

Excavation of Barrows at Ston Easton, Somerset

(*Preliminary Report*).

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DURING July–August 1941 a group of five much-denuded round barrows on Chewton Plain, near Ston Easton, was excavated. The results may be summarized as follows :

BARROW 1. This mound near Worberry Gate, the old turnpike on the Wells-Bristol road, was the only one previously recognized. It consisted entirely of soil with an admixture of calcareous tufaceous material of local derivation. It had a diameter of approximately 38 ft., and a present height of 2 ft. 6 in. Three feet south-west of the centre a small pit had been dug into the underlying clay. The dimensions of this pit were 2 ft. by 1 ft. 6 in., and 6 in. deep. Its filling consisted of local soil scattered with fragmentary charcoal and a few scraps of calcined human bones—obviously a primary cremation. From the old ground surface came flint flakes and blades, mostly used but unworked ; one well-worked scraper was found. A sherd of Romano-British ware and a bronze buckle represented some disturbance on the east.

BARROW 2. The second barrow lay rather more than half a mile north-east of the first. It was of similar type—built of earth, 46 ft. in diameter, and now 2 ft. high. Here one small oval pit (2 ft. 6 in. by 2 ft. by 8 in. deep) lay 7 ft. south-east of the centre, dug down into the clay to the rock below. Its contents consisted of crushed charcoal, a mere handful, and a few calcined bone fragments. Among the flints was a barbed and tanged arrow-head. A Bronze Age date may be accepted for this and the first barrow.

BARROW 3. This site lay half-way between the two first.

Built of soil it was considerably larger with a diameter of 61 ft. It had been constructed on an exposed surface of silicified lias limestone—a slight natural knoll. The primary burial was 12 ft. from the centre to the south-east. An overhanging-rim urn (mid-Bronze Age) stood on the rock and was covered with a small thin slab of stone. It contained the cremated remains of one adult person. A later cremation had been inserted on the south-east margin of the mound, and a later burial-pit had been dug on the south-west margin, so shallow that one of the skulls was visible between the covering-stones. It contained three skeletons, all crouched, a woman and two men. There were no grave-goods. The filling included two flint flakes and a sherd of Bronze Age pottery, evidently shovelled in from the body of the mound. The incidence of Roman pottery on the south side of the mound suggests that the burial should be assigned to that period.

BARROW 4. A third of a mile south-east of Barrow 3, this site had a field-wall running over it and a water-trough fixed on its highest point. The structure was more elaborate and consisted of three elements—(1) a stone cairn with retaining wall (lower but comparable with that at Wick, Stogursey, *Proceedings*, liv, ii, 1-78). Its diameter was 28 ft., and the maximum height of the revetting wall 2 ft. 6 in.; (2) an encircling stone ring some 5 ft. wide, on an average 15 ft. outside the cairn; (3) a covering earth mound running *over* the stone ring for about 2 ft. The central area had been disturbed, but the sequence of events seemed clear. A pit had been dug into the subsoil and a roughly rectangular cist constructed in its base. A young man of Early Bronze Age type was the first burial, but his bones had been shifted to a position alongside the lining-stones of the grave. Remains of a mid-Bronze Age cinerary urn at a higher level in the pit indicate a later burial; the rim suggested its inverted position on a flat stone. Later again a long-headed woman had been buried flexed in the original cist; fragments of abraded Samian pottery lay near her feet. A second Romano-British burial (a youth) some feet higher up had been disturbed, probably in medieval times.

BARROW 5. This lay a short distance north-east of Barrow 4 and was much ploughed down. Excavation showed that the

mound represented two separate cairns without covering barrows. (a) The northern cairn was about 37 ft. across and only 18 in. high. The centre had been completely explored in Roman times. A bronze brooch and a coin of Constantine I in good condition suggest a fourth century A.D. date for the disturbance. Sherds of Samian and Castor ware also occurred. A later cremation had been inserted on the north margin, but is undatable. (b) Four feet to the south was a smaller cairn, 23 ft. in diameter, and now merely two stones deep at its greatest height. Here again the centre had been looted, but a few fragments of the original cinerary urn (mid-Bronze Age) survived on the old ground surface. And again potsherds indicate Romano-British disturbance.