

## APPENDIX 5: ASSESSMENT OF AMBER ARTEFACTS

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Conservation by Liz Barham

### 1. Introduction

1.1 A total of twenty-one amber beads, <2> and <3>, were recovered from burial [41] at ARC WHR 99 in Zone 1. They consist of seventeen virtually complete beads and four fragmentary.

1.2 The amber beads were recovered by hand excavation of a secondary flexed burial associated with a round barrow. The amber beads can assist the following fieldwork event aims:

- To determine the spatial organisation of the landscape, and changes through time
- To determine the ritual and ceremonial uses of the landscape

### Methodology

1.3 The amber beads were accessioned in accordance with the Museum of London system.

1.4 The records have been entered onto the Oracle relational database/RLE datasets.

1.5 No sampling was undertaken of the beads.

### Quantifications

*Table 1: Assessment of Amber Artefacts ARC WHR 99*

Context	Special Number	Material	Count	Period	Comments (Description)
40	2	Amber	14	BA	Discoid with a single central hole; 13 small and one large; all virtually complete
40	3	Amber	7	BA	Discoid with a single central hole; all small; 3 virtually complete and four fragmentary

## Provenance

- 1.6 The beads were found around the neck area and right scapula of a poorly preserved skeleton, buried in a flexed position with the head to the west. The burial cut the backfill of the inner ditch of a Bronze Age barrow. Comparison with other sites, elsewhere in Britain, indicate a date of *c* 1600 BC for the burial.

## Conservation

- 1.7 The beads have been conserved but it is recommended that handling and movement of them is kept to a minimum as they remain in a fragile condition.

## 2. Comparative material

- 2.1 Comparison with other sites, elsewhere in Britain, indicate a date of *c* 1600 BC for the burial. There are, however, difficulties in dating the beads themselves. Amber beads and artefacts are frequently found in burials during the early to middle Bronze Age both in Britain and elsewhere in continental Europe (Coles & Harding 1979, 31 & 256). Beads and necklaces of jet, amber and faience are traditionally associated with burials of the Wessex culture of the final Early Bronze Age (Barclay & Wallis, [1999] 234), although they occur elsewhere in Britain too (Shennan 1993, 60). In Britain the Bronze Age appears to have been the high point in the use of amber and as Shennan has pointed out of a total of approximately 200 occurrences of amber in prehistoric Britain about 130 date to the Bell Beaker and Early Bronze Age phases (*ibid*, 59). Although amber beads continued in use into the Roman period they were never as popular as in the prehistoric period (Allason-Jones 1991, 271). As can be seen from above the exact dating of the plain discoid beads from the present site is problematic and will require further research (see below).

## Potential for further work

- 2.2 The beads can assist the following Landscape Zone Aim:
- *The socio-economic landscape of the later agriculturists (2000-100BC)*
- 2.3 The amber beads are the only artefacts recovered from the burial. As mentioned above, further work is required on their dating and also comparative work to see if any inferences about social status can be made. It has been noted elsewhere that such necklaces are usually associated with female burials (Barclay & Wallis [1999], 234).
- 2.4 The amber beads can assist with the following Fieldwork Event Aims:
- *To determine the spatial organisation of the landscape, and changes through time*
- 2.5 The beads, as part of the burial, can assist in the interpretation of the landscape and the changes made to it through time.
- *To determine the ritual and ceremonial uses of the landscape*

2.6 The beads are the only artefacts recovered from the burial. As mentioned above, they may be able to give indications of status and sex. Their place on a secondary burial within a Bronze Age barrow is of interest in interpreting the ritual and ceremonial uses of the landscape. Further work will be required comparing other ritual sites and burials of a similar date.

2.7 The following further work is recommended:

- Publication of the beads as part of an integrated report on the barrow and burial.
- Catalogue of the beads
- Research of comparative material/sites
- Writing of a short report on the beads
- Group photograph of the beads and drawings of c 5 beads

## **Bibliography**

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