow was about 64m south of barrows 1-4 and about midway between Barrows 3 and 4. It had been entirely removed in the scraping and was located by the discovery of the primary burial and indicated by the surface of the limestone which was higher under the barrow than under the surrounding field surface. Its diameter and original height could not be ascertained.

The Burials

The primary burial (Burial 1) was similar to that in Barrow 3. It was contained in a small pit of approximately oval shape cut in the subsoil; the long axis was east-west. The west end was fairly straight; the sides roughly vertical and the base concave. The pit had a north-west/south-east axis of 0.6m and a north-east/south-west axis of 0.4m. The depth in the centre was 14cm. The top of the burial had been scraped exposing the reddened rim. The sides were also burnt for a thickness of about 2.5cm. The filling was much disturbed and some was disturbed around the pit on the surface of the scraped limestone. The filling of the pit was very black and sooty and contained cremated bone, fire-reddened pebbles and charcoal. A fine Collared Urn (see p. 40 and Fig. 4.8) was found by Mr. Haw, prior to the burial being recorded by the writer. It had apparently been found at the west end of the burial pit lying horizontally north-south with the base to the south.

Burial 2 was located on the eastern edge, 3.7m north of Burial 1. It consisted of a roughly circular patch of charcoal-flecked dark soil containing soot and an associated plano-convex knife (see p. 41 and Fig 5.4). The deposit was scattered and the original location unknown. The patch measured 0.7m east-west and about 5 to 8cm deep.

Burial 3 consisted of a roughly circular patch of sooty soil 15.5m east of Burial 1 about 5 to 8cm deep. Attached to this on the west side was an area of burnt limestone. This was 0.6m across east-west.

THE FINDS

THE POTTERY by S. Ford 1

All of the vessels described below have a very similar fabric. In the exposed surfaces, the clay matrix appears slightly vesicular; this is probably due to a calcite temper which has largely been burned or dissolved out. It did, however, include occasional pieces of shell up to 2mm in diameter. The main temper is ill-sorted grog (up to 2mm, or occasionally 5mm) which occurs in variable quantities. The minute flecks of mica and rare quartz grains up to 1mm in diameter were
probably present in the original clay. Differences do, however, exist between vessels, not only as slight variations in the size, type and quantity of temper, but also in the degree of finishing. A distinction has therefore been made between finer and coarser vessels.

The Beaker sherd from Barrow 2, while having a similar fabric to the other pottery, has a well-finished surface and fully oxidised core, suggesting a different manufacturing technique, notably a higher firing temperature.

**Barrow 2**

**Burial 1** (primary burial) (Fig. 3.1)

Fine Food Vessel decorated with stabled herringbone decoration (Gibson's Basic type, Gibson 1978). Outer surface pale orange; inner surface grey-black; core black.

**From Mound** (fig. 3.2)

Fine long necked Beaker sherd decorated with horizontal cording and vertical V-shaped stab beneath the rim. Both surfaces uniform pale orange; core orange.

**Barrow 3**

**Burial 1** (primary burial) (Fig. 3.3)

Large, fine Collared Urn decorated with vertical and horizontal cording on the collar and whipped cord herringbone decoration on the neck. Both surfaces orange-brown; core black.

**Secondary Burials**

**Burial 2** (Fig. 3.4)

Coarse thick-walled base, probably of a Bucket Urn. Undecorated; finger impressions made during manufacture. Outer surface orange-brown; inner surface brown-black; core black.

**Burial 6**

Coarse, undecorated body sherds 11mm thick and several base fragments. Outer surface pale orange-light brown; inner surface black; core red-brown. (Not illustrated).

**Burial 7**

One possible rim sherd. Outer surface light brown; inner surface and core black. (Not illustrated).

**Burial 8** (fig. 3.5)

Coarse thick-walled base, with accidental finger impressions. Outer surface brown; inner surface and core black.

**Burial 9**

Several fine thin-walled sherds, undecorated; only accidental impressions. Both surfaces light brown; core black. (Not illustrated).

**Burial 18** (Fig. 3.6)

Coarse bucket urn with applied cordon. Non-decorative finger impressions on base and vertical finger smearing. Outer surface light-dark brown; inner surface and core black.

**Unstratified**

1. (Fig. 4.7)

Three large coarse sherds including base. Undecorated; only accidental impressions. Outer surface brown-orange; inner surface grey-brown; core black.

2. Four sherds 7mm thick, decorated with oblique and parallel stabbing. Outer surface orange-dark brown; inner surface and core black. (Not illustrated).

3. Several coarse sherds 8mm thick. Undecorated. Outer surface orange-brown; inner surface brown; core black. (Not illustrated).

4. Two coarse undecorated rim sherds 5mm thick. Outer and inner surfaces dark brown; core black. (Not illustrated).

**Barrow 5**

**Burial 1** (primary burial) (Fig. 4.8)

Collared Urn decorated with criss-cross cordings. Outer surface light brown; inner surface grey-brown; core black.

**Discussion**

The Food Vessel from Barrow 2 (Fig. 3.1) and the Collared Urn from Barrow 3 (Fig. 3.3) are typical in both form and decoration of their respective classes. However, the Collared Urn from Barrow 5 has a somewhat unusual decoration. Burgess and Vardell have attempted to produce a typology for Collared Urns based on radiocarbon dates. The vessel from Barrow 5 with its concave collar, narrow base and embellishment of the shoulder seems a reasonable candidate for their
The pottery from the site is unusual in that both primary and secondary vessels are in the same fabric, the only difference being the degree of fineness. However, the vessel from Barrow 3, Burial 9 shows that finer vessels were not restricted to primary burials.

THE FLINTS by Elizabeth Healey

The six flint artefacts recovered during the excavation comprise a plano-convex knife, associated with Burial 2, Barrow 5, a flake knife and a fabricator associated with a food vessel inside the coffin in Barrow 2, and two scrapers and a saw from the make-up of Barrow 2. The artefacts are fully described in the catalogue (see p. 42) and illustrated in Fig. 5.

The fabricator, (Fig. 5.1), belongs to a class of tool characterised by heavily worn areas usually concentrated on one or both ends of blanks of varying form, but the wear may extend on to the sides of the object. The type is found in Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age tool-kits. Preliminary studies recognise the following morphological sub-types:

a. steeply retouched rod-like pieces of flint of lozenge-sectioned form.

b. steeply retouched rod-like pieces of flint of triangular-sectioned form.

c. edge-retouched flakes or blades of D-sectioned form.

d. irregular pieces.

The example here is of type b.

The chronology of these various sub-types has not been satisfactorily established, but there is some evidence to suggest that type a did not survive the Beaker period (Atkinson 1951, 71) and that type c may prove to be a distinctive Late Neolithic or possibly Beaker type (Smith 1965, 108). Type d appears to have a longer time span (Saville 1977, 3-8).

In the absence of data on experimental replication and microwear analysis, the use to which such a tool might have been put must remain hypothetical, and it is by no means certain that all fabricators performed the same function. It is however improbable that any were punches or flint-flaking tools (pace Evans 1897, 416), but some may have been used as drills or as pestles for pounding minerals and pigments. The occurrence of some fabricators with pyrites, in closed burial contexts has led to the suggestion that they were
used to make fire, the heavy wear on the fabricators being caused by friction in use as strike-a-lights (Evans 1897, 311-317; Close-Brooks 1971-2, 127). The association of fabricators and pyrites when found together with other artefacts including usually small, scale-flaked knives (as Fig. 5.3) and more rarely 'sponge finger' stones or bone spatulae, awls and V-perforated buttons, suggests a standard tool-kit. Examination of the wear on some of the objects has led to the interpretation of the whole package as a leatherworker's tool-kit: the fabricators and pyrites providing the fire-making equipment; the knives being used to scrape and cut skins; the spatulae to rub in fat and apply the final burnish; the awls employed in sewing and the buttons in fastening leather garments (Smith & Simpson 1966, 134; Green 1976, 68-9). Others have suggested that the fabricator itself was used as a leather burnisher (Bradley 1970, 356). Certainly the morphological similarity of sub-types c and d to some small scale-flaked knives, with which they are broadly contemporary, is striking and lends weight to the possibility that in fact they are simply heavily worn knives (compare scrapers with areas of heavy wear).

Whatever the function of 'fabricators' and small knives, which must ultimately depend on microwear analysis, it is clear that the association of a small knife and fabricator in Barrow 2 forms part of a tool-kit, similar to those from other burials, and in common with the other examples is tentatively interpreted as belonging to a leatherworker. The ceramic associations of such tool-kits are either Beaker (Smith & Simpson 1966, 133-41) or, as in this instance, Food Vessel, compare for example the kits from Simonstown cairn, Colty, Glamorgan, (Fox 1959) and Aberdour Road, Dunfermline, Fife (Close-Brooks 1972, 127-8).

The calcined knife from Barrow 5 (Fig. 5.4) comes from a cremation deposit: Burial 2. It is a finely worked example and as such falls within Clark's definition of a Plano-convex knife (Clark 1932, 158). In England these knives (which are to be clearly distinguished from the less well-flaked forms, like the knife from Barrow 2 (Fig. 5.3)), occur with both inhumations and cremations and have traditionally been considered early Bronze Age artefacts, normally, though not exclusively, associated with Food Vessels (Clark 1932, 160) and more particularly with the Yorkshire Vase type of Food Vessel (Simpson 1968, 198-9). They also occur, though less frequently, with Collared Urns. In Ireland they are found with a variety of ceramic styles in Bronze Age contexts but always seem to be associated with cremations (Kavanagh 1973, 217-8). In Scotland however they are apparently documented in Neolithic contexts for example in the chambered tombs (Henshall 1972, 185), and in the mortuary structure at Dalladies (Piggott 1972, 44-5) although this particular example may be better considered as a single-piece sickle.

The relationship (if any) between the Neolithic and early Bronze Age knives therefore needs clarification (Healey 1972, 802-10), but in the light of the present English evidence it seems reasonable to assume that the Stroxton plano-convex knife is early Bronze Age in date. The relative rarity of these fine knives and their occurrence in burial contexts suggests that they may have been prestige and perhaps non-functional objects, and are to be seen in contrast to the leatherworker's tool-kit from Barrow 2.

The other three artefacts (two scrapers and a saw) are from the barrow mound together with an unabraded beaker sherd. Typologically all three could have been associated with the beaker. Finds of pottery and flintwork within barrow mounds are frequently encountered (Ashbee 1960, 53; Green 1974, 126). There is no compelling reason to suppose that the artefacts from Stroxton were not accidentally incorporated, especially since other apparently broadly contemporary flint artefacts (not examined by myself) but of late Neolithic to Middle Bronze Age date (S. Ford pers. comm) were found on the field surface.

Catalogue

1. Fabricator, sub-type b, of triangular cross-section; blank steeply flaked to central ridge from base, and some inverse flaking on ventral face. Both ends heavily worn and sides abraded. Dimensions: 74 x 16 x 16mm. Mid-brown-grey flint; cortex (unrolled) on back. (Fig. 5.1)
   Location: ; Barrow 2: grave.

2. Scraper. Retouched scraper-edge of rounded plan extending for about three quarters of the circumference of a squat flake struck from a changed orientation core. Heavily undercut on the stepest parts. Dimensions: 42 x 42 x 16mm. Striking platform plain. Grey flint with cortex (unrolled) on about half of the dorsal face. (Fig. 5.2).
   Location: Barrow 2: mound make-up.

3. Knife. Fine scale-flaking on edges at butt end and all over dorsal face on distal half. Made on a blade apparently struck from a single platform core. Dimensions: 50 x 17 x 5mm. Plain striking platform. Mid-brown flint. (Fig. 5.3).
   Location: Barrow 2: grave.

4. Knife. Finely flaked plano-convex knife pointed at both ends; striking platform and bulb flaked away. Dimensions: 75 x 20 x 6mm. Calcined. (Fig. 5.4).
   Location: Barrow 5, Burial 2.

5. Scraper. Three quarters of circumference (i.e. all but the striking platform) of small squat blank, retouched with invasive flaking to form a scraper edge of rounded plan. Dimensions: 23 x 24 x 8mm. Wide plain striking platform. Mid-brown flint. (Fig. 5.5).
   Location: Barrow 2: mound make-up.

6. Saw. Coarse dentilications (about 5 per cm) on edge of a large blade fragment. Dimensions (minimum) 42 x 27 x 6mm. Dark grey flint. (Not illustrated).
   Location: Barrow 2: mound make-up.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Margaret Ehrenburg for discussing various aspects of this report with me and to Dr Stephen Green for reading through in draft and offering helpful comments.

THE CREMATED BONE by Prof. G. Causey, Royal College of Surgeons, and Rosemary Powers, Sub-Department of Anthropology, British Museum (Natural History).

The primary burial, no. 1, in Barrow 3 was recovered entire from its urn after removal from the field, enabling Professor Causey to comment in some detail (Causey 1964, 39-60). Miss Powers’ descriptions of the secondary, mostly disturbed and incomplete, cremations (nos. 2-18, and Barrow 4, Burial A) have been collected in Table 2.

Barrow 3, no. 1

Primary burial

This consisted mainly of small pieces of long bone but included a small fragment of the maxilla, the head of a femur and several phalanges. These suggest that the individual was between sixteen and twenty years old and the general size of the skeleton and slenderess of the bones suggest a female. It could however be a slow-developing or under-mature boy of the same age.
### TABLE 2

**The Secondary Cremations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Other material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Adult or nearly so</td>
<td>Frags, femur and roots mixed with gravel of 3 teeth—prob. 2 incisors and 1 molar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Few frags., part of rim of acetabulum mixed with charcoal and gravel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>No bone visible*</td>
<td>Charcoal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Minute chips</td>
<td>Gravel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Adult or nearly so</td>
<td>Broken into small pieces (8mm or less)—both skull and long-bone frags.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dozen frags. long-bone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Minute frags.</td>
<td>Mixed with charcoal and gravel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Prob. juvenile</td>
<td>Frags, skull and long-bone mixed with charcoal and gravel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Prob. adult</td>
<td>Frags, skull and long-bone Gravel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Few flecks white powder representing cremated bone</td>
<td>Charcoal and gravel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>No sign of cremated bone to unaided eye*</td>
<td>Gravel only—no charcoal*: fine ironstone gravel possibly resembling charcoal on excavation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Frags, skull and long-bone A little charcoal and gravel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Barrow 4**

A Adult, prob. male

Pieces of skull, showing (Small gravel and open sutures, and long-bone showing noticeable muscle markings

All fragments are white and calcined, occasionally lightly stained with iron from the matrix which is a gravel including quartz pebbles, sandstone and ironstone. In so far as they can be identified, all the bone fragments are human.

*AM Lab. microscopical examination showed some present.

---

**EXAMINATION OF 'SOIL' SAMPLES by J. Evans, North-East London Polytechnic & Leo Biek, Ancient Monuments Laboratory**

Three small samples taken by the excavator were investigated (Table 3; Fig. 6). The nature of the silhouette material may be compared to that at Bishops Waltham (Biek 1957, 162-3). The mechanism awaits full investigation: in general terms, biological and especially cellular substances, buried in well-drained media under acid conditions, appear to act as accumulators of certain elements, particularly manganese, which are otherwise mobile in the circumstances. The picture is slightly complicated by the related formation of similar 'pans' at drainage interfaces between more and less permeable strata.

The observations at Stroxton would be consistent with the burial, in the grave pit under Barrow 2, of a wooden 'dugout canoe' type coffin. Probably for the first time, an attempt to identify the original material of the dark stain was successful. The recovered 'woody' fine structure may have been preserved by the flints lying on it. Both 'wood' and stain were found by Jacqui Watson at the Ancient Monuments Laboratory to be probably Oak (Quercus sp.) and one cannot therefore decide whether the flints were lying on the 'side' (thickness) of the coffin, or on a 'lid' covering it. In general terms the observations are similar to what was seen at Swarkestone, Derby., Barrow 4 (Biek 1960, 43). There, the 'stain' was interpreted as a humus pan. It is clearly probable that such a pan would form in this situation, at both sites. But there, the presence of identifiable wood in the stain actually gives substance to the coffin.

Had there been a corpse, it need not have left a recognisable trace; wood is more likely than bone to have its form mineralised before losing its coherence under these conditions, which would also make a diffused and confused skeletal shadow virtually unrecognisable. Detailed work in progress on a similar feature found at Little Ouseburn, E. Yorks., may clarify this aspect; there, also, the base was black—presumably because accumulation was reinforced by 'panning'.

The low pH of the 'white clay' confirms its probable origin within the drainage domain of the sand and gravel, as against the boulder clay till proper, which is known to be of pH ca.8. The placement of the 'clay' looks deliberate but could be fortuitous.

---

**Fig. 6. Sketch plan of the grave pit from Barrow 2.**

---

43
## TABLE 3 (Fig. 6)

**Examination of ‘soil’ (deposit) samples from Barrow 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Field description</th>
<th>Laboratory description</th>
<th>Analytical results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emission spec. At. abs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>‘stain’</td>
<td>(a) matrix: fine yellow-brown sand containing (b)</td>
<td>normal ‘earth’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) glossy black particles, mostly flat but some nodular-vesicular; some ferruginous amorphous, ‘pan’-like; some similar to 2(b)</td>
<td>elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>‘rotted wood’</td>
<td>(a) as 1(a) and containing (b)</td>
<td>as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) very few minute light-brown flaky particles showing ‘woody grain’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>‘white substance’</td>
<td>‘white’ sandy clay loam</td>
<td>as above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Notes
1. This note was written in 1979 and does not take into account any material published after this date.
2. See, for example Longworth, 1961. 263-306; Pryor, 1974, 1-2, Fig. 3; Burgess, 1974.
3. The publication of Pierpoint’s work in Yorkshire was too late for consideration here (Pierpoint, 1980).

### References


Green, H. S., 1974. ‘Early Bronze Age burial, territory and population in Milton Keynes, Bucks. and the Great Ouse valley’, *Archaeological Journal* 131, 75-139.


---

The society is grateful to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (English Heritage) for a grant towards publication of this article.