

**Revisiting Battlegore: a Bronze Age barrow and its landscape context**

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# REVISITING BATTLEGORE: A BRONZE AGE BARROW AND ITS LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

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## SUMMARY

*The small group of prehistoric monuments, situated in an unusually low landscape position, was excavated by Harold St George Gray in 1931. This paper revisits the artefacts found then, publishes radiocarbon dating for a cremation burial found by Gray and presents the group from the perspective of current thinking. The group of Bronze Age copper-alloy objects found in nearby wetland is briefly commented upon.*

## INTRODUCTION

It has long been noted that, by comparison with the adjacent counties of (the remainder of) Devon and Cornwall, and Wessex, the barrows of Exmoor and the surrounding areas represent a rather understudied resource and that modern scientific dating was lacking or ambiguous (Page 1893, 75; Riley and Wilson-North 2001, 34; Mullin 2011, 119; Gillings 2013). To help remedy this situation, in 2016 the authors were involved in a project to assess the potential of archived material from round barrows in the wider Exmoor area (as defined by Grinsell 1970) for further study (Kirkham and Jones 2016). This involved a literature trawl and visits to museums in Somerset and Devon, and online searches of other, more distant, museum collections including the Ashmolean and the Fitzwilliam Museums. This resource assessment project identified the Battlegore archive, along with a scattering of other sites, as having potential for further work. In 2017 an application was made to the Maltwood Fund for a project to re-examine the documentary and artefactual archive and obtain two radiocarbon determinations to date the cremation found within the barrow: this was approved by SANHS. This paper presents the results of that study.

## THE BATTLEGORE BARROW CEMETERY

The Battlegore barrow cemetery (ST 0745 4139, Williton parish) is situated a little below 30m OD on the interfluvium between the Washford River to the

west and the Doniford Stream to the east; the former drains into the sea at Watchet less than 2 km to the north and the latter at Doniford Beach (Fig. 1). The barrow group lies on the Mercian Mudstone Group, formerly known as Keuper Marl, which is generally reddish and calcareous: the Blue Anchor Formation is similar but grey to greenish grey and lies a little to the east (British Geological Survey Maps 294 and 295, 1984). These are probably covered by thin drift material as Gray (1931) makes frequent reference to gravel. The land was and still is part of the Wyndham family estates based at nearby Orchard Wyndham House: William Wyndham was President of the Society 1931-32.

The cemetery is recorded in the Somerset Historic Environment Record (hereafter SHER) as 35378. It consists of a line of three barrows surviving to varying degrees and a group of large stones, probably a much damaged megalithic structure – a ‘dolmen’. These were scheduled as one unit, a Round Barrow Cemetery, on 15 May 1934 (List Entry Number 1019032). The barrows were listed by Grinsell (1969, 41) as Williton 1 to 3, with Williton 1, excavated by Gray, at the north end, with Williton 2, 120m to its south and Williton 3, 150m south of that (Fig. 1, inset). It should be noted that a number of details in the Grinsell reference are based on interpretation of the excavation report according with barrow studies in the 1960s. Aerial photographs suggest that there was a small ring ditch between each of the two barrows (SHER 35440 and 35441). Riley (2006, fig. 2.7), in her description of the site, shows the cemetery with the ring ditches and includes a plan of the stones with a suggested reconstruction as a portal dolmen (*ibid.*, fig. 2.8). Examination of the aerial photographs suggests potentially greater complexity which further aerial photography might elucidate. To the north east of Williton 1, and probably respecting it, are a series of slight but still visible earthworks (SHER 22814).

The barrow cemetery runs through a small south-west to north-east valley in the Washford River-Doniford Stream interfluvium (Figs 2 and 3). Barrow 1, at its north end, is close to the small stream along

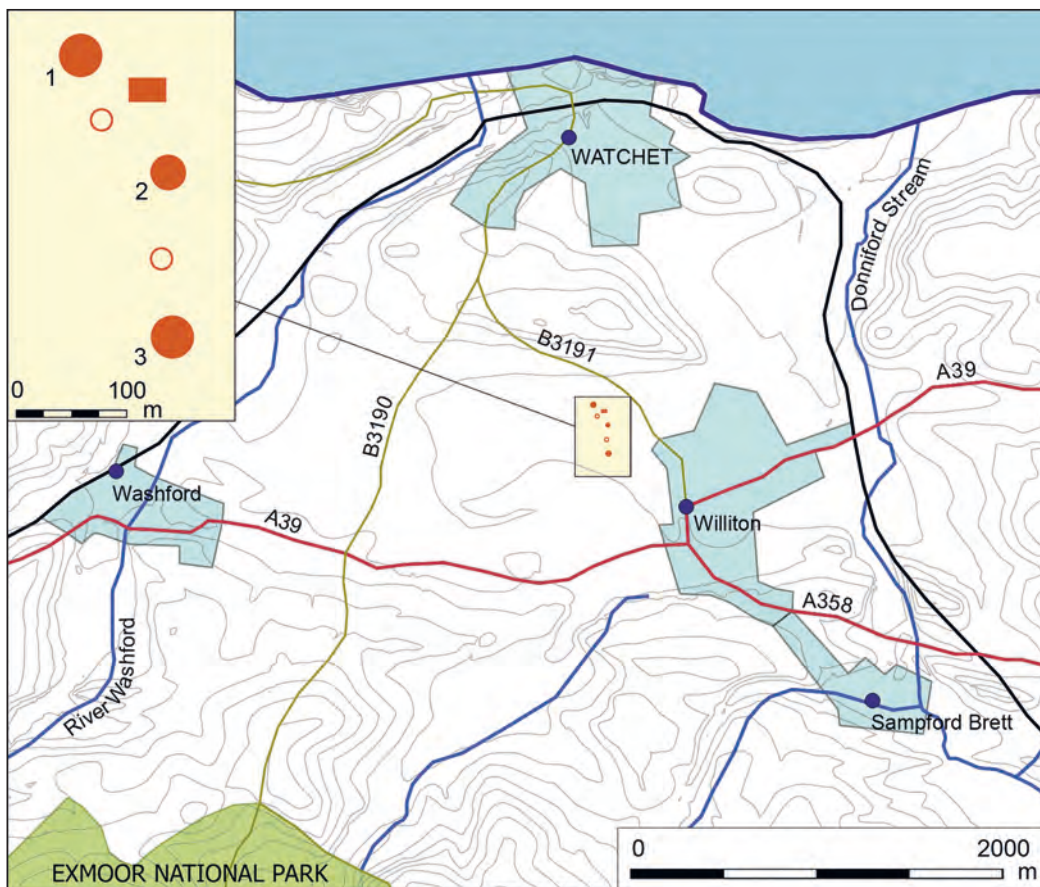


Fig. 1 Map showing local topography and sites (rectangle = dolmen; solid circles = barrows; small open circles = ring ditches). Details of ring ditches based on data © SHER (Illustration: Gary Young)

this valley which runs into the Doniford Stream, a valley containing some recent alluvial deposits. The stream was once meandering but its course has been straightened by drainage work from the 19th century and later. It was formerly liable to flooding, something reflected in field names north and west of the Barrow, the fields in which a number of Bronze Age copper-alloy artefacts have been found (see below). Views to the north from are blocked by a steep hill 75m OD: high land from this runs in a lower spur out to the Washford river with St Decumans church upon it. A flint scatter which included Mesolithic material was found on the hill prior to 1965 (SHER 34192). The topography means the sea is nowhere visible from the cemetery. To its west lie the Brendon Hills which form one side of a long valley running north-west to south-east, with the Quantock Hills on the other side.

The alignment of Barrow 1, the ‘dolmen’ structure and Barrow 2 is that of this long valley, but Barrow 3 is a little off this line to the west.

The land on which the cemetery lies is slightly higher than its surroundings, as the contours on Fig. 1 demonstrate. The field in which Barrow 1 and the ‘dolmen’ lie has the name ‘Little Stone Park’ (Figs 2 and 3), and that immediately to its south with Barrow 2 ‘Stone Park’ while plots with Barrow 3 are ‘Graborough’ and ‘Graborough Meadow’ (Gray 1931, fig. 1). These names suggest ground stony in comparison with its surroundings. Dr H. H. Thomas of the Geologist Survey identified the stones of the ‘dolmen’ as ‘conglomerate sandstone with a calcareous matrix’, ‘New Red Sandstone’, ‘purely local...or brought a short distance’ (Gray 1931, 21).



Fig. 2 Barrow 1 from north, note 'dolmen' in hedge beyond Barrow 1



Fig. 3 Barrow 1 looking north-west

### The 1931 excavation

Harold St George Gray conducted excavations for the Society from 13 April to 2 May 1931, with William E. V. Young as foreman and the three others including W. Wedlake who was later to become an authority on Camerton. The work concentrated on the best preserved barrow, Williton 1, with another trench around the stones of the 'dolmen' and some trial work on the adjacent earthworks. A Battlegore Excavation Fund of £40 pounds 19 shillings had been raised from private donations, with £10 from an Anonymous Benefactor for ex-Service Men (Gray 1931, 36).

Gray had learnt his archaeology from working in his early years as an assistant to General Pitt-Rivers (Bowden 1991, 164). Becoming Curator of Archaeology at Taunton Museum in 1900, he then excavated an extensive range of prehistoric sites in southern Britain, many of which were never fully published. There was little overall development in techniques in the early part of the 20th century and there were few archaeologists who would have stimulated or criticised Gray. But at Windmill Hill from 1925 Gray worked for Alexander Keiller, who was enthusiastically befriending scholars like the young Stuart Piggott. Keiller was very outspoken, and dismissed Gray in 1927 after rows about recording and took over directing the excavation himself (Smith 1965, 2; Murray 1999, 33-44). After this Gray appears not to have worked outside Somerset. Cyril Fox's work on barrows from the late 1920s, as at Ysciefiog in Flintshire (Fox 1926), was already concerned with the Bronze Age communities involved; in contrast, Gray's report on Battlegore reveals that he was no longer at the forefront of new archaeological techniques and the report is little different from the 'run of the mill' excavation reports of the time that can be found in county archaeological journals.

### Cutting I around 'the stones'

An approximate rectangle c. 10m by 3m was cleared around Stones I and II, which alone were visible at the start of excavation (Gray 1931, pl. IX). There had been a recent ditch dug along the side of the hedge adjacent to the stones. Excavation discovered Stone III probably incomplete, set within a socket the bottom of which was not reached because of water. A socket hole was found for Stone II filled with sand. Some other small stones were found and a good photograph published of the stones at the completion of excavation (*ibid.*, pl. VIII). A small reconstruction sketch shows Stone I supported by II and III (*ibid.*, pl. IX). A few flints, described below, were the only finds.

### Barrow 1

Barrow 1 was excavated by Cutting II east to west, 110 feet long and 10 feet wide, with a western extension 17 feet long and 3 feet wide. Two reference pillars A and B set 30 feet apart (*ibid.*, pl. XI) retained their stratigraphy (*ibid.*, pl. VII). Finds were clearly recorded as to depth but not as to position in most cases. Modern stratigraphic excavation techniques had not yet developed and it is presumed that the barrow mound was cleared by removing spits of soil right across it. Using the data in Gray's (1931) report, the stratigraphy can be approximately reconstructed. Gray obtained specialist advice on charcoal and charred wood.

### Old land surface

This was located in some places as a 'thin somewhat rust coloured ochreous or rust coloured line of slight thickness' (Gray 1931, 23). It is unclear whether the

barrow site had been deturfed or not. In the pl. VII view of the trench some small depth of material is shown, higher than the bottom of the trench, around the central cremation pit, which was presumably the old land surface. The 'natural' is generally described as 'gravel' (*ibid.*).

#### Features preceding the barrow mound

1. A circular pit 2 feet in diameter and 1 foot deep with a loose blackened soil fill containing a few oak charcoal fragments. This was described as a 'posthole' but is best interpreted a pit with a specialised deposit.
2. A pit 2.25 feet NW to SE by 1.9 feet deep NE to SW and 1.5ft deep lay 20 feet east of the centre point of the barrow. The cracked lower part of a vessel P12 was set in this pit and contained a mass of cremated bone 5 inches thick. A scraper F19 (not a knife as reported) and a flint flake were found on the top of this bone. Sherds of the vessel were found set around above the lower part, some facing the wrong way round. A flat circular wooden cover was found over the fill, sloping down from the north-east to the top of the cremated bone at the south-west. This had had 'a rather thick turned over rim, this flange showing uppermost'. Only small scraps of this cover survive. Some sherds from the same vessel were found above the cover. The cremation was examined by Arthur Keith and described as 'of either a woman or of a lad or youth. I think 'of a youth', a 'person having the stature of at least 5 ft'. Analysis of cremation burial was at an early stage in 1931, however, and recent reanalysis of Early Bronze Age female burials recovered since 1950 shows that Collared Urns are the ceramics found most frequently found with these (Rogers 2013, 26).

This feature was described as 'secondary' due to its position east of centre. It was also stated not to have been disturbed in recent times. It is now suggested that the broken vessel was part of a Collared Urn of which P18 – a distinctive collar sherd – was found in the disturbances noted by Gray. The possible circumstances and date of some re-arrangement of the urned cremation are considered in the Discussion section below.

Several sizable pieces of oak were found preserved at the base of the mound between these two features but do not survive. The presence of oak artefacts indicates that conditions favourable to the preservation of certain organic materials are present in Barrow 1, possibly due to its low-lying close-to-flood-line location.

#### The barrow mound

This survived some 3-4 feet high with a flat top and formed an apparent circular mound 95-104 feet across with no obvious berm (its height may have been lessened by agriculture). The mound is described as being of 'layers of reddish brown earth and gravel very much broken up by masses of grey clay... a kind of flood soil' (Gray 1931, 23). There is no surviving evidence of clear layers within the mound. Some of the mound may have come from excavation of the ditch, but the only references to the nature of the material through which it was cut describe it as grey and either gravelly or loamy: the excavator might be expected to have noted a red colour.

#### Barrow ditch

This was sectioned at either end of Cutting II and in Cuttings VIII, IX and X. These other cuttings were positioned in possible gaps, but in all cases showed the ditch to have been continuous. It was between 4 feet and 5 feet wide at the level of the subsoil and between 2.5 and 2.75 feet deep with a flat base. Fills were grey and clayey. Some Late Iron Age or early Roman period sherds were found in the ditch fills, probably in their upper part. The fills also contained some worked flint.

#### Disturbances in the barrow mound

Two 'fairly large trenches' had been dug 'more or less at right-angles' to Cutting II in the central area between reference pillars A and B, in some cases disturbing the top of natural soil. While the ghost of these trenches can be seen in pl. VII, their precise locations and dimensions are uncertain. Modern glazed pottery was found 2.75 feet down from the surface and medieval pottery P13 3 feet deep.

#### Cutting IX

This investigated one of a number of small tumps in field. The makeup of tump is not recorded: three flint flakes and a piece of slag were found.

#### Cutting III

This was positioned around another stone of same conglomerate sandstone, which was judged to be in its natural bed.

#### Cuttings IV-VII

These sectioned parts of the slight earthworks.

Nothing dateable was found in the banks but shallow ditches contained a range of material which led Gray to consider them as of recent origin.

## THE PREHISTORIC FINDS

### Prehistoric Pottery

This was described (Gray 1931) with 'P' numbers. P1-P18, and P23 come from long Cutting II across Barrow 1, P25-P28 from Cuttings IX or X trenches through the ditch on the south-east and south respectively. Depths below surface are recorded in each case, but unless otherwise stated below, there is no information on position within a trench. Some pieces are recorded as from 'the disturbed area', described above as two 'fairly large trenches' dug at right angles to Cutting II. Pieces which are not recorded as being from 'disturbed' can reasonably be regarded as incorporated in the barrow material which quite possibly came from the ditch, or, if not, from the immediate vicinity. Stuart Piggott commented upon and provided the drawings of P1, P8 and P16 (Gray 1931, pl. X).

#### *Peterborough*

A total of 15 sherds, 71g.

**P8** disturbed 2.35 feet deep. Ten sherds, 33g, the largest illustrated (Gray 1931, pl. X, P8, exterior = left view). Fabric dark grey throughout with c. 10% inclusions of crushed vein quartz <4mm. Out-turned rim with slight expansion, from vessel c. 300mm rim diameter. Decorated inside, on top and on interior with coarse twisted cord, some in short lengths 'maggots'. A small sherd, not illustrated, also has this decoration. The fabric is also found in P3, 6g, 2 feet deep, P7, 2s, 10g, 2.2 feet deep, and P10, 7g, 1.6 feet deep and P11, 15g, 2.85 feet deep, barrow ditch. The sherds belong to the Mortlake sub-style of Middle Neolithic Peterborough pottery, current c. 3300-2900 cal BC. A good published parallel is Mortlake P1 from Castle Hill rectangular ditch fill, Honiton (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999, fig. 23); the published drawing of P8 is accurate for the sherds as such but presented at an incorrect angle.

It is unclear whether the sherds came from disturbed areas or from the soil incorporated in the barrow. Most if not all of the lithics from the site could be contemporary. Lithics and pottery together suggest some systematic Middle Neolithic activity on the site. The only other known site with Peterborough pottery in West Somerset is that at Ellicombe outside Minehead, some 9km west north-west of Williton. The site there has pits with Early, with Middle and

with Late Neolithic ceramics, and also two cremations in Food Vessels apparently with no associated mound. Unfortunately this site could not be taken forward to publication: an archive report is lodged with SHER (32674: Quinnell 2014).

#### *Beaker*

A total of 21 sherds, 51g.

**P1** 1 foot deep, probably from undisturbed barrow material (Gray 1931, 35). One large sherd (Gray 1931, pl. X), 9 small pieces, 25g. Fine grogged fabric, with c. 5% sand and some chert fragments <2mm, reddish yellow with dark grey core, cord impressed decoration as in pl. X, although close examination shows chevron design below horizontal lines. Similar fabric: P2, 3g, 2 feet deep; P3, 6s, 6g, 3 feet deep; P4, 4g, 2.1 feet deep, 18s, 38g.

**P16** disturbed 1.5 feet deep, three conjoining sherds, 13g. Fabric as P1 but thicker. Square-toothed comb stamped decoration with lines slanting, not horizontal as shown in pl. X.

Two vessels are represented and are likely to belong with classified Beaker types, not domestic Beaker, but insufficient of either is present for the types to be identified. The fine grogged fabric is represented in a recent pit find at Hinkley, in the scattered Beaker sherds from Cannington and in the Beakers from the Wick Barrow which is adjacent to the Hinkley site (Quinnell and Wood forthcoming). The sherds may either have come from a pit or have survived from a soil scatter incorporated in the barrow mound. If they had come from burial-associated vessels more of each would probably have been present. A pit with Beaker sherds has recently been found at Volis Hill, Kingston St Mary, a little north of Taunton (Thorpe 2002; SHER 15910).

#### *Collared Urn*

**P12** Base of vessel with cremation, now in over 100 sherds, 5,830g. Described as found cracked with some of the upper sherds 'lining the hole the wrong way round'. Above was a slanting cover of oak. Grogged fabric with <10% sand <1mm and occasional angular fragments of sandstone and chert <2mm. Base c. 170mm in diameter: exterior oxidised reddish brown to buff. The sherds include a single carinated piece 360mm in diameter; this is likely to have formed the lower edge of the neck and would have been the widest part of the vessel. A number of other sherds may belong to this vessel: P14, 3s, 44g, 3.15 feet deep; P15, 4s, 29g, 3 feet deep; P17, 2g 2.6g associated with two small cremated bone fragments 2.6 feet deep; and P23, 11g, 3.5 feet disturbed; a further total

of 10s, 86g. It is unclear whether sherds found on the old land surface near the cremation were given separate numbers. P18, 49g, 3 feet deep disturbed, was correctly identified as the base of a collar of a Collared Urn: this has untidy stamped/stab marks for which insufficient survives for any decorative pattern to be distinguished. This was not linked to P12 by Gray but the fabric is similar, the size appropriate, and the tone of the surface matches that on some lower parts of P12. It seems appropriate to suggest that P12 and P18 come from one vessel as may most, if not all, of the other sherds; the comparatively small size of the base, compared with the upper body, would be appropriate. Even if the collar sherd P18 does not come from the cremation vessel, the carinated sherd should represent a Collared Urn, as this kind of angle in a vessel wall is not known for any other vessel form from the Early Bronze Age.

P12 is recorded by Helbaek (1953, 227, FINDS LIST A, Battlegore p. 12 (*sic*)) as having an impression of a hulled barley grain. Helbaek was under the impression that the vessel was of Late Bronze Age date, while Grinsell (1969, Williton 1) considered it 'MBA?'

The two dates on cremated bone obtained in the current project, SUERC-84148 2020-1884 cal BC and SUERC-84149 1928-1769 cal BC, should relate to Collared Urn sherds. Some 150 radiocarbon dates associated with Collared Urns have been assembled by Law (2008, table 1.1) and show clearly that the form was generally present across Britain from around 2100 cal BC. The Battlegore dates fall early within the suggested 600-year span of these vessels.

Only six Collared Urns are recorded from the whole of Somerset by Longworth (1984), the nearest being from Whitefield, Wiveliscombe (*ibid.*, no. 1404, pl. 121); Battlegore was not included. Apart from Battlegore. However, there have been a number of more recent finds in South Somerset.

The Hatcheries, Monkton Heathfield, just east of Taunton, has a small group of Early Bronze Age pits with burial associations (Hughes *et al.* 2016). One pit contained a Collared Urn with a cremation and a second pit had a rim sherd from another urn. Another pit contained a faience bead and more cremated material and produced SUERC-41663 1890-1690 cal BC. A site at Wick Lane, Norton Fitzwarren, contained two cremations in Collared Urns: two dates from material associated with one of the Urns were 1780-1600 cal BC (92.9% probability, Wk-23034) and 1950-1750 cal BC (95.4% probability, Wk-23035) (Alexander and Adam 2013). Another site with pits containing charcoal at Maundown, just west of Wiveliscombe, had two containing Collared Urns, one complete with a cremation and a second

with sherds: this site is unlikely to be fully published (Context One 2009).

The *oak cover* to the cremation is described by Gray as 'remains of a flat circular wooden (oak) cover, which appeared to be about 1.2ft in diameter...of a thin piece of oak...with traces of a rather thick turned-over rim, this flange showing upwards'. Some small pieces of this survive, which suggest that the grain ran across the piece. No parallel is recorded by Longworth (1984) or Law (2008) although the latter includes some references to organic covers the materials of which have not been further identifiable (*ibid.*, 127, 191, 274). A covering wooden slab is recorded from a barrow on Crichel Down, Dorset (Piggott and Piggott 1944). Nothing similar is presented in Earwood's (1993, 38-39) survey of prehistoric domestic wood work although some of her references to early finds now lost could be appropriate.

#### *Later Iron Age*

Seven sherds, 31g, were examined. P5, 5g, 2 feet deep, comes from Cutting II barrow mound area. P25, 4s, 9g, including part of bead rim, P26, 11g, and P28, 11g, come from Cuttings IX and X, 2-2.5 feet deep in the middle of the ditch. The fabric and the fragmentary bead rim indicate either a later Iron Age date or the use of local fabrics into the early Roman period. The fabrics can be matched by material in Late Iron Age and early Roman contexts at Hinkley (Quinnell and Wood forthcoming). P19-22 and P24, which from descriptions seem similar but were assigned as late medieval or even later, come from Cutting V, one of the earthworks to the east of the barrow, but are not now present.

#### **Lithics**

*Barrow Mound Cutting II* A total of 123 pieces were recorded of which five are chert and the rest are flint. These are recorded by Layer: I down to 1.5 feet; II down to 2.5 feet; III down to undisturbed gravel. It is unclear whether individually numbered F3 to F27 are part of this number or additional to it. F1, F3, F7, F16, F19, F21 and F25 were illustrated (Gray 1931, pl. X) (no locations currently found for F1 and F2.). The unnumbered debitage was washed for the first time but no tools were recovered. This suggests that F numbers were only given to pieces when the collection was reviewed for publication.

A number of small blades and blade fragments and a small blade core suggest some activity of Late Mesolithic date.

Most of the material from Cutting II, either numbered or debitage, is likely to be later Neolithic.

The most distinctive piece is the edge ground knife F16 (Gray 1931, pl. X). This is a very fine ground edge knife, of later Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date, for which Gray publishes a full and accurate description. It was found at a depth of 2 feet, 3.85 feet west of reference point B and 7 feet from the south side of Cutting II: it is unclear whether it lay in disturbed or undisturbed mound fill. This is 110mm in length, has a little direct retouch on both sides of the distal end: the right edge has been ground on both faces and wear gloss is apparent along this. Knives with a single ground/polished edge, as opposed to discoidal and rectangular knives, never been studied nationally, and knowledge has not substantially advanced since Manby (1974) linked these to Peterborough and Grooved Ware contexts in north Britain. Recent work at Newton Poppleford in Devon has a knife very similar to F16 from a group of pits with Fengate pottery and late 4th millennium BC radiocarbon dates (Quinnell 2018). F19 (*ibid.*, pl. X), found on top of the cremated remains together with a 'flint flake', was published as a knife but is a much used double side and end scraper. It is the only one of the itemised flints not described by Gray except in Footnote 38 where its ventral surface may have been confused with that of F16.

The other material from Cutting II included: a possible leaf arrowhead of yellowish flint F17, F3 scraper, F7 part of knife, F15 blade with heavy use-wear from knife use, F6 broken scraper, F8 double edged and end scraper, F9 broken scraper, F11 end scraper, F14 end scraper, F18 broken scraper, F20 small side scraper, F26 broken scraper, F25 and F27 broken probable knives. The number of distinctive tools, if not the product of selective collection, is high and suggests either an element of structured deposition or an in situ practice involving knives and scrapers.

F1 was initially described as 'petit tranchet' (Grinsell 1969) but is a hollow based arrowhead with all three tips fractured: this, following Green (1980, 141), is likely to be of Beaker or Early Bronze Age date. F21 (Gray 1931, pl. X) is confirmed as a thumbnail scraper for which a similar date range is probable.

A scatter of lithic pieces, generally not closely dateable, occurred in most of the Cuttings.

The three pieces from Cutting 1 'dolmen' are all debitage, probably of Later Neolithic date.

#### **Early, Middle and Late Bronze Age metalwork** *with Matt Knight*

Six copper-alloy artefacts were found in the 1860s during draining works on land to the west of the

barrow cemetery, one specifically from a plot named Lake's Meadow. Gray (1908a; 1931) documents their finding and provides illustrations. They are all described and illustrated by Pearce (1983, 540, pl. 94) and her numbers, 782 to 784d, are used below for consistency. Pearce's descriptions are updated and relevant typochronological information is included. Numbers 784a and 784d were studied as part of PhD research (Knight 2018); they are currently held at the Museum of Somerset, Taunton. Recent enquiries have located number 782 and possibly number 783 at the Community Heritage Access Centre (CHAC) in Yeovil, although these have not been studied first-hand; the authors are grateful to Joseph Lewis for his assistance with this. It was not possible to locate the others.

**782** (Fig. 4, A; Gray 1931, fig. 2, A) Camerton dagger fragment (following Gerloff 1975, 107, no. 197, pl. 19), based on recent dating to the Early Bronze Age, c. 1900-1600 BC (Jones and Quinnell 2013; Jones *et al.* 2013). The dagger is incomplete with the tip and butt missing, though the breaks appear rounded. Gray (1931b, 16) suggested the dagger was reworked after breakage, which seems an accurate interpretation from the available image. The dagger has a dark brown, smooth patina, with some green corrosion on one face.

Dimensions (following Pearce 1983): L. 119mm; W. 45mm.

Current location: CHAC YEOVM:8/77/1 (recorded as 'lost' by Gerloff)

**783** (Fig. 4, B; Gray 1931, fig. 2, B) Dagger or dirk, Early-Middle Bronze Age, Arreton-Acton Park c. 1600-1400 BC. This is a long dagger with a damaged heel and originally four rivet holes, though three are now broken. One rivet is still in position. The blade has a 'flattened, rhomboidal-shaped section' (Gerloff 1975, 108) and a midrib. This object is recorded both by Gerloff (1975, 108, no. 203, pl. 19) and Burgess and Gerloff (1981, 23, no. 87, pl. 13), falling with their respective Camerton dagger and Type Taplow dirk classes; this is perhaps a moot typological point. Dimensions (following Burgess and Gerloff 1981): L. 198mm; W. 54mm.

Current location: Probably CHAC YEOVM:8/77/2 (recorded as 'lost' by Gerloff; could not be located at time of writing, but recorded on CHAC database)

**784a** (Fig. 4, C; Gray 1931, fig. 2, C) Dirk, Group II, Type Littleport (following Burgess and Gerloff 1981, 30, no. 168A, pl. 127), Early-Middle Bronze Age, Arreton-Taunton metalworking phases, 1600-1275 BC. This dirk has a lozenge-section blade, with



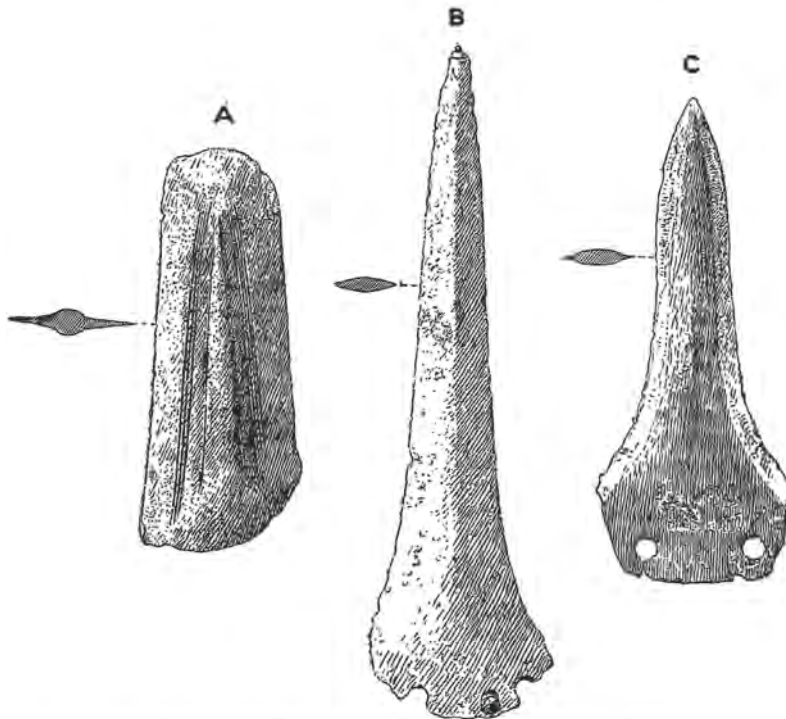


Fig. 2.—Bronze Implements found at Battlegore, Williton, Som. Scale  $\frac{1}{4}$  linear.  
 A, Part of Dagger converted into a Knife. B, Rapier-shaped Dagger blade.  
 C, Knife-dagger found in 1868.

From Drawings by Mr. E. Sprankling.

Fig. 4 Metalwork following Gray (1931, fig. 2): A = Camerton-Snowhill dagger 782;  
 B = dagger or dirk 783; C = dirk 784a

a trapezoidal hilt and two rivet holes, one of which is broken. It has a shallow midrib along the ogival blade and bevelled edges, though conclusive signs of use could not be identified. Burgess and Gerloff (1981, 30, no. 168A) record this incorrectly as having two torn rivet holes and an asymmetrical omega hilt mark: there was no observable hilt mark and only one rivet hole was torn, probably through accident. It has a dark brown patina on one face consistent with the socketed axehead (no. 784d).

Dimensions: L. 142.8mm; Bl. W. 30.5mm; Bl. Th. 4.4mm; Hilt W. 44.7mm; Hilt Th. 2.3mm; Sh. W. 57.1mm; Wt. 81g.

Current location: Museum of Somerset, Taunton TTNCM 31A

**784b** (Fig. 5, D; Gray 1931, fig. 3, D) Ornamented spearhead, Tréboul type, early Middle Bronze Age, Acton Park-Taunton phases, c. 1500-1275 BC. This is a complete spearhead with a flame-shaped blade

and a decorated pegged socket. The socket mouth is adorned with two bands of decoration, both consisting of hatched triangles, separated by horizontal bands of grooves. Pearce also depicts two lines of pontillé decoration either side of the central rib extending along the wings and converging towards the tip. This has been interpreted (Davis 2012, 167f., no. 1040, pl. 87) as an Armorican import of Tréboul type dating to the early part of the Middle Bronze Age.

Dimensions (from Pearce 1983): L. 163mm; W. 35mm.

Current location: Unknown, seemingly lost. CHAC possess two spearheads with a similar provenance (see below) though neither are decorated. Davis (2012, no. 1040) lists a 'private owner' for this spearhead though information appears to have been drawn from previous sources.

**784c** (Fig. 5, E; Gray 1931, fig. 5, E) End-winged axe, Wilburton to early Ewart Park phase, c. 1000-900

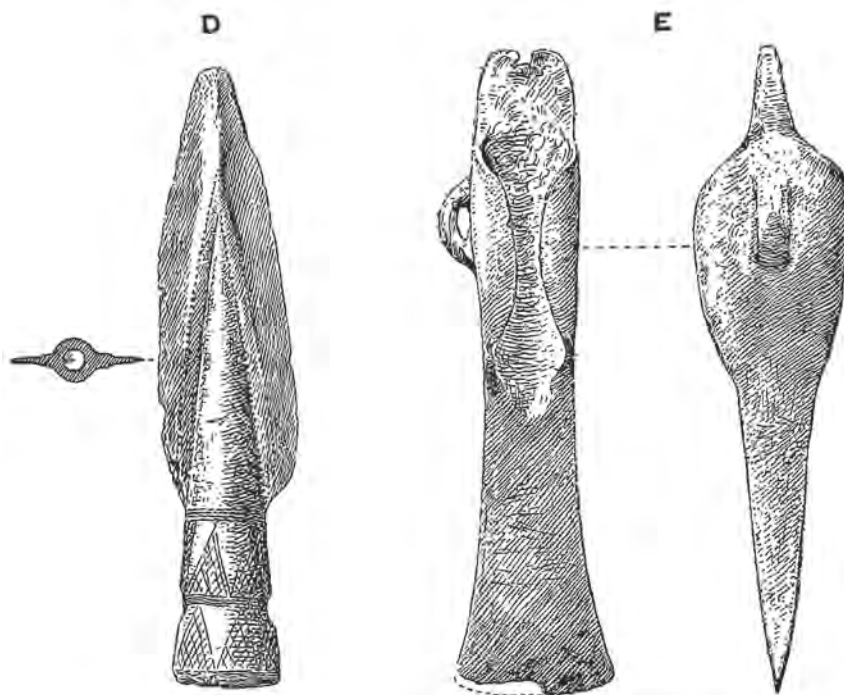


Fig. 3.—Bronze Implements found at Battlegore, Williton, Som.  
Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$  linear.

D, Ornamented Spearhead. E, Winged Celt or Axe.

From Drawings by Mr. E. Sparckling.

Fig. 5 Metalwork following Gray (1931, fig. 3): D = ornamented spearhead 784b;  
E = end-winged axe 784c

BC. This is a slender axe with high, winged flanges hammered on both faces, no stop and a side-loop positioned central to these wings.

Dimensions (from Pearce 1983): L. 175mm; W. 40mm.

Current location: unknown, possibly lost. A winged axehead with a similar provenance is currently held by CHAC (see below), though does not match the illustration.

**784d** (Fig. 6; Gray 1908a) Faceted socketed axe, Type Meldreth (following Schmidt and Burgess 1981), Late Bronze Age, Stogursey/Ewart Park phase, c. 1000-800 BC. This axe is complete, with eight facets, a circular socket and a single collar moulding from which a side-loop originates. The casting seams are still quite prominent, but have been slightly hammered; hammer marks are also visible along at least one of the facets suggesting preparation of the tool, though there are no signs of use-wear on the

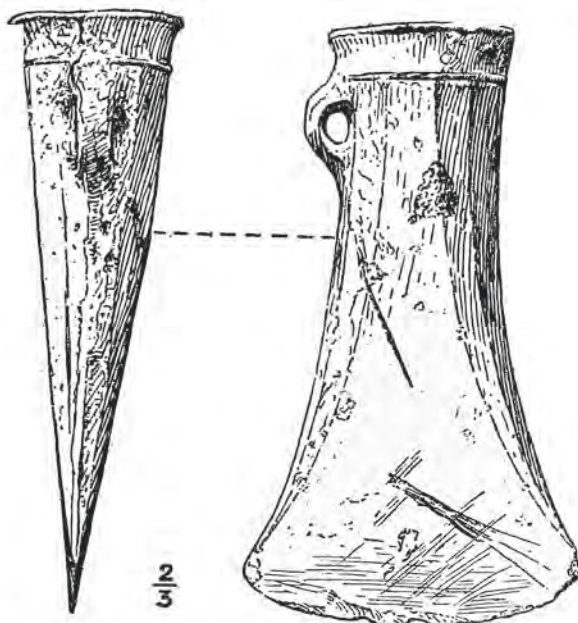
cutting edge. It has a dark brown patina, consistent with the dirk (no. 784a).

Dimensions: L. 106.4mm; Bl. W. 58.1mm; Sock. Diam. Ext. 30.2mmx31.3mm; Sock. Diam. Int. 24mmx24mm; Wt. 211g.

Current location: Museum of Somerset, Taunton TTNCM:20B

#### Discussion

There is no record of these items being found in close association as would be the case with a hoard. The artefacts span broad time range, from a date in the Early Bronze Age until somewhere in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages though it is notable that no conclusively Taunton-Penard phase material is present. It could be said that they formed three different groups: 782-83 Early Bronze Age; 784a-b early Middle Bronze Age; and 784c-d Wilburton to early Ewart Park in the Late Bronze Age. It seems



Bronze socketed Celt, found near one of the  
"Battle Gore" mounds at Williton.

1. See *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, Vol. XV, pt. i, p. 5; also the Pigott Drawings, Halsway Manor House.

Fig. 6 Metalwork following Gray (1908a): faceted socketed axe 784d

likely that the bronzes represent ritual deposition in a watery situation over a long period (see below).

Some caution should be added, though, as there is limited information about the find circumstances of most of the metalwork. The dagger (no. 782) and the dirks (nos 783, 784a) are finds one would expect in association with a barrow-scape and thus pose no real issue. The socketed axe is likewise in little doubt, as, despite dating much later, it has a patina consistent with the dagger and Gray's (1908a) account relates it to specific drainage operations; moreover socketed axes are occasionally known from earlier sites (for example, a Late Bronze Age socketed axe found close to Barrow D at Farway, Devon (Pearce 1983, 442, no. 236, pl. 30; Jones and Quinell 2008)). Type Meldreth axes have a more typical distribution in central and eastern England, but are known from Somerset contexts, such as the Stogursey hoard (McNeil 1973) or the Turbaries, Glastonbury (Knight 2018, 515, TTNCM-F054g). This latter site may provide some support for the variety of metalwork recovered from Battlegore, as 13 metal artefacts spanning the Early,

Middle and Late Bronze Age were found during peat cutting at the Turbaries (Knight 2018, 512ff.).

However, the end-winged axe and the Tréboul spearhead, both of which are now lost, are potentially suspect. The Tréboul spearhead is an Armorican form and is the only one known from Britain presently (Davis 2012, 168). Similarly, end-winged axeheads represent a form common in north-western France and are uncommon finds in south-west England; when they are found, it is usually on the south coast, in Dorset or, most recently, in hoards from Cornwall. This is one of only three examples known from Somerset, though one is simply recorded by Pearce (1983, 544, no. 818, pl. 98) as from '?Somerset'; the other is currently held at CHAC, Yeovil (see below). That two typically north-western French objects should be provenanced to the site of Battlegore, dating from two different periods of the Bronze Age, means interpretation should be undertaken with caution.

In locating 'lost' metalwork, it was revealed that the dagger and dirk are recorded at CHAC with the find-spot 'Orchard, Williton, Somerset', rather

than Battlegore, and came into the museum from Wyndham College, where they were previously held (see Pearce 1983). Under this same provenance and accession sequence are two or possibly three further objects, briefly recorded here:

- YEOVM:8/77/3: A median-winged axehead, Middle-Late Bronze Age, c. 1300-1000 BC (Knight *et al.* 2015, 72, no. 451, pl. 21)
- YEOVM:8/77/4: A plain pegged socketed spearhead, Late Bronze Age, c. 1100-800 BC (Knight *et al.* 2015, 72, no. 450, pl. 28)
- A plain pegged socketed spearhead, Late Bronze Age, c. 1100-800 BC. Unmarked object located in the collections with YEOVM:8/77/3, not previously published.

It is unclear whether these objects represent additional finds from the Williton area, or instead represent a collection that was incorrectly provenanced. It should be noted that Orchard Wyndham House, some 1,300m south west of Battlegore, was the centre of the Wyndham estate on which the barrows are sited. The objects could have been found on the Wyndham estate, possibly at Battlegore, with no further information recorded. They could have come from an 'orchard' somewhere on the estate or indeed anywhere near Williton. Alternatively they may be a re-acquisitioned group of objects from another collection. If the first is correct, however, then the significance of the metalwork at Battlegore, which would then include a dagger, two dirks, two rare forms of winged axehead, an exotic spearhead and two additional spearheads, is very noteworthy.

#### LATER POTTERY

*David Dawson*

Five sherds were definitely identified as dating later than the prehistoric period, one Roman P27, four medieval P13 and one post-medieval. The descriptions are purely visual based on the modified Whitbread system and are not based on detailed mineralogical examination or knowledge (Quinn 2013, 80-102).

#### Roman

*P27 Barrow 1, Cutting X, depth 2 feet, near inner side of ditch.* Rim of a wheel-thrown cup. Very eroded soft-fired orange-red matrix with traces of colour coat on external and internal surfaces, no discernible inclusions. Typical of some of the Oxfordshire red/brown slipped wares which are more commonly found in the 3rd and 4th centuries in the South West

than earlier (Young 1977, 306).

#### Late Saxon to Medieval

*P13 Cutting II, depth 3 feet, in disturbed part of mound.* Three adjoining sherds of the carination of a hand-built base of a jar, approximate diameter 230mm. A fourth body sherd is similar and from the same recorded position. Medium fired matrix tending to fracture lamellarly, reduced grey core, reoxydised buff internal margin with darker buff surface, reoxydised buff outer margin with reduced black outer surface with traces of sooting, abundant inclusions <1.5mm of subangular milky and other quartz, occasional <5mm of conglomerate and sandstone, and a variety of other minerals. No similarities have been found in comparison with the Somerset pottery fabric type series and those from Taunton Castle and Nerrols Farm, but then there is growing evidence that the majority of such pottery is locally made and only a minority of pots of specialist fabric types were more widely distributed (Dawson with Dawson 2016; Dawson and Payne 2021; Andersen *et al.* 2022). The materials included in the fabric imply local production. This kind of mix of locally sourced materials is not dissimilar to the kinds of medieval ware found at Cannington, for example. The rim form is the normal method of ascribing a date range to such vessels but this kind of sagging base is typical of the period c. 950 to 1250 (compare Rahtz 1974, 116-23; Pearson 1984). The sooting is evidence that this particular vessel has been used as a cooking pot, probably over an open fire.

#### Post medieval

*Sherd marked IV and associated with a label 'Battlegore Cutting IV'* from earthwork north of Barrow 1. Rim sherd of a wheel-thrown bowl. Hard-fired smooth matrix, traces of a reduced grey core and rest oxidised buff typical of Fremington clays, inclusions of abundant crushed quartz <2mm, internal plain lead glaze reduced green, eroded in patches. A North Devon Gritted Ware product of 16th-century form 18b (Morris 2017, 289).

#### Comment

The presence of sherds P27 and 'Post Medieval' does not elicit surprise. Both kinds of ware are widely distributed along the Somerset coast and can be regarded as residual discarded pottery. The medieval material P13 invites further comment as about a quarter of a base of a jar was found (see below).

TABLE 1 RESULTS OF THE RADIOCARBON DATING

Battlegore, Barrow 1	Cremated bone: Rib fragment	SUERC-84148	3584 ± 24 BP	2020-1884 cal BC
Battlegore, Barrow 1	Cremated bone: Long bone fragment	SUERC-84149	3526 ± 24 BP	1928-1769 cal BC

## RADIOCARBON DATING

Prior to the current project, dating for the site was entirely dependent on the ceramic assemblage.

The key aim was therefore to obtain secure, reliable radiocarbon dating from the cremated bone from the off-centre pit. Two suitable pieces of bone were selected, in order that a replicate date could be obtained to validate the result from the first sample. The cremated bones are stored loose in a box and it was not possible to relate the position of the two samples within the original deposit.

The samples were submitted for accelerator mass spectrometry dating at the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (SUERC) (Table 1).

## Results

The two new determinations from the cremated bone firmly place the cremation deposit into the first centuries of the second millennium cal BC. The determination SUERC-84148 could be taken to suggest that it was a little earlier than SUERC-84149. It is certainly the case that some cremation deposits in the South West region have been found to be composite and comprised of mixture of individuals (for example, Jones 2011), and there is growing evidence for the opening of Early Bronze Age graves, either to remove or add bone (see below). There is, however, a significant overlap between the two dates and it is not possible to determine whether the deposit represents one or more people without detailed osteological analysis. The significance of the radiocarbon dating will be discussed below.

## DISCUSSION

The re-analysis of the artefacts and the radiocarbon dating of the cremation deposit confirms the complexity which was indicated by the original excavation report (Gray 1931), but further clarifies the extent of prehistoric sequence (and subsequent activity) which was not apparent from the much shorter chronology which was assumed for the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods in the first half of the 20th century.

Similarly, more modern approaches to landscape biography, the development of monuments (for example, Bradley 2002; Jones 2005; Tilley 2017) and the importance of their settings were not generally considered by archaeologists at the time when Battlegore was first published. Neither the pre barrow landscape into which the monument was set nor subsequent developments which potentially arose from the presence of the barrows were discussed in Gray's report (1931). Indeed the landscape itself was also strangely absent when seen from a modern perspective. There was no comment that the barrow and the megalithic structure were set in what would now be termed a liminal place: on dry land, close to a stream and marshlands which lay to the immediate west and north, and below a visually distinctive low ridge which blotted out the coast which lay beyond it.

The remainder of this discussion will therefore focus upon the *longue durée* of the barrow site itself and the place in which it was set.

## Before the Bronze Age barrows

The earliest identifiable activity on the site is associated with a few flints in the form of blades and a core which are likely to be of Late Mesolithic date. Given the small nature of the assemblage it is not possible to ascertain the form or intensity of activity on the site at this time, although the proximity to wetlands at the bottom of a long distinctive ridge, which provided shelter from the coast, would probably have made the location an ideal one for hunting.

In addition to a potentially productive hunting ground, the distinctive landscape setting may have attracted Mesolithic people, and as well as later visitors to the locale. The first certain evidence for monumental architecture is a ruined megalithic structure, situated close to the north end of dry land prior to post-medieval drainage. The megalithic structure is comprised of two shorter sandstone blocks and a larger block, or capstone, measuring 3m long by up to 1m wide. Traditionally the site has been described as being an Early Neolithic chambered tomb (Dobson 1931, 257; Grinsell 1969), and, most recently, discussion by Riley (2006, 22-24) has drawn

comparison with portal dolmens which are found in Wales and west Cornwall. The surviving components, however, make this analogy seem unlikely. The stones are too few and rather small, and the 1931 excavation did not reveal evidence for additional sockets for the stones which would supported the sides and back of the chamber. Instead, the site seems to have more in common with the smaller megalithic settings and propped stones which are also found in west Wales and Cornwall (Darvill and Wainwright 2016; Jones and Goskar 2017). Interestingly, many of these sites are located near to the sources of water, which is often audible from them (Garcês and Nash 2017). Simple megalithic structures and propped stones are both poorly dated forms of monument, although recent excavations at Hendraburnick quoit in north Cornwall produced an associated Late Neolithic radiocarbon date (Jones and Goskar 2017) and an Early Neolithic date has been suggested for some of the Welsh examples in Pembrokeshire (Darvill and Wainwright 2016).

Given the uncertainty of the exact form or date for the construction of the megalithic setting, it is possible that the Middle Neolithic Peterborough ceramics and flint found during the excavation of the barrow may have been associated with activities connected with the construction of the megalithic structure, or may instead represent a continuing interest in the area of the monument into the middle centuries of the fourth millennium cal BC, c. 3400-2900 cal BC (compare Ard and Darvill 2015). Either way they demonstrate a significant Neolithic interest in the area.

### The Bronze Age barrows

#### *The barrow group*

On current evidence there is a lacuna in monument construction or obvious activity in the period between c. 2900 and 2000 cal BC. Probably at around the turn of the second millennium cal BC a linear barrow group was constructed which ran towards the southern edge of the wetland. The precise date for the construction of the group is unknown as only Barrow 1 has been excavated. The Beaker sherds found at Barrow 1 hint at a phase of activity dating to the late third millennium cal BC, and certainly Beaker associated barrows and cairns are known in the wider vicinity, as at the Wick barrow, Charmy Down, Batheaston and Wincanton (Gray 1908b; Clarke 1970; Grinsell 1971), but the sherds from Barrow 1 cannot be directly associated with barrow construction and may be linked with earlier occupation or pit-related activity.

Three of the five recorded barrows (Riley 2006, 23, fig. 2.7) are upstanding but crop-mark evidence

suggests that there may have been more (Fig. 1 inset, open circles). The southern three sites, comprising two large barrows with a much smaller cropmark between them are on a true north-south alignment, however, the fourth cropmark site kinks slightly to the west and appears to respect the position of the earlier megalithic structure and follows the natural topography. This suggests that the megalithic structure continued to retain some significance in the landscape. A little further to the north is Barrow 1 which marked the northern end of the alignment and incorporated the megalithic structure into it. A large ring ditch type feature is also visible on aerial photographs between the megalithic structure and Barrow 1. It is uncertain whether this undated ring ditch was an open enclosure or another mounded barrow: if the latter it may have incorporated the megalithic structure into its southern side.

Anyone proceeding up the valley from the south along the barrow alignment would have passed the 'ancient monument' before reaching the large mound Barrow 1 and the edge of dry land. In other words, the creation of links with the deep past and the marking of a transitional, potentially liminal place in the landscape seem to have been important considerations in the layout of the barrow group. Indeed, several barrow groups in the wider South West region seem to have been located in the vicinity of water on the edge of marshy zones, river valleys and the coastal fringe (Pollard and Russell 1969; Christie 1985; Jones 2005; Tilley 2017). Although much less common than those on the higher ground, barrows within such locales are often susceptible to later damage and levelling, and have often only been discovered as part of developer funded excavations (for example, Chaffey and Kendall 2018; Lawson-Jones 2019; Barber *et al.* 2019).

#### *Barrow 1*

Harold Gray's Barrow 1 is the only monument in the group to have been excavated, and, even here, the investigation was limited to a single long trench, measuring less than 3m wide, across the middle of the site. A dispersed and diverse range of activities, including pit digging, fires and placing of artefacts are now known to have taken place at other barrow sites in Somerset and the wider South West region prior to mounding (for example, Lewis 2007; Jones 2012) and would not have been thought about at the time of excavation. The excavations were also undertaken by workmen who may not have identified features. Two features only were recorded beneath the mound, a probable small pit associated with oak charcoal and a larger pit which contained the urned

cremation deposit. The smaller pit with oak charcoal in its fill can be paralleled across the South West region, particularly on Dartmoor (Wainwright *et al.* 1979), where cairns commonly cover pits filled with charcoal, but also in Somerset and Cornwall (Miles 1975; Lewis 2007; Jones 2012), and can be seen as being a placed deposit, which may or may not have been associated with the act of burial.

The cremation was not analysed as part of this project but weighing approximately 1kg clearly represents a substantial deposit, comprised of at least one if not more people. It had been placed in a Collared Urn, the upper part of which was smashed, and the pit was then sealed by an oak cover. Exact parallels for this are hard to find, which is unsurprising as traces of unburnt wood rarely survive in dryland sites. It may be noted that the cremation within a Trevisker vessel at Bratton Down on Exmoor was contained by an apparent wooden cist with a stone slab base (Quinnell 1997), and small wood containers have been found in association with cremations elsewhere as at Milton Lilbourne barrow 4 in Wiltshire, where a cremation was associated with a very small charred log coffin (Jones *et al.* 2017). These examples could suggest that wood and especially oak had become associated with the containing of the dead – by encasing, or sealing human remains, and may be part of a wider trend of wrapping the dead, which can be seen in the Bronze Age in Britain and elsewhere in Europe (Harris 2014; Jones 2016).

The fragmentation of the Collared Urn below the oak cover allows for several possibilities. The first is that it was already broken, or was fragmented as part of ritual rites when it was buried. Both partially incomplete and completely fragmented ceramic vessels are widely found under barrows across the South West region (Jones 2005; Jones and Quinnell 2006). The widespread occurrence of broken vessels in barrows and other contexts was highlighted as being a part of funerary rites by Grinsell (1961) over 50 years ago. It is possible that this may have been the case at Battlegore, and the condition of the vessel may relate to its deliberate fragmentation as part of the funeral rite.

Alternatively, it is possible that the fragmentation of the vessel arose from a later disturbance to the site. This may have occurred during the medieval period when the mound above was disturbed and sherds of pottery were buried. However, the precise context of the medieval pottery is uncertain and it is possibly unlikely that medieval people would, on encountering the bones, have placed the oak cover back again over the pit. A more likely possibility is that the disturbance to the vessel was prehistoric and here the apparent placement of some of the collared

urn sherds back to front beneath the cover may be apposite. Across Britain there is a growing body of evidence that barrow sites were not necessarily seen as being a final resting place in the Early Bronze Age (Bradley and Fraser 2011; Brück 2019, chapter 2). At Raunds in Northamptonshire, for example, several barrows showed evidence for later burials being cut into earlier graves (Harding and Healy 2007, 228-30) and at Loose Howe in Yorkshire the original log coffin burial under the mound seems to have been disturbed by a second Early Bronze Age insertion (Jones *et al.* 2019). The latter site also became the focus for another Early Bronze Age burial, when a cremation was inserted into the top of the mound. If this was also the case at Battlegore, it is possible that the potentially slightly later radiocarbon determination (SUERC-84149) may have been associated with a later addition to the original burial deposit.

Barrow 1 mound itself does not appear, as far as examination of the records allow, to have been multiphase but appears to have been simple and possibly single phase.

## **Beyond the barrows**

### *The later Bronze Age*

There is evidence that Barrow 1 and the adjacent wetland continued to be of importance in the centuries after the mound had been constructed. Watery places, including mires, marshes and open water were places for deposition throughout the Bronze Age of Britain and the near Continent (Fontijn 2003; Bradley 2017; Bradley *et al.* 2015; Bradley *et al.* 2018), and especially during the second half of the second millennium cal BC. Large hoards are known in the wider South West and beyond (for example, Pearce 1983; Lawson 2018; Greeves 2019), as are single and small numbers of finds, which in Somerset (as elsewhere) make up the majority of recorded findspots of metalwork (Knight *et al.* 2015). The context of the single or small groups often gets overlooked because they are seen to be less meaningful than the obvious large hoards (Poyer 2015; Autenrieth and Visser 2019). At Battlegore, at least six pieces of metalwork have been recovered, which are likely to belong to the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Ages. Caution is required because the metalwork finds were recovered during drainage works to the west of the barrow and more artefacts may have gone unrecorded or of course remain to be discovered: some problems with the provenance of the artefacts have been discussed above. Nonetheless, the available evidence does suggest that small quantities of metalwork was deposited over an extended period of time in the wetland to the west of the barrow and

there was no intention to recover it (compare Fontijn and Roymans 2019). No metalwork was recovered from Barrow 1; however, it does seem likely that the wetland would have been approached from the slightly raised land, upon which the barrow cemetery was located, and the barrows would have been significant landscape features. The earliest objects, the Camerton-Snowhill dagger fragments, are now known to have been made sufficiently early to be broadly contemporary with the cremation deposit in Barrow 1 (Jones and Quinnell 2013, table 3). These objects are of interest as daggers are more usually found in burial related contexts and much less so with votive deposits (Needham 1988).

Some depositional activity occurred in the Middle Bronze Age phase and probably at an early stage with a rapier of local type and a spearhead which may have been an import. The latter is of particular interest as it may have been regarded as an exotic form, which instead of being recycled was placed into the wetland. Such an exotic piece, with its distant biography, may have enhanced the value of Battlegore as a place for special deposition. The sequence of activity continued into the Late Bronze Age with two different axes, one of which, the end-winged axe may be as early as the Wilburton phase. The sequence of metalwork reflects wider changing fashions in artefacts which are found in hoards but also indicates the importance of social memory with regard to appropriate actions and the importance of at certain places in the landscape (for example, Bradley 2002). In the case of Battlegore, deposits comprised of individual items seem to have been the proper form of votive offering at the wetland.

Seen in this way, barrow-associated ritual and deposition into the wetland may have been initially contemporary, contrasting, ritual practices, one concerned with the disposal of the dead and the other with a liminal space between the dry land and the water. The continuing link between ritual practices associated with a place with water and barrows which came to be perceived as ancient may have been a potent one. It is certainly the case that other Early Bronze Age barrows in Somerset continued to be the focus for activity in the Middle Bronze Age, as for example, at Beacon Hill, Mendip, where an urned cremation burial was inserted into the top of the mound (Leach 2013), or Tynings Farm, where Deverel-Rimbury pottery was recovered from two barrows (Mullin 2011). This implies that the memory of the barrows continued to be important, although on current data at Battlegore it was the wetland that continued to receive items of metalwork on an occasional basis.

#### *After prehistory*

Small amounts of pottery suggest activity in the Late Iron Age/early Roman period and also in the 3rd or 4th centuries AD but this may be linked to the little understood slight earthworks to the north of Barrow 1.

The post prehistoric activity which is revealed by the sherds of medieval pottery in the disturbed part of the Barrow 1 mound is more difficult to interpret. Several barrows in the South West region and beyond are associated with medieval pottery, usually fragments, as at Loose Howe in Yorkshire, but very rarely as substantially complete vessels as at Talland Bay in Cornwall (for example, Jones *et al.* 2019; Cate Frieman pers. comm.). In Somerset, bronze objects, said to be of AD 15th-century date were found at Charlecombe 2 in a 'robbers hole' (Grinsell 1971, 95). Radiocarbon dating has also revealed medieval disturbance, as at the Watch Hill barrow in Cornwall (Jones and Quinnell 2006) and we might therefore expect there to have been more medieval activity than recovered finds reveal.

The usual inference from medieval finds is that their deposition was associated with practical purposes, either treasure hunting or digging out good soil for use as fertilizer (Harding *et al.* 1930; Kirkham 2012). There are documented accounts for both practices in the medieval and post-medieval periods, and in Somerset an official decree was issued for treasure digging in 1545, although barrows were not specifically mentioned (Grinsell 1971). However, it is clear that responses to barrows in the medieval period were varied (see for example, Jessup 1974, 149-66; Williams 1998; Cooper 2016), with some being reused for burial in the early-medieval period, others associated with myth and legend to do with treasure, and others again with supernatural beings, which could be friendly or in some cases fearsome and vengeful (for example, Harte 1986, 34, 40; Palsson and Edwards 1989, 93-94). Somerset is no exception. The Wick barrow was known as Pixie barrow and associated with a story concerning the placing of a repaired shovel in return for a cake (Grinsell 1970, 158-59). There is no recorded story associated with Barrow 1, although interestingly another name for Barrow Willand 4 was 'Bloody Pate', as blood was supposed to have run downhill from it (Grinsell 1969, 41). An alternative explanation to treasure hunting, may therefore be that the burial of the pottery at Barrow 1 was associated with medieval superstition and a desire to achieve a magical outcome by leaving a pot in a supernatural place. Either way, the pottery is a reminder that barrows continued to play a role in the landscape long after their builders' intentions had faded from memory.



## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The revisiting of the Battlegore archive has produced significant results in terms of understanding the dating and complexity of the barrow in light of modern thought. The study highlights the importance of museum archives as a source of obtaining new information. Further analysis of the cremated bone from Barrow 1 was beyond the scope of this project but a re-evaluation of the remains would certainly be advantageous as the current identification is based on the rather limited osteological methods that were current in the 1930s. It would, for example, be desirable to establish the sex and age of the burial and whether it represents a single individual or multiple deposit.

The wider re-visitation of the metalwork assemblage has also revealed unexpected results, which had not been considered before. It was found that a sequential series of metalwork deposits had been placed into the marshy ground to the north and west of Barrow 1. The earliest, the Camerton-Snowhill dagger, may have been roughly contemporary with the construction of the barrow mound. However, the remaining artefacts were later and the most recent, the socketed Ewart Park axe, was several centuries later than the dagger. Two pieces (the spearhead and the winged axehead) were potentially of Continental origin, and therefore suggestive of long-distance contacts. Taken together at face value the assemblage suggests that Battlegore was a significant place in the landscape for nearly 1,000 years. This would make it an exceptional site, as although metalwork is associated with other barrows in the South West region, for example at Bloody Pool on Dartmoor (Tucker 1867), those deposits are single phased (for example, Knight 2022). The timing and tempo of the deposition of the Battlegore metalwork is, however, uncertain. Many of the pieces are worn and the circumstances of their discovery uncertain, as they are random finds recovered from drainage ditch digging. Further study of the archive is unlikely to achieve more in this case, and a fuller programme of investigation of the surrounding area, including the field to the north, is therefore necessary to see if more metalwork finds are present.

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