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EXCAVATIONS AT YARBOROUGH AND KNOLL HILL FARM STANDING STONES, NORTH SOMERSET

DAVID MULLIN, JODIE LEWIS AND HEATHER TAYLOR

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SUMMARY

This article details the results of research excavations at two standing stone sites in the parish of Banwell, North Somerset. The Yarborough Stone is a large, extant stone and the excavations near it revealed a deliberately laid clay platform, a smaller, buried monolith and a pig burial in a pit, deposited with a flint scraper and a crystal. At Knoll Hill a further standing stone site was excavated. Although the stone is no longer present, the stone socket was located and found also to be associated with a deliberately laid clay platform. No direct dating evidence was obtained for either site, but the related discoveries, together with comparisons drawn from other excavated standing stones, make a Neolithic or Bronze Age date likely.

INTRODUCTION

The parish of Banwell in North Somerset is unusual in having a large concentration of standing stones. Six stones are located in the parish but, as little previous work has been undertaken, their date and function are uncertain. The most well-known of the Banwell stones is the large monolith previously known as Wook's Quoit, now more commonly called the Yarberry or Yarborough Stone (Scheduled Monument Number 22810). A further stone once existed 400m to the east of the Yarborough Stone, hereafter known as the Knoll Hill Farm standing stone, but has been removed. This article details the results of research excavations at both sites in 2011.

The Yarborough standing stone is located at the south-west corner of the parish of Banwell in North Somerset (NGR ST 3903 5783; Fig. 1), and is generally assumed to be Neolithic in date. It takes the form of a single, isolated orthostat of local pinkish Dolomitic Conglomerate, almost 2.5m in height. The stone stands on a site sloping gently to the south, just below the 10m contour, but still above what would originally have been the northern flood plain of the River Lox Yeo, which lies about 260m to the south. This watercourse flows north-east/south-west, draining into the River Axe at Crab Hole, roughly 1 km south-east of Loxton. Historically, the Yarborough stone was also known as 'Wook's Quoit'. Corcos (2015, 15) notes that the ultimate source of this designation is unknown, but it was certainly current in the early 18th century: in the manuscript notes for his proposed history of Somerset written c.1730, the antiquarian John Strachey of Sutton Court, notes in his description of Banwell and Banwell Hill that:

'In the vally on the so. of the hill a large monumental stone set up calld Wooks Cait relating to the fabled gyant inhabiting Wokey hole so Hautvills Cait in Chew & Belluton & the Devill(e)s casts' (SRO DD/SH 107 c/202, Part 2 of 2, Winterstoke Hundred, quoted in Corcos 2015).

The stone stands on land belonging to Yarborough (or 'Yarberry') Farm, 200m to its north. The present farm building is at least early 17th century in date (listing no. Banwell 4/45) but the site on which it stands is almost certainly medieval (Corcos 2015). The bury element of the place name may refer to either a fortified and/or high status occupation site or a hill, mound or tumulus (for a detailed discussion of the place-name and the landscape and topographic context of the stone see Corcos 2015). There is a low mound visible next to the Yarborough Stone and this, in conjunction with the place name, suggests the possible presence of a Bronze Age barrow. A geophysical survey by Corcos and Smisson (2009) confirmed the presence of the mound and what appeared to be a partial ditch, immediately east of the standing stone. This was interpreted as a previously unknown barrow, which incorporated the presumably pre-existing orthostat in its ditch.

A further stone stood just under 400m to the east of the Yarborough stone, at Knoll Hill Farm (NGR ST 3943 5790; Fig. 1) but this had disappeared before 1954 (North Somerset HER 108; Hunt 1954, 28). The location of the stone is marked on Ordnance Survey mapping from the First Edition of 1881 through subsequent revisions until

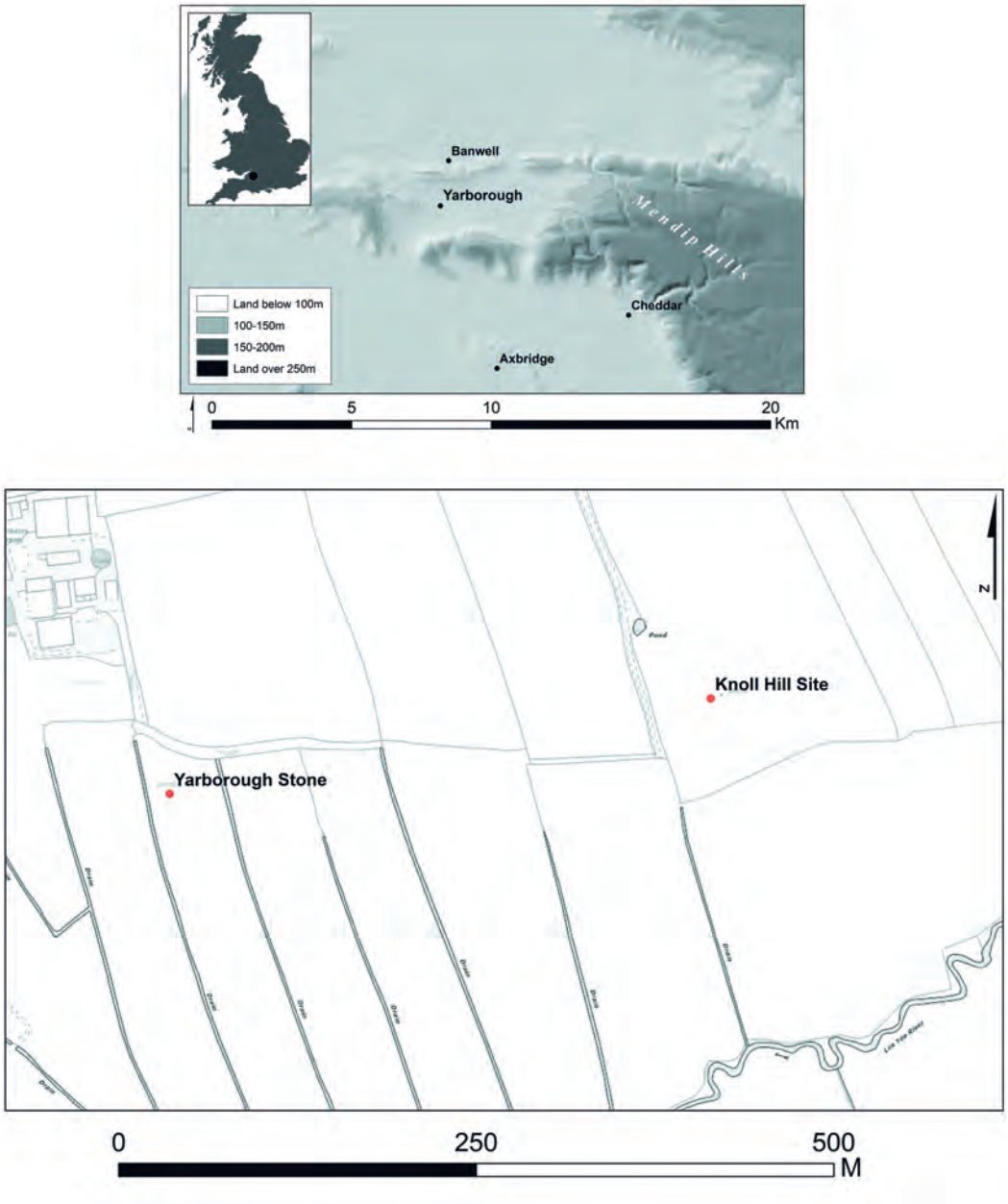

Fig. 1 Site Location © Crown copyright and database rights (2020). An Ordnance Survey/Edina Service

the 1970s but little more is known about this site. It was, however, subjected to resistivity survey by Corcos and Smisson (2009) and suggested to be associated with a curving ditch, similar in nature to that at Yarborough.

THE 2011 EXCAVATION PROJECT

Since the mid-1990s, two of the authors (JL and DM) have been researching the prehistory of northern Somerset, with a particular focus on ritual and funerary monuments of the Neolithic and Bronze Age. This has included regional reviews of the evidence (Lewis 2005; 2007; (ed.) 2011; Lewis and Mullin 2012a; 2012b) and excavations at major Later Neolithic sites including the Priddy Circles (Lewis and Mullin 2011) and Stanton Drew (Lewis and Mullin 2013). In addition, one of the authors (HT) has produced an MRes thesis on the standing stones of northern Somerset (Taylor 2019), supervised by aforementioned authors. The results of these projects are revealing this landscape to be rich in Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments, with intriguing indications that it is a region where different monumental traditions from western and central parts of Britain came together (Lewis and Mullin 2012a; Lewis, Mullin and Johnson 2018; Taylor 2019).

As part of this ongoing research, excavations were undertaken close to the Yarborough Stone and at the site of the Knoll Hill Stone. At Yarborough the intention was to investigate the hinterland of the standing stone, looking for associated features that might help elucidate the date and function of the site. The mound and ditch discovered by Corcos and Smisson (2009) were also targeted. At Knoll Hill, the objective was to locate the socket for the stone and identify any further features.

Four trenches were opened at Yarborough and a single trench and a series of test-pits at Knoll Hill. All trenches were hand-excavated and locations recorded using Trimble R8 VRS 'survey grade' RTK GPS, capable of centimetre-scale accuracy. Further geophysics surveys were undertaken at both sites but revealed no results of interest.

THE YARBOROUGH STONE

The four trenches were excavated outside the scheduled area, but close to the standing stone at Yarborough (Fig. 2). Trench 1 was located to the east of the stone, Trench 2 to the south of Trench 1, and Trenches 3 and 4 were north of the stone.

Trench 1 was located over the area of the possible barrow, described above. The trench was L-shaped and measured 11m x 2m north-south and 10m x 3m east-west (Fig. 3). A single feature was visible in the eastern arm of the trench, cutting the subsoil at a depth of 0.20m. This was a shallow ditch (1006), which contained a single sherd of post-medieval pottery and a piece of flint. It is suggested to be a drainage ditch of relatively recent date.

A sondage was excavated in the northern part of the trench, to determine the extent and composition of the mound (Fig. 3). This revealed that below the subsoil was a deposit of sand, 0.20m thick (1002). Below this was a grey silt, 0.15m thick, containing frequent charcoal inclusions (1003). This was directly above a natural orange clay (1004) which was up to 0.50m thick and overlay weathered Mercia mudstone bedrock (1005).

The sequence in Sondage 1 appears to represent entirely natural formation processes. The mound interpreted as a barrow can now be discounted as a deposit of sand, overlying a natural clay deposit. Separating them is a band of grey silt with charcoal inclusions, which also seems to be natural in origin. It is unknown whether the charcoal contained within it is anthropogenic in origin, but it is likely both clays and sand date to the end of the last Ice Age (Hardy in Corcos 2015).

Trench 2, measuring 2m x 4m, was placed to investigate whether the deposits revealed in Trench 1 continued to the south (Fig. 2). Below the subsoil, at a depth of 0.25m, was a deposit of brown alluvial clay (2002), 0.15m thick. Below this, and of a similar thickness, was a grey silty-sand deposit (2003), with some organic content and frequent charcoal inclusions. Underlying this deposit was a brown alluvial clay (2004), similar to context (2002). This was assumed to be the natural substrate and excavation was halted at a depth of 1.20m (7.40m above Ordnance Datum (aOD)).

Although the deposits in Trench 1 and Trench 2 are not all identical in character, they appear to represent similar natural events whereby clays and sands were laid down in successive alluvial episodes. There is a striking similarity between context (1003) in Trench 1 and context (2003) in Trench 2 however, suggesting that the grey silty/silty-sand with frequent charcoal inclusions forms part of an extensive deposit laid down in a single episode.

Trench 3, situated north of the Yarborough Stone, originally measured 2m north-south by 4m east-west but was partially extended to maximum dimensions of 4m north-south by 6m east-west (Fig. 4). In the central-northern part of the trench, a thin, mid-brown clay layer or surface (3002) was revealed below the plough soil, which continued beyond the trench. This survived up to 0.05m thick but had been plough truncated. The exposed area of this clay surface was semi-circular in plan, measuring c. 2.20m east-west by 1.5m north-south. The thinness and regularity of this deposit, so different to the other clays encountered, suggest that this clay had been deliberately laid to form

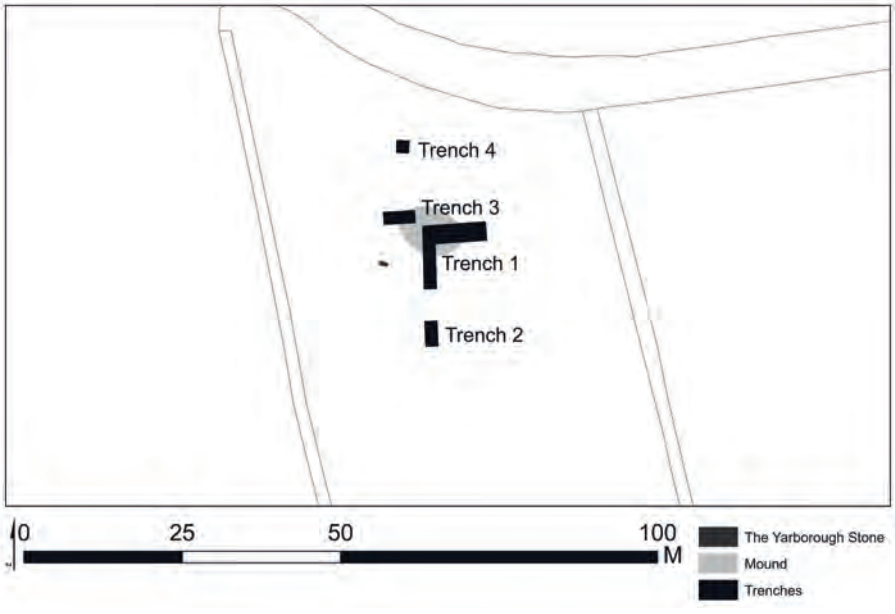

Fig. 2 Yarborough trench locations

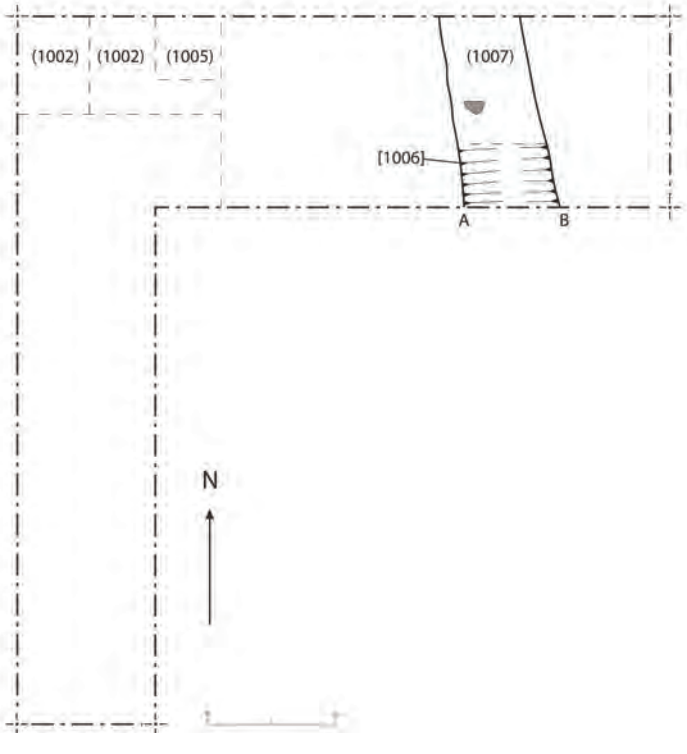

Fig. 3 Plan of Trench 1, Yarborough

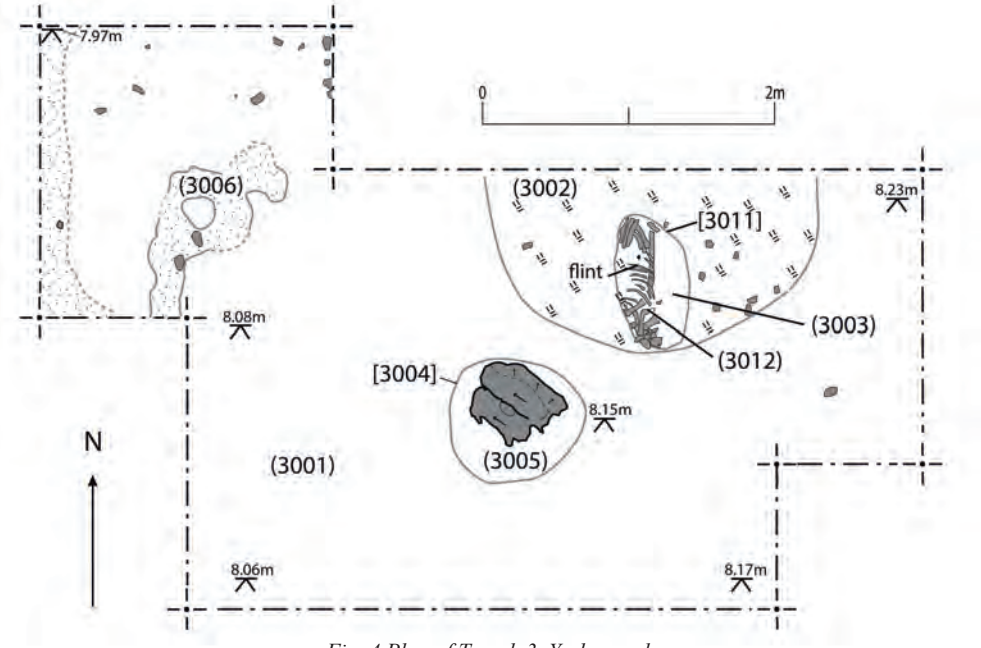

Fig. 4 Plan of Trench 3, Yarborough

a surface or platform. A shallow pit [3011] was cut into this deposit, measuring 1.00m x 0.50m x 0.17m deep, with the long axis orientated north-south (Fig. 4). It contained a single, homogenous orangey-brown clay fill (3003) dispersed through which were a number of very small, coloured stones and six small pieces of flint and chert debitage. Placed in the base of the pit were the articulated remains of a pig *Sus scrofa* (3012). The skeletal remains were complete, with the exception of the teeth, of which none were present. The pit was too small to contain the whole of the pig, and the back legs lay slightly outside it (Fig. 5)

The only other finds from the pit were a flint scraper, which was underneath the pig, and a small piece of white quartz with some iron staining, which was placed above it. Elements of the pig skeleton were submitted for radiocarbon dating, but all failed the initial %Nitrogen test and dating was not possible.

The brown clay layer (3002) overlay a natural deposit of orangey-brown sandy clay (3001). This was cut by a further pit, just under a metre south-west of pit [3011] (Fig. 4). This was a circular pit [3004], approximately 1m in diameter and 0.35m deep, which contained a large stone, measuring 0.70m x 0.60m x 0.45m, sealed only by plough soil (Fig. 6). The stone has been identified as dolomitised Carboniferous limestone (see Hardy, below). The fill of the stone hole was a homogenous brown clay (3005) and contained a single flint.

Below context (3001), was a thick deposit of brown

Fig. 5 Photograph of Yarborough standing stone, pig skeleton (3012) and stone pit [3004]

Fig. 6 Photograph of Yarborough standing stone and stone in pit [3004]

clay (3007) and a further, thinner deposit of lighter brown clay (3008). These contained a few pieces of flint debitage and are similar to the clay deposits noted in Trench 2.

To the west of both pits was an area of redeposited brown clay (3006), forming no discernible shape and containing no finds.

Trench 4 measured 2m x 2m and was located over a rise to the north of the Yarborough Stone (Fig. 2). This revealed a locally prominent ridge of Mercia Mudstone geology, but no stratified archaeological finds or features.

Present in the topsoil of all the trenches were small quantities of post-medieval pottery, clay pipe and glass, together with a small amount of undiagnostic flint debitage.

THE KNOLL HILL STONE

The site of the Knoll Hill Farm standing stone was located using GPS, based on historic Ordnance Survey mapping. Initially, a 4m x 4m trench was excavated but this was subsequently extended by 2m to the west and 2m to the south (Fig. 7).

Below the turf and topsoil, at a depth of 0.25m, a deposit of orangey-brown clay (1001) was revealed. This, in turn, covered a deposit of compact light blue alluvial clay (1002) in the north and western part of the trench (Fig. 8). The blue clay was up to 0.20m thick and overlay a thick deposit of reddish-brown clay which extended across the rest of the trench. This alluvial clay is not a natural deposit and represents a deliberately laid surface or platform.

Both deposits were cut by a linear feature 0.45m wide [1003] which, on excavation, proved to be a straight-sided drain cut, 0.50m deep. In the section of this cut was a further cut [1005], the extent of which was partly visible in plan to the north-east of the drain. This feature, a pit, measured 1.20m north-south and 0.60m east-west, but had been truncated in this direction by the drain and also truncated by ploughing. The surviving depth of the pit was 0.25m. The dark reddish-brown clay fill (1006) contained no finds.

The drain truncated the relationship of the pit to the blue clay deposit (1002). However, despite this, the pit corresponds to the location of the stone recorded by the

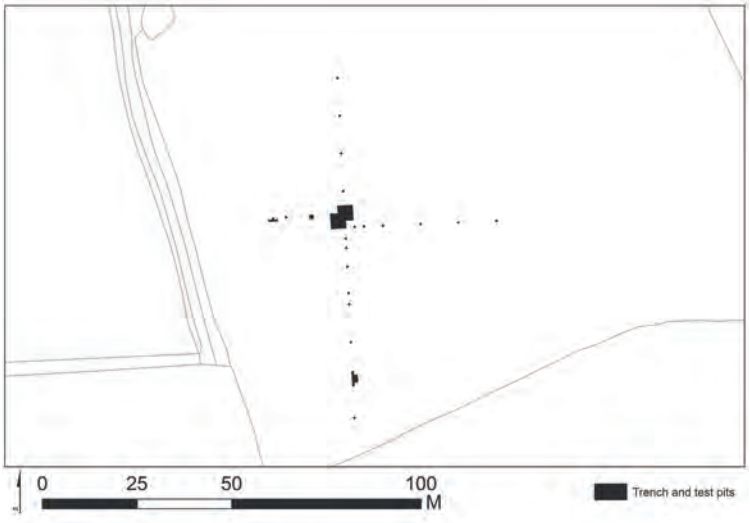

Fig. 7 Knoll Hill trench and test pits location

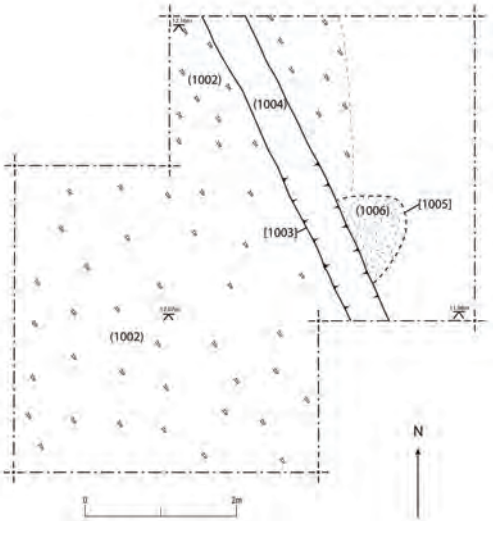

Fig. 8 Knoll Hill trench plan

Ordnance Survey and appears to represent the base of a stone socket.

A series of 21 test pits, mostly measuring 0.50m x 0.50m, were excavated at intervals to the north, south, east and west of the excavation trench (Fig. 7), to investigate the extent of blue clay deposit (1002). These revealed that the clay continued outside the excavation trench, extending over an area 15.5m east-west and 12.5m north-south. The stone socket was located at the eastern edge of the clay deposit, though the relationship has unfortunately been removed by the field drain. However, it is clear that the clay did not extend east of the stone socket.

Finds were sparse at Knoll Hill and come only from unstratified topsoil deposits in one of the test pits. Small amounts of flint debitage, post-medieval pottery, corroded iron fragments and an animal tooth represents the totality of the assemblage.

THE FINDS

The struck lithics

Heather Taylor

The struck lithic assemblage from the excavation comprised of 35 items of either flint or chert, flint being the dominant raw material (Table 1). As neither flint nor chert are of local geologies the material must have been transported into the region.

Of all the lithics present across the sites, only one could be identified as a diagnostic tool, that of a scraper from the bottom of fill (3003) of pit [3011], containing the remains of a pig. The scraper, measuring a maximum of 26mm x 28mm, was made on a crude tertiary flake with no cortex visible and exhibits abrupt retouch on the dorsal surface resulting in the scraping edge. The striking platform of the prepared core is evident and a significant bulb of percussion with concentric ripples are present on the ventral surface. The flint is opaque, grey-brown in colour and has a number of impurities.

With the exception of the flint scraper, all of the flint and chert artefacts recovered from both the Yarborough and Knoll Hill sites represent debitage of tertiary flakes and fragments, with a small number of secondary flakes and fragments and one primary flake. These cannot be

assigned a firm date. The only other items of interest are the two flakes from context (2004) which refit and represent a snapped secondary flint.

Other stone
Heather Taylor

A total of 47 small stones were found in context (3003), the fill of pit [3011] containing the pig skeleton. These ranged in size from 4mm x 2mm x 1mm up to 26mm x 22mm x 15mm. The stones are of varied lithology and are red, grey, black and white in colour. They are angular and not waterworn. They may be natural inclusions within the pit fill (3003) or represent selected deposits. In addition, a small lump of stained white quartz, measuring 35mm x 30mm x 30mm, was found placed directly above the pig skeleton.

TABLE 1 THE STRUCK LITHICS

Trench /Context No.	Context description	Quantity	Description
Yarborough Stone			
T1/Unstratified	U/S	5	Debitage
T1/1002	Sand deposit	3	Debitage
T1/1004	Orange clay deposit	1	Debitage
T1/1007	Fill of post-medieval ditch	1	Debitage
T2/2004	Brown clay deposit	2	Debitage (refit)
T3/Unstratified	U/S	9	Debitage (includes 1 x burnt piece)
T3/3003	Fill of “pig pit”	8	1 x scraper; 7 x debitage (6 burnt)
T3/3005	Fill of “stone pit”	1	Debitage
T3/3007	Brown clay deposit	2	Debitage
T3/3008	Brown clay deposit	1	Debitage
Knoll Hill Stone			
TP7/ Unstratified	U/S	2	Debitage

The pottery
Heather Taylor

A total of 53 sherds of pottery and five clay pipe stem fragments were recovered from the topsoil at both sites, with one further piece of pottery from the fill of field drain in Trench 1 at the Yarborough Stone. These finds are fairly typical of those resulting from manuring practice in the post-medieval period and include slipware, transfer-printed ware and tin-glazed earthenware.

The animal bone
Martyn G. Allen

The animal bone assemblage comprises a single skeleton from pit [3011]. Although the skeleton was exposed in the context in a relatively complete state, the material has since severely fragmented. The general preservation of the material is poor and in many cases the surface of the bone has abraded, most likely due to unfavourable soil conditions. No teeth are present, though some fragments of skull and mandible are present. No evidence of butchery, canid gnawing, or pathology was observed on any of the remains.

A number of specimens were available, in particular a distal humerus, ulna, proximal radius, and two astragali, from which the pig could be positively identified. Biometric data demonstrate that the Yarborough individual was similar in body size to the pigs deposited at Durrington Walls in Wiltshire during the Neolithic. Each of the available measurements fit within the ranges from the Durrington dataset and each is close to the corresponding mean value. The Durrington Walls pigs were shown to exhibit low biometric variability and were argued to be from a single domestic population (Albarella and Payne 2005, 593). This suggests that the Yarborough pig was also from a domestic population (as opposed to a wild boar), possibly local, albeit not necessarily contemporary with the Durrington Walls pigs.

The sex of the animal could not be ascertained via biometric analysis and pigs are otherwise sexed by the root formation on their canines which were, in this case, absent. Whilst no teeth were recovered, a number of

elements at different stages of epiphyseal fusion were present. The distal humerus, the glenoid of the scapula, and the proximal radius were all fused, an event which, based on the timings of Silver (1970), takes place between 12-18 months of age. The vertebrae, the proximal and distal femurs and the proximal tibia were all found to be unfused. Each of these are 'late fusing' elements, generally forming epiphyseal closure by or after four years of age. However, the calcaneus and the proximal first phalange were both unfused, with the former closing around 24-30 months of age and the latter closing by 24 months. These data, therefore, place the estimated age of the individual at between 18-24 months old at its time of death.

The stone from pit [3004]
Peter Hardy

The stone is deeply weathered along all joints and surfaces. It is sufficiently clean to expose several different surfaces down to their weathered exterior. Overall, it is a pale buff colour with a small patch of freshly broken material displaying a similar colour to the outer weathered surface. One surface, evidently the side of a former mineralised joint within the solid rock, is covered by yellow ochre. This material is soft and easily scratched to a depth of several millimetres, and it may be some centimetres in depth.

The stone is composed of limestone, exhibiting a large number of small shell fragments, some up to 20-30mm in size but more typically they are around 5-10mm across. Recognisable amongst these are several crinoid ossicles, and a number of shell fragments which look like brachiopods of the *Productus* or *Chonetes* genera. One, which projects by around 10mm from the surface, failed to react with dilute HCl, suggesting mineral alteration, possibly to silica. Many of the fossil fragments are eroded away entirely and appear to have been selectively removed by solution, whilst the presumed originally calcitic matrix of the limestone is apparently dolomitised. The evidence for this dolomitisation is the rather subdued reaction of the matrix with dilute HCl and the colour, which is characteristically pale buff, in contrast with the usual neutral grey of unaltered Carboniferous limestones in the area. In places the matrix still retains evidence of some ooids (ooliths) and the stone has many clear bedding surfaces within it, with spacings of a few cm. The highly comminuted state of the fossil material combined with the thinly bedded nature of the rock and the presence of ooids suggests deposition in an active shallow water environment with wave action. No stratigraphically significant fossils were observed, other than the crinoid ossicles, which suggest a Lower Carboniferous age for the rock. The brachiopod shell debris is consistent with this suggested age.

The post-depositional history of the stone indicates exposure to mineral rich ground waters bearing a variety of elements, which have partially or entirely replaced the original matrix. There is little evidence of any original calcitic material remaining, the rock apparently having been dolomitised and fractured, with yellow ochre (limonite or hydrated iron oxide) deposited in the eroded sections of the joints. Silicification is not generally evident although at least one shell appears to have resisted weathering selectively and may have been replaced by silica.

The rock is possibly of local origin. Evidence to support this is that it appears to be consistent with the lithologies found in the mid-range of the Lower Carboniferous limestone, which is exposed on the ridge above the site, and its dolomitisation suggests that it was exposed to mineral bearing fluids. These are known to affect shallowly buried limestones of both Carboniferous and Jurassic ages in the Mendip region, and are associated with the characteristically mineralised Dolomitic Conglomerate of Triassic age which immediately overlies the Carboniferous limestones locally.

DISCUSSION

Although no direct dating evidence was found at either Yarborough or Knoll Hill, the discoveries from their immediate surroundings are strongly suggestive of a prehistoric date for both of these sites.

At Knoll Hill, a shallow stone socket measuring 1.20m x 0.60m was uncovered, although this had been truncated by a later drain and also by ploughing. The pit corresponded with the position of a stone marked on historic Ordnance Survey mapping. No finds were recovered from this feature, but it appears to have been located towards the edge of a deposit of blue alluvial clay, seemingly a deliberately laid platform. The Knoll Hill stone site is around 15m aOD and lies on Mercia Mudstone group bedrock: it seems likely that the alluvial clay used to make this surface came from the valley of the Low Yeo River, to the south of the mudstone bedrock. Although the clay used in its construction is unusual, blueish-white clay was observed in the fill of stone holes of the outer circle and the avenue at Avebury (Gillings and Pollard 1999) and was also used to fill a subsidiary pit that had been cut into the side of a stone socket.

Just to the north of the Yarborough Stone, another clay surface was uncovered, this time of brown rather than blue clay. This surface extended beyond the excavation trench and thus its dimensions are unknown but the excavated segment was semi-circular with a sharply defined edge, very different from the other clay deposits encountered

during the excavations. Cut into this surface was the pit containing the pig and adjacent to it was the buried stone.

Both of these clay deposits appear to be deliberately laid surfaces or 'platforms' adjacent or close to the standing stone. Similar laid features are known at other standing stone sites in western Britain, such as Miskin, Llantrisant, Glamorgan where a 'paved' area to the north of the standing stone measured 1.55 x 1.45m, and comprised angular stones set into the ground (Vyner 1977). At the Devil's Quoit, Stackpole Warren, Pembrokeshire, a platform measuring 16m x 8m and made up of more than 2000 elongated limestone and sandstone cobbles was associated with the standing stone (Benson *et al.* 1990) and at Rhos-y-Clegyrn, Pembrokeshire, a clearly defined cobbled area measuring 20m x 15m was constructed to the north of a standing stone (Lewis 1974). Platforms of redeposited natural were also discovered around individual stones at the stone rows at Battle Moss, Caithness (Baines *et al.* 2003, 95). The purpose of such platforms is unknown but suggest a carefully prepared area for activities associated with the stones.

The large, unworked stone from pit [3004] at Yarborough was accompanied by a single piece of undiagnostic flint debitage. The stone was sealed by plough soil and it is difficult to be certain about the nature of this feature. Excavation proved it to extend c. 0.20m above the top of the surviving pit cut so it was not completely buried, although the height of the contemporary ground surface is not known. The stone could be the remnants of a larger, broken-up standing stone, but this seems unlikely when it could simply have been toppled and buried or removed. The pit from which it was recovered also does not conform well to stone burying pits such as those at Avebury (Gillings and Pollard 1999) or Stanton Drew (Lewis and Mullin 2013). Instead it seems to represent the socket for this block of stone.

Small blocks of stone have been noted at the sites of other standing stones, however, such as Rhos-y-Cleygrn, and the mid-3rd millennium BC 'betyl' stone at Avebury, noted by Alexander Keiller during the excavation of Stone 33. Here, Keiller observed that the position of the stone served no practical purpose and that it was not a packing stone but intentionally placed '…for some ritual purpose' (Keiller quoted in Gillings 2015). More locally, a stone of a similar size was found during a watching brief at Charterhouse on Mendip. Flint flakes of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age type were found in the stone socket and interestingly, the stone itself was adjacent to a circular cobbled platform, associated with lithics of a similar type and date (Rosen and Shurety 2013). Williams (1988) has commented on the trend towards miniaturisation in standing stones in the 2nd millennium BC and Gillings (2015) has discussed practices of erecting and decommissioning of small standing stones ('miniliths') in south-west Britain. It may be, then, that this stone was erected at around the same time as the Yarborough stone. Such pairings of large and small stones are discussed by Gillings (2015).

The smaller stone at Yarborough is probably derived from the ridge above the site, rather than excavated from local bedrock (Hardy, above). This seems also to be true of the Yarborough standing stone itself and Taylor (2019) has noted that the prehistoric standing stones of northern Somerset are usually not of the underlying bedrock and were transported to their locations. Similarly, the stones of the stone circle at Stanton Drew are not local to the site (Lewis 2007) and the source of the stone used at Charterhouse, discussed above, was between one and six km from the site (Rosen and Shurety 2013). Barber and Williams (1989) have also noted that many standing stones in Wales are of materials foreign to their immediate surroundings. Whilst there may have been prosaic reasons for selecting non-local stones, it has also been suggested that moving stones for monumental purposes in prehistory would have required the organisation and structuring of a workforce, and that the movement and successful erection of the stones may have been symbolically linked with the social implications of such actions (Richards 2004; Osenton 2011; Richards and Cummings 2015). It is also possible that the particular properties of certain stone types may have made them attractive to their erectors and here again we can think of the use of the crystal-laden, reddish-conglomerates favoured at the Stanton Drew complex (Lewis 2005). The Yarborough stone itself is also of iron-stained Dolomitic Conglomerate, with cavities once crystal-filled (Hardy in Corcos 2015).

Adjacent to the stone in pit [3004] at Yarborough was a further pit, cutting the brown clay platform and containing the remains of a pig. Due to the porosity of pig bones it rare for them to survive in archaeological contexts, with the teeth often being the only surviving element due to their durability (Albarella and Payne 2005). However, at Yarborough, the complete skeletal remains of the pig survived, although preservation was poor. The biometrics of the Yarborough pig indicate that it was between 18 and 24 months of age at the time of its slaughter, but, whilst the complete carcass of the pig was buried, the lack of butchery marks suggest that it was not consumed as food. There is also no evidence that the pig was scavenged, which would have undoubtedly left its marks on the skeletal remains, meaning the carcass must have been buried deliberately (Serjeantson 2011, 72).

The teeth of the pig were altogether absent. This cannot be explained through unsystematic recovery and there are no pathological reasons for a pig to be born without their teeth, or for them to be removed at a young

age (Pinnington pers. comm. to Heather Taylor). It is possible that the teeth were removed for their use as amulets or personal ornamentation and the use of animal teeth and bones for such purposes is well documented in archaeological contexts across the world. Jonuks (2017) suggests that pendants and animal teeth may not have just been used as simple decoration or as amulets, but may also have acted as socio-cultural markers.

Radiocarbon dating failed to assign an absolute date to the pig remains. The presence of a flint scraper and a piece of quartz in association with the animal are suggestive of a prehistoric date, the scraper being of Neolithic or Early Bronze Age type. Quartz is often found incorporated into mortuary contexts, for example, in the monuments of the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age (Darvill 2002; Lewis 2007) but also in the mouths and hands of the deceased in medieval graves. Gilchrist (2008) argues that prehistoric people may have seen quartz as having generative and transformative properties and the small colourful stones included in the fill of the pit may also have been significant, the deposition of small stones having been noted at earlier prehistoric sites elsewhere in Somerset (Lewis *et al.* 2019). There is also a possibility that the quartz was removed from the Yarborough Stone itself: Hardy (in Corcos 2015) has noted that the conspicuous hollowing on the south face of the standing stone (Fig. 9) may be the result of the selective removal of crystals that once filled cavities in the rock. If this is the origin of the crystal in the pit it would suggest that the pig burial is either contemporary with or post-dates the Yarborough stone.

Although pigs are common in the later part of the Neolithic, these are more often butchered and interpreted as the remains of feasting, associated with ritual and ceremonial monuments (Serjeantson 2011). Whole animal carcasses were interred in later periods, however. Recently, excavations ahead of construction at North End, Yatton, uncovered a rich array of archaeological sites, dating from the later Neolithic to the 7th century AD (https://www.wessexarch.co.uk/our-work/yatton-trackway-past). Of particular note here is a pit from the Iron Age phase of occupation which contained a whole piglet, a rose quartz crystal and the foot of a white tailed eagle. The site is only c. 10 km north-east of Yarborough. Iron Age pig burials are also known from other sites, such as the three pigs buried in a reused storage pit at Winterborne Kingston, Dorset (Russell and Cheetham 2016) and pig remains have been found at Danebury hillfort, Hampshire. There is strong evidence that this practice also occurred in the Anglo-Saxon period, where animal carcasses are found in association with cremated human burials of the pre-Christian period, seen at the cemeteries at Elsham, Illington and Newark, for example, where they are considered to be sacrificial in nature (Crabtree 1995, 21).

Fig. 9 Hollowing on the south face of the Yarborough standing stone

The precise date of the Yarborough pig remains unresolved and its association with the standing stone uncertain, but its treatment, and particularly its dentition, appear to be unusual and relate to the location in which it was deposited. The accompanying scraper and crystal might, tentatively, suggest a date between the Neolithic and the Iron Age however.

The small mound to the east of the standing stone at Yarborough, previously thought to be a round barrow, has been identified as a natural mound of sand and clays and the 'ditches' corresponding with field drain cuts. Hardy undertook an auger survey around the Yarborough Stone and noted the deposit of wind-blown sand and clays, which he suggests may date to the close of the last Ice Age (Hardy in Corcos 2015, 45). Nevertheless, the location of the stone next to a natural mound echoes practices identified elsewhere in Britain and discussed by Mullin (2001). The presence of mounds associated with standing stones can also be noted elsewhere in northern Somerset. The Wimblestone, Shipham, is located at the north end of a low mound, suggested by Grinsell (1971) as a possible round barrow (Shipham I). Field observation by the authors, however, suggests this may be elongated, rather than round, but it is unlikely to be the remains of a long barrow.

The cumulative evidence points towards the standing

stones at Yarborough and Knoll Hill being of prehistoric date. The unexpected 'minilith' next to the Yarborough Stone might suggest a 3rd-2nd millennium BC erection date for this and its larger counterpart, placing them in the tradition of monumental stone architecture characteristic of the Later Neolithic and Bronze Age. The flints and quartz buried with the pig, next to these stones, also fit well with this date range, although as radiocarbon dating failed, this remains tenuous. It is, for example, possible that the pig was buried at a later date for reasons unrelated to the primary purpose of the monument. There was no datable material from the Knoll Hill stone pit, but the adjacent blue clay platform echoes similar structures from other Neolithic and Bronze Age standing stone sites.

Yarborough and Knoll Hill form part of an important and distinct regional grouping of standing stones in northern Somerset, recently investigated by Taylor (2019). It is interesting to note that whilst many of the ceremonial and funerary monuments of Neolithic and Bronze Age date in the region tend to occupy the higher karst landscape of Mendip, standing stones are found at a wider range of altitudes, in more diverse landscape locations. The standing stones of northern Somerset have long been overlooked, but the evidence indicates that they have much to contribute to our understanding of both the distribution of standing stones and the organisation of monumental landscapes. Further research is planned, to 'join up' standing stones with the monuments with which they may be contemporary, in order to gain a better understanding of how this region may have been perceived and used in prehistory.

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