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# Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society

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(incorporating the Cambs and Hunts Archaeological Society)

Volume XCVIII  
for 2009



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for 2009**

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**Published by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society 2009**

ISSN 0309-3606

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# A fen island burial: excavation of an Early Bronze Age round barrow at North Fen, Sutton

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with contributions by Barry Bishop, Steve Boreham,  
Natasha Dodwell, Rachel Fosberry and Sarah Percival

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*A round barrow in North Fen, Sutton proved to conceal two central pits, one of which contained the cremated remains of a sub-adult accompanied by a plano-convex flint knife held within an inverted Collared Urn. A radiocarbon date places the burial in the early second millennium BC. The second pit produced evidence for one or more organic containers placed within which were ashy deposits, possibly representing pyre debris associated with the burial.*

## Introduction

The round barrow (SUT 7) lies in North Fen at the western edge of the parish of Sutton (TL 4049 8164, Fig. 1). It is one of six possible round barrows (SUT 2–7) identified on the North Fen island (Hall 1996, 57; Last 1997; for the wider setting, see Webley and Hiller, this volume). SUT 7 was one of the least well preserved earthworks and was identified as an eroded Bronze Age barrow which appeared in the landscape as ‘a bright orange circular patch’ (Hall 1996, 58). It was visible on aerial photographs with an encircling ditch.

The barrow lies at c. 1.00m OD on a small island of river gravel terraces surrounded by deep Nordelph peat deposits interleaved with Fen Clay. At the time of the excavation, the site lay within an active gravel quarry which has altered the landscape dramatically; a reservoir now lies only 20m to the south of the barrow and the area immediately surrounding it has been stripped completely to reveal underlying sand and gravel deposits, effectively leaving the barrow as a small ‘island’ (Fig. 2).

Blaby’s Drove lies approximately 100m to the north of SUT 7, whilst Long North Fen Drove is approximately 500m to the south and Horsley Fen Middle Drove about 400m west. Evaluation in 1996 of 18.8ha of land south of Blaby’s Drove identified that the remnants of the barrow, although already compromised by severe erosion caused by natural weathering, arable cultivation and drainage, could be preserved between the two arms of the then proposed reservoir (Last 1997). The earthwork was consequently fenced in order to protect it during preparation for the

reservoir, although it subsequently became clear that the site was coming increasingly under indirect threat from the quarry operations. Subsequent monitoring of the barrow by Cambridgeshire County Council identified increasing erosion and potential loss of the site, with particular damage having already occurred on its north-eastern side. As a result the former County Archaeologist (Dr Tim Reynolds) enlisted the help of the Sutton Conservation Society who set up the Sutton Archaeological Dig Project to excavate the barrow. The group were awarded a grant from the Local Heritage Initiative (LHI) and undertook the excavation under the supervision of Cambridgeshire County Council’s Archaeological Field Unit (CAM ARC), now Oxford Archaeology East. The excavation took place at weekends between April and October from 2004 to 2007.

The barrow was excavated in quadrants. The south-western quadrant was dug entirely by hand, although mechanical assistance was used in the other three quadrants to remove the plough soil. Following extensive hand excavation of trenches across both the northern quadrants, mechanical assistance was also used to strip the remainder of the mound deposits. Finds in the south-west quadrant were located using 1m square x 0.10m deep collection units; finds in the other three quadrants were located in three dimensions to their precise location. All mechanical excavation was carried out under the supervision of an experienced CAM ARC archaeologist.

Recording followed CAM ARC’s standard procedures. All site records and artefacts are currently held at Oxford Archaeology East’s offices under the site code SUT COD 04. Survey was carried out using a Leica GPS 1200.

## Archaeological Background

The round barrow sits towards the north-western edge of a gravel island in North Fen. This island is one of a series lying in the south-western Fen along the prehistoric course of the River Great Ouse. It lies

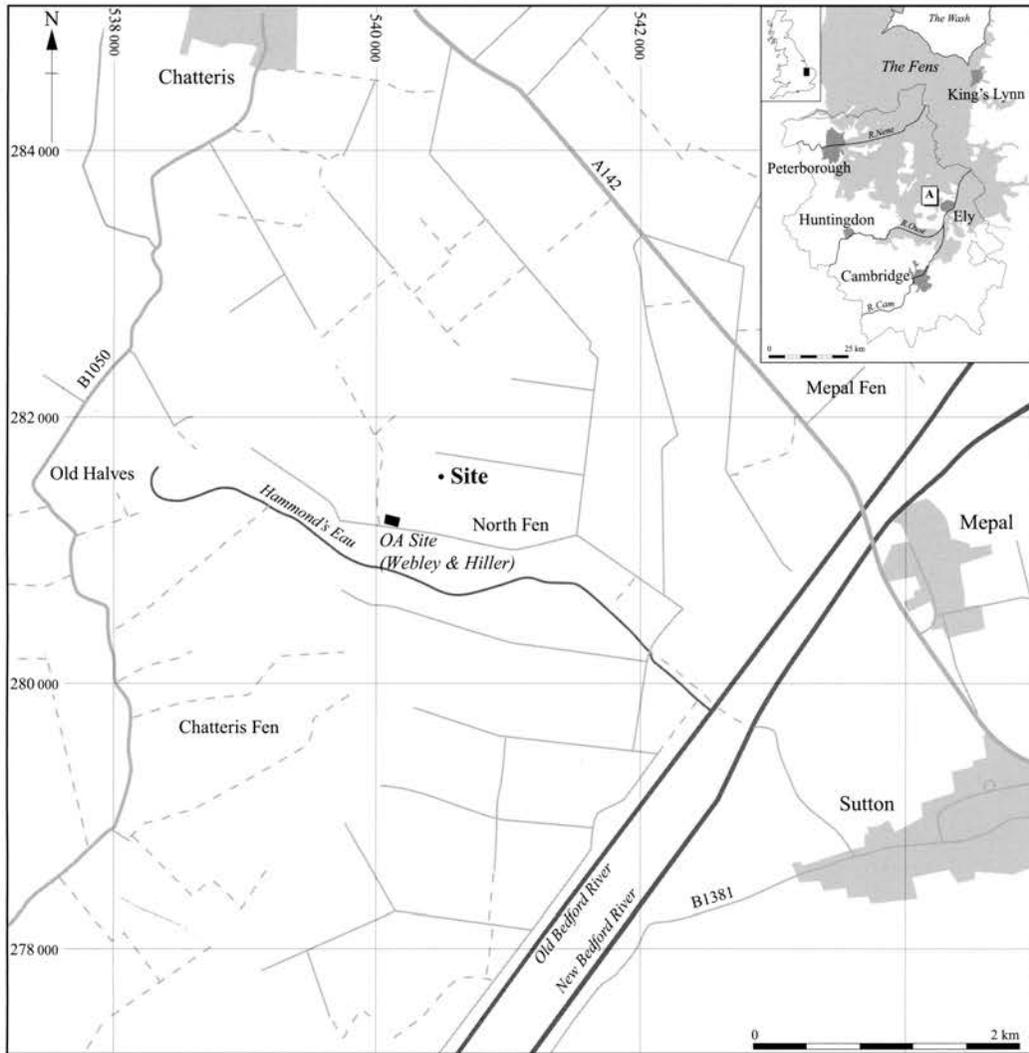


Figure 1. Site location.

between 300 and 400m to the north of a major palaeo-channel of the River Ouse which was probably active during the Neolithic/Bronze Age. Its course here is approximately followed by the post-medieval drainage work known as Hammond's Eau.

The surrounding area is a rich prehistoric landscape: Haddenham to the south boasts two Neolithic long barrows and a causewayed enclosure as well as numerous round barrows in a cemetery that straddles the parish border with Over. Many round barrows and ring-ditches lie nearby to the north on the southern edge of the much larger Chatteris island.

Recent excavations by Oxford Archaeology South on the southern edge of the island revealed prehistoric activity of mainly Neolithic and Early Bronze Age date. Features included a buried soil horizon containing pottery and large quantities of worked flint of later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date. Shallow pits and hollows and two large waterholes were also found, one of which contained an Early Bronze Age timber-revetted platform (Webley and Hiller, this volume).

### The Excavation

Overlying natural gravel and sealed by the mound was a 0.20m thick layer of pale grey moderately compact slightly clayey silt with frequent lenses of iron staining throughout (Fig. 3; layer 275/1219) perhaps indicating a buried soil. Pollen analysis of this deposit proved unproductive but did show that it had been elluviated, oxidized and stripped of most of its nutrients (Boreham below). The presence of considerable amounts of micro-charcoal, however, suggests that burning of the area around the mound must have taken place.

Beneath the mound, were two centrally-placed pits (805, 807; Figs 3 and 4). Although positioned closely together, it was not clear whether one cut into the other: effectively, the two pits appear to have been contemporary, one dug to contain cremated human remains and the second presumably as a receptacle for deposits associated with the burial.

The smaller pit (805; 0.45m in diameter and 0.45m deep) contained a complete inverted Collared Urn



Figure 2. The barrow during excavation. © Kim Osborne 2006

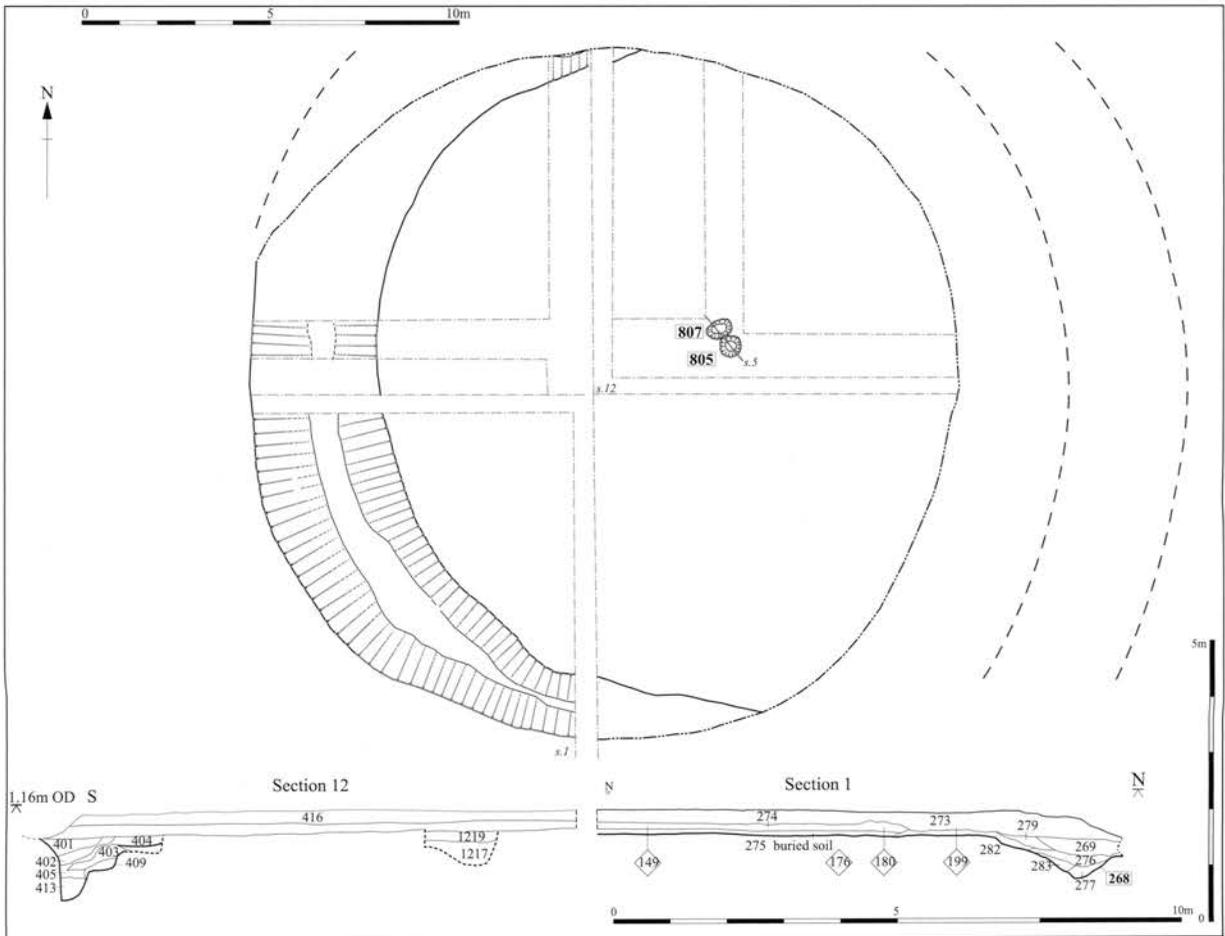


Figure 3. Plan and section of the barrow mound and ditches.

with what appeared to be a deliberate hole placed centrally in its base (Fig. 4). The urn is approximately 30cm tall and the collar is decorated with cord impressions (Percival below; Fig. 6). A total of 1113g of burnt bone with a radiocarbon date of 1880–1670 cal BC (SUERC-19125: 3440±30 BP) was found inside the pot and appears to have belonged to a single sub-adult between the ages of 12 and 18 years (Dodwell below). A plano-convex flint knife (Bishop below; SF 96, Fig. 5) had been placed in the urn with the cremation. Although in good condition, the knife had clearly been used before deposition but must have been added after the cremation process as a grave good, since it showed no signs of having been burnt. The pit itself was backfilled with a fairly clean mid grey silty clay containing occasional charcoal flecks; a sample from this fill produced some charcoal but little else.

Immediately adjacent to the central cremation was a larger pit (807; 0.56m diameter and 0.57m deep) with near vertical sides and flat base (Fig. 4). A thin layer

of clay covered its base and a narrow vertical void was noted around at least two thirds of its circumference and to approximately half of its height. The interleaving layers of black 'ashy' silt and clean dark grey silt that filled about half of the pit's depth were laid horizontally. There is evidence for at least two and possibly three episodes of structured deposition; the earliest (after the lining had been put in place) was slightly dish shaped in profile, hinting that the ashy deposit (816) had perhaps been contained within a vessel that has since decayed (a basket or wooden bowl). Lying immediately above it was another ashy deposit (814) forming a flat-based, vertical-sided interface with deposit 817 (suggesting another decayed container). A horizontal layer of black ash (809) sealed fill 814 and was in turn sealed by a final layer of ashy organic silt (808). A pollen sample (24) taken through these deposits showed that the clay lining had been subjected to severe oxidation, but the remainder of the sample was in good condition and provided

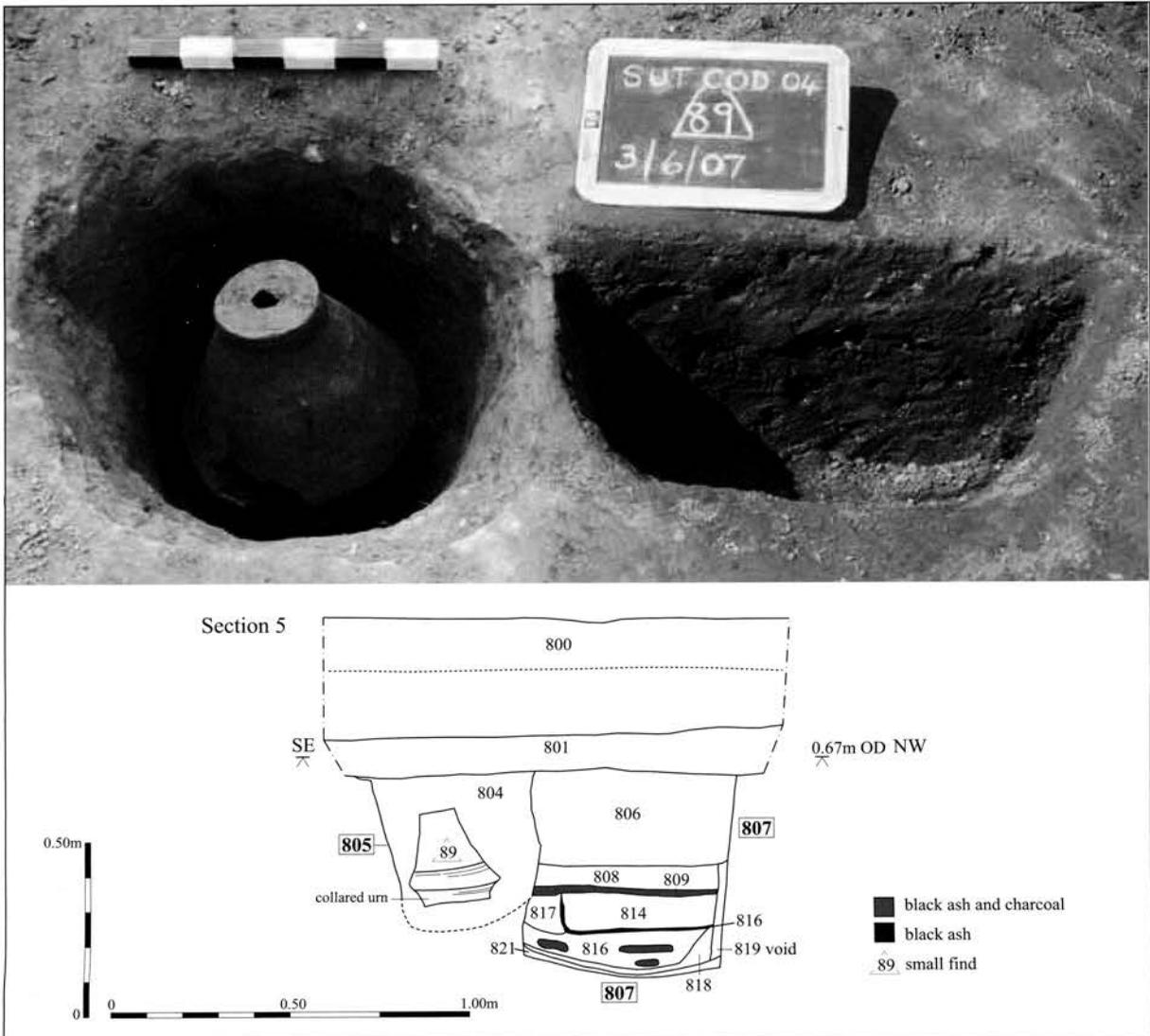


Figure 4. Top, photograph of the collared urn in situ; below, section of pit 805 showing collared urn in situ.

evidence for a 'patchwork' landscape of field systems interspersed with areas of wet and dry woodland (Boreham below).

The upper half of the pit was filled with an homogeneous mid grey silty clay (806) that was indistinguishable from that filling the cremation pit (805).

Encircling these pits, the ring-ditch (268) was cut through the subsoil. It survived for approximately half of its circumference, the eastern part having been destroyed by quarry-related activity. The surviving ditch was 2.10m wide at its narrowest point to the south broadening to 3.60m at its widest point to the west, varying in depth from 0.50m to 0.80m. Its original diameter is calculated to have been approximately 18m, based on the surviving segment of ditch and the location of the cremation which is assumed to have been central to the ring-ditch. The ditch profile varied from a broad shallow U or V shape on its south and west sides to a much narrower steeper V shape on its north side where it was at its deepest. Its basal fills were generally dark grey in colour, with a fine sandy silt texture probably derived from natural weathering over a very long period of time. This weathering material apparently derived from the outer rim of the ditch rather than the mound. The ditch appears to have been largely filled in before the paler more gravelly soil from the mound began to wash into it.

The two central pits were sealed by a much denuded mound (274) that survived up to 0.30m high in the centre (to 1.14m at its highest point, excluding the overlying plough soil). The surviving mound deposits were a mixture of pale buff sandy silt and gravel up-cast material with occasional evidence of iron staining and rare darker grey lenses that may indicate much decayed grass turves. A column sample (27) taken through the mound for pollen analysis showed that burning had taken place nearby but was otherwise uninformative. The mound had obviously been subject to ploughing and soil improvement over a considerable length of time since the scars of mole drains were observed cutting through the mound and into the buried soil beneath. It is impossible to estimate what the original height of the mound would have been although material deriving from it was found filling the top of the ring-ditch to the extent that it had finally obscured much of it. The mound and ditch were covered by a (0.30m thick) layer of plough soil (273).

### The Flints

*Barry Bishop*

Eighty-five struck flints were identified: 20 came from the mound, 24 from ditch fills, the remainder from topsoil or unstratified. They comprise a mix of flakes and blades, and represent a variety of technological traditions. The material was clearly manufactured over a considerable period, from at least the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age. All of the struck pieces were separately examined, classified and, where possible, assigned a date. The full report on which this

summary is based is retained in archive.

The earliest pieces consist of the broken tip of an obliquely blunted microlith and a burin. These are typically found within Mesolithic industries although the latter occasionally occur in Early Neolithic contexts. Only one piece, a blade-like flake, was recovered from the buried soils sealed beneath the barrow. This is likely to be of Mesolithic or Early Neolithic date and together with other blades and blade-like flakes indicates at least some pre-barrow flintworking. No pieces solely diagnostic of Early Neolithic industries were identified but as Mesolithic and Early Neolithic implements and occupation sites are often found in close association within the fens (Reynolds and Kaner 2000), it is quite possible, although not conclusively demonstrable, that both periods were represented amongst the material here.

Later Neolithic activity is suggested by a probable chisel-type transverse arrowhead (SF 16; Green 1980) that had broken, apparently during manufacture. Two large scrapers comparable to some of the scrapers recovered from the later Neolithic flint scatter at Fordham (Mortimer and Connor forthcoming) may hint at possible pre-barrow activities although as the dating of such implements is imprecise the two here could have been contemporary with the construction of the mound. These are both noticeably larger than the other scrapers recovered and are very finely worked, having symmetrical convex scraping edges. They are made of very similar raw materials, a dense black flint with a thick creamy cortex comparable to that from the mines at Grime's Graves. Made with more care than is usually seen on scrapers from other periods, both have faceted striking platforms and notches on their sides, which may have enabled them to be hafted. Although they both appear to have been used to a limited degree, the choice of raw materials and the care taken in their manufacture may have resulted in them being seen as prestigious implements. If so, they may relate to ceremonial practices surrounding the initial construction or use of the mound or perhaps indicate that the site was significant before it was chosen for its funerary use. Interestingly, comparable examples were recovered from one of the barrows excavated at Chippenham, where they were thought to represent an earlier, Neolithic, settlement (Leaf 1936, 149–150, fig 10–11).

The most notable piece that could be directly related to the primary use of the barrow is a plano-convex knife (SF 96, Fig. 5), found with the cremated body inside the Collared Urn. This is unburnt and must therefore have been added after the cremation process as a grave good. It was made on a large hard-hammer struck flake of a slightly vesicular translucent mid brown flint. It has been pressure flaked all the way around its perimeter with the exception of its bulbar end and over most of its dorsal surface, resulting in a slightly asymmetrical leaf-shaped implement. It is in good condition but has clearly been used, with some microscopic edge rounding evident, both on its cutting edges and further inwards towards its centre. Plano-convex knives are character-

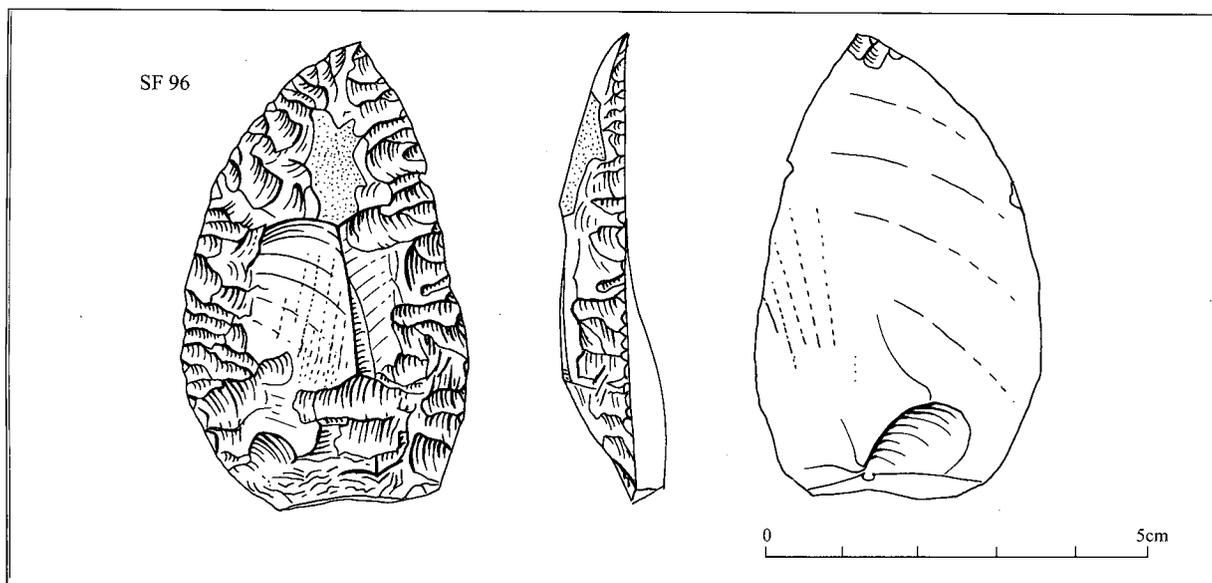


Figure 5. Flint knife.

istic of Late Neolithic, Beaker and Early Bronze Age industries, including those associated with Collared Urns (e.g. Webley 2007) and are frequently found within funerary contexts, particularly as grave goods (e.g. Clark 1932; Leaf 1936; Saville 1985; Garton 1994; Healey 1998). This example has been used and may have been a personal possession of the cremated individual. A small burnt flake fragment (SF 90) was also recovered from the fill of the cremation, this possibly having been incidentally burnt within the pyre although it could have been a tool that accompanied the burial: it is unfortunately too fragmentary to identify more closely.

Scattered across the barrow and in the barrow ditches was a small quantity of opportunistically struck flakes typical of Bronze Age industries, particularly those of the mid and later second millennium. The presence of four sequentially refitting flakes demonstrate that the barrow remained a focus of flint-using activity subsequent to its primary use as a burial mound. The use of barrows and similar mounds for working substantial quantities of flint, possibly for ceremonial or ritual purposes and often long after their funerary use, has been documented at several sites in Cambridgeshire (Trump 1956; Evans 1993; Evans and Knight 1996; Pollard 1998) as well as further afield (e.g. Fasham and Ross 1978; Smith 1987; Greatorex 2001; Ballin 2002). The small quantities recorded here may represent *ad hoc* requirements for sharp edges. Nevertheless, the significance of the monument, as an ancient point in the landscape, possibly associated with ancestral concerns, was probably not lost on the flint knapper.

### The Collared Urn and other pottery

Sarah Percival

The complete Collared Urn (SF 89, Fig. 6) formed the primary burial within the barrow and was found inverted over a substantial quantity of cremated human remains associated with the Early Bronze Age flint knife noted above. The vessel has a straight, narrow collar 45mm deep with a shallow overhanging lip. The diameter at the rim is 220mm broadening to 250mm at the shoulder before tapering to 105mm at the base. The total height of the urn is c. 301mm with the shoulder sitting approximately 56mm below the collar which is decorated with alternating panels or hurdling filled with ten to eleven bands of horizontal and vertical twisted cord impressions. Below the rim diagonal cord impressions form a double band of herringbone motif. There is no decoration beneath the shoulder. The interior of the rim is decorated with a single row of short cord impressions around 7mm long. Vessel wall thickness is fairly even being around 8mm below the collar. The base of the vessel has a small post-firing perforation that appears to have been created in antiquity.

Both the exterior and interior of the urn are heavily stained with an orange ferruginous substance probably leached from the surrounding iron rich gravels. The urn is made of a coarse grog tempered fabric with a laminated texture. Some areas of the vessel display a light grey colouring perhaps suggesting that the pot had been partially burnt.

Collared Urns first appeared in southern Britain from around 2200 BC and continued in use until approximately 1200 BC (Gibson 2002, 96). Burgess, writing in 1986, suggested that within this continuum certain earlier, middle and late traits could be identified. The Sutton urn has several stylistically early traits, including the narrow straight collar and use

of decoration featuring whipped cord impressions in short repetitive lines. The presence of these traits suggests that the vessel dates to an earlier phase of the Collared Urn tradition. Recent work on the Cambridgeshire Collared Urns with radiocarbon dates questions whether stylistic traits can be used to date such vessels in this way (Rob Law pers. comm.). A radiocarbon date of between 1880 BC and 1670 BC puts the Sutton Collared Urn into the beginning of the middle period.

Six further sherds weighing 54g were recovered from five contexts, along with 21 unidentifiable scraps weighing 3g that are not closely datable. Two small sherds, from contexts 116 and 120 (SF 17) were decorated with cord-impressed maggots in

grog- and sand-tempered fabric which may be from a Food Vessel and a grog-tempered sherd with cord impressions which may also be from a Food Vessel or perhaps an urn. One large sherd in quartz sand tempered fabric, from context 269 (SF 36) is from the collar of a Collared Urn with twisted cord impressed hurdling similar to the decoration on the complete urn also found at Sutton (SF 89). Two sherds weighing 7g (SF 98) are heavily abraded and are not closely datable.

The small assemblage may be the remains of up to six further vessels perhaps associated with secondary burials from within or around the barrow dispersed when the mound was ploughed out. Food vessels, which often feature cord-impressed maggots, were frequently used as accessory vessels with cremations or inhumations and were also in use in the earlier Bronze Age.

### The Human Bone

Natasha Dodwell

The contents of the Collared Urn were excavated in the laboratory and the material wet-sieved and then passed through 10mm, 5mm and 2mm sieves. All extraneous material was removed from the >5mm fraction. Osteological analysis followed procedures for cremated human bone outlined by McKinley (2002 and 2004). All bone >10mm was examined and sorted and weighed by body part (*e.g.* skull, limbs and axial skeleton). The residues from the 2mm and 5mm fractions were scanned and identifiable elements separated. A fragment of bone was selected for radiocarbon dating and returned a date of 1880–1670 cal BC (SUERC-19125: 3440±30 BP).

Neither obvious duplication of skeletal elements nor contradictions in age were noted, suggesting that the cremated bone derived from a single individual.

Age was determined by the stages of dental development and epiphyseal fusion (Brown 1985; Scheuer and Black 2000). Many small fragments of bone showing unfused epiphyseal surfaces were observed but they were predominantly too fragmented to identify to skeletal element. However, loose epiphyses from the hands and feet and a maxillary premolar with fused roots age this individual as a sub-adult, dying between the ages of 12 and 18 years.

The bone fragments were predominantly buff white in colour, indicative of efficient cremation although they had been stained a rusty orange colour by iron panning. Several of the phalanges and a metatarsal were dark blue-grey (less well oxidised), perhaps indicating proximity to the edge of the pyre.

A total of 1113g of burnt bone (>5mm) was recovered from the urn. The unsorted 2–5mm fraction is almost entirely bone and weighs an additional 294g. Studies of modern western cremation practices have determined that the weight range of collectable (>2mm) cremated bone one might expect from an adult cremation ranges from 1000g to 2400g (McKinley 1993). No figures are available for

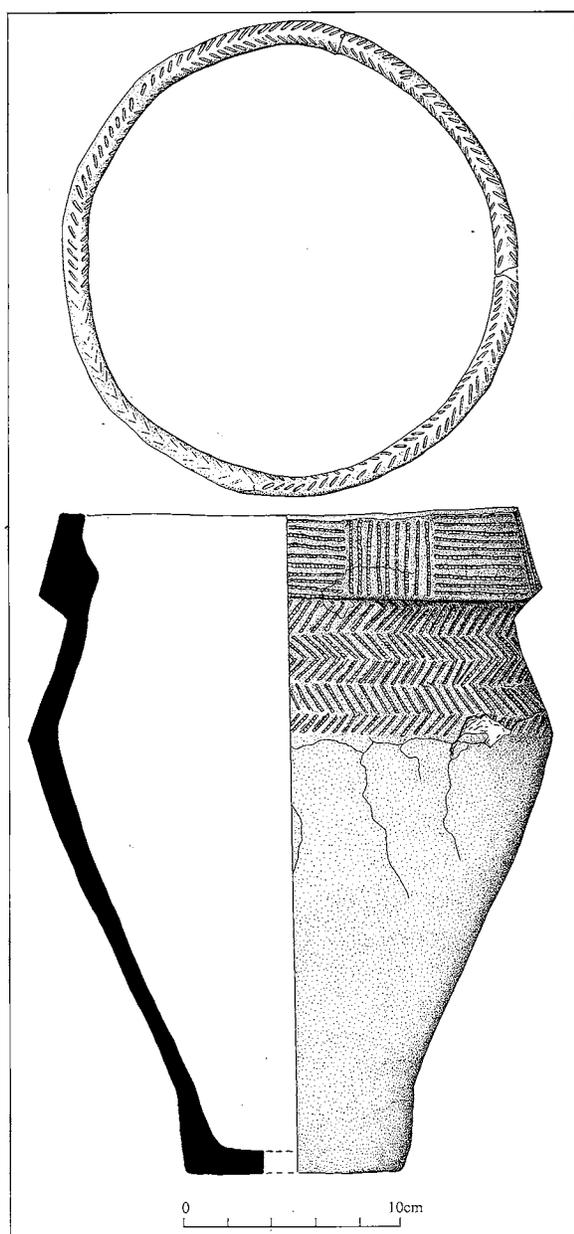


Figure 6. Collared Urn.

immature cremated remains but the bone weight from this context suggests that all of the cremated bone from the pyre was collected for burial.

There is no evidence of deliberate fragmentation of the cremated bone; the maximum recorded bone length was 94mm and the majority of the bone was recovered from the 10mm fraction (c. 64%).

Lumps of a light-weight charcoal/iron panned material were identified which may be pyre debris or 'cremation slag'. Other than this substance no pyre debris was identified in the fill surrounding the vessel or in the vessel itself, suggesting careful collection from the pyre, and perhaps that its inclusion in the burial was not deemed significant.

### The Charred Plant Remains

*Rachel Fosberry*

The entire fills from the two central pits (805 and 807) were processed by bucket flotation. The charred plant remains consisted predominantly of wood charcoal with occasional cereal grains that were all poorly preserved, either because of taphonomic factors or because they had been charred at a high temperature. The poor preservation did not allow detailed identifications and the grains have been identified simply as cereals. The volumes of charcoal found in the fills of pit 807 indicate substantial burning of wood, possibly from a pyre. No artefacts or small bones were recovered.

### Pollen

*Steve Boreham*

#### Introduction

Four spot samples (spot samples 149, 176, 180 & 199; Fig. 3) and two monolith samples (samples 24 and 27) were submitted for analysis. Three spot samples were taken from the upper layer (274) of the barrow mound and the fourth (199) from the base of topsoil (273) all in the southwest quadrant. Sample 24 came from pit 807, adjacent to the cremation pit. It is believed that the deposits in this pit may have come from the pyre associated with the cremation. Sample 27 was taken from the buried soil (275/1219) and deposits thought to represent the construction of the barrow mound (274).

All the samples were prepared using the standard hydrofluoric acid technique, and counted for pollen using a high-power stereo microscope. In addition, the micro-charcoal concentration in sub-sample 24 (15cm) was assessed using the point-count method. The full reports including the percentage pollen and charcoal data are retained in archive.

#### The Barrow Mound

Other than a large quantity of micro-charcoal, sample 27 (50cm) was barren and no further analysis was undertaken. It appears that this buff sandy silt up-cast

material has been elluviated, oxidised and stripped of most nutrients, clays and organic materials. The presence of considerable amounts of micro-charcoal suggests burning of the area around the mound. The pollen concentrations in the four spot samples (149, 176, 180, 199) varied widely between 2,848 and 42,716 grains per ml. Preservation was generally good, but corroded grains were particularly noted in spot sample 176, which also had the lowest pollen concentration. Large amounts of finely divided organic debris diluted the pollen and hampered counting. Thus, total counts from the slides yielded less than the statistically desirable minimum of 300 pollen grains.

Other than 176 all of the spot samples produced a grass-dominated assemblage with cereals, herbs and small amounts of arboreal pollen. This is interpreted as an open grassland environment with arable activity and occasional stands of hazel scrub. The herb assemblages give no strong indications of disturbed ground or riparian habitats, but are typical of tall-herb meadow communities. The abundant fern spores suggest a damp and partly shaded environment close by. With the exception of the lime-elm pollen signal, this type of pollen assemblage is found in archaeological sites in southern England from the Bronze Age through to Late Roman times.

#### Pit 807

Sample 24 (4cm) pollen spectrum has been severely modified by post-depositional oxidation, showing that the basal organic material was subjected to considerable oxidation above the water table.

The upper organic silt of sub-sample 24 (15cm) appears not to have suffered dessication to the same degree and showed clear evidence of grassland and meadow environments, arable activity, mixed oak woodland including lime, the possibility of hazel coppice and areas of wet alder carr. This composite pollen signal must represent a 'patchwork' landscape of field systems interspersed with areas of wet and dry woodland. The relatively low abundance of arable 'weeds' and disturbed ground indicators may suggest that arable cultivation was taking place some distance from the site. This pollen spectrum fits well into the expected assemblage for the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age. The micro-charcoal analysis confirms that although there may have been burning nearby, the micro-charcoal signal has been diluted by other material washed into the pit.

### Discussion and Conclusions

Primary interment of Collared Urns is relatively rare in Cambridgeshire (Rob Law pers. comm.) and the only other known Collared Urn burial with a plano-convex flint knife came from an urn from Snailwell (which had three). The Snailwell burial was one of four urned (three of them were inverted) cremations associated with Barrow A which formed part of a barrow cemetery: none of the other barrows contained urned cremations. The richly furnished Snailwell

cremation was thought to be the primary burial and is described as having been centrally placed, although the accompanying plan shows it as off-centre (Lethbridge 1950, 33–34, fig.2). Another of the urns (III) bore greater similarities in decoration with its basketweave pattern around the collar above herringbone to the shoulder (Lethbridge 1950, plate VII). Longworth records only 21 cases of such flint knives being found in association with a Collared Urn, most of them in the north and west of Britain. Of these, eight had been burnt and the others were placed with the remains on interment (Longworth 1984, 67). Examples of inverted cremations include one from Swaffham Prior (HER 8003).

Longworth also mentions one instance of cremated remains being poured in through the base of an inverted urn whose base had been deliberately broken (*ibid*, 48), and it is possible that cremated bone was put into the Sutton urn in the same way. Law has divided the Cambridgeshire Collared Urns into three groups based on their height and base to mouth ratio. The Sutton urn fits into his Group C and two other Cambridgeshire vessels have very similar proportions, one from Soham and the other from Water Newton. Both have a similar internal moulding to the Sutton vessel which most of his other Group C urns lack.

Group C vessels are characterised by vase-shaped profiles: wide mouths, well-defined collars, broad shoulders, and a body that narrows towards a small base. Twisted cord is the most popular decorative technique and horizontal lines and herringbone are the most popular decorative motifs. The vessels tend to be decorated on more than one zone and most Group C vessels were from barrow contexts, two of which formed 'primary' interments.

A similar configuration of two closely adjacent pits, one of which contained an inverted Collared Urn was found at Upton near Northampton (Foard-Colby 2008). In this case the pot had suffered considerable damage giving the opportunity to excavate a cross-section through the vessel and its contents, which showed that the pot appeared to have been filled with deliberate care. The urn itself was slightly squatter and shorter and its herringbone motif was executed with incised lines rather than impressed cord. Charcoal from within the urn returned a calibrated date of 1980–1750 BC making the Sutton cremation (1880–1670 BC) slightly later in date. The adjacent pit in the Upton example was interpreted as a posthole and there was no evidence that the cremation had ever been covered by a mound or encircled by a ditch.

There is good evidence for structured deposition within the ancillary pit at Sutton, but it is not possible to ascertain the exact nature of the deposits. It is likely that the pit held a series of vessels made from organic material (such as wood, wicker or leather) and that each of these contained organic remains that have not survived. The origin and identification of these organic remains is less easy to determine. There is a high percentage of charcoal in the bulk sample residues and yet the evidence for micro-charcoal in the

monolith samples is fairly limited leading Boreham (above) to suggest that it is unlikely that the deposits within the pit came from the pyre. By contrast the few heavily distorted charred seeds that have survived are interpreted as evidence in favour of a pyre. The absence of cremated bone may suggest that the pyre material was very carefully separated into its constituent parts (perhaps by careful placing of the cremated bone into the upturned urn through the hole in its base) as suggested by Longworth (1984, 48). Alternatively the deposits may have been indirectly associated with the cremation, perhaps the remains of food offerings.

Excavation of the SUT 7 round-barrow has added to the growing corpus of these significant monuments in the Cambridgeshire fens. Very recent excavations of a large number of different types of barrows at Over by the Cambridge Archaeology Unit will no doubt make further significant advances to this field of study.

#### Acknowledgements

Excavations were carried out by the Sutton Conservation Society Dig Group volunteers under the direction of Aileen Connor. The volunteers were Rob Atkins, Tony Baker, David Batten, Joan Batten, Denise Chappell, Jenny Cowser, Norman Freeman, David Goodman, Liz Hawkin, Alexandra Hook (née Tinker), David Hook, Clive Hughes, Ellie Hughes, Cecilia Lawson, Vanessa Lewis, Jane Logan, Gae Mathews, Colin Meechan, Pete Michina, Peter Nicholls, Kim Osborne, Joy Owen, Terry Scarffe, Irene Scarffe, Gill Shapland, Peter Smith, Tim Smith, Rob Soffe, Diura Van Thoden, Bernice Thornton, Sarah Tickle, Amanda Walsock and Laura Wood. Taleyna Fletcher carried out the GPS Survey. Dr Tim Reynolds and Gill Shapland initiated the project. Dr Quinton Carrol advised on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council. Rob Law commented on the Collared Urn. The illustrations are by Gillian Greer. Thanks are also extended to PJ Lee and Sons, the land owner and Richard Bull, the land agent for permission to access the site. This article was prepared for publication by Elizabeth Shepherd Popescu.

**Cambridge Antiquarian Society is grateful to the Sutton Conservation Society and the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant towards the publication of this paper.**

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