

## APPENDIX 7: ASSESSMENT OF HUMAN BONE

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 A human skeleton, with a necklace of amber beads, was recovered during the excavation of the Whitehill Road Barrow, ARC WHR 99.

### Methodology

- 1.2 The human skeletal material was scanned and assessed in accordance with the MoLSS Environmental Archaeology Manual (in preparation). The results of the scan are summarised in the table below.

*Table 16: Assessment of Human Bone, Inhumation*

Event code	Context	Context type	Period	Preservation (high/medium/low)	Completeness %	Age	Comments (pathology noted/sex)
ARC WHR 99	41	burial	EBA	Low	25	Adult	(?)female

### Quantifications

- 3.1 There was a single inhumation of an adult. The presence of the necklace is not necessarily diagnostic of a female burial. However, features on some of the cranial fragments suggested that the remains were female

### Provenance

- 1.3 The burial was recovered in the flexed position (Plate 2). The body had been placed on the back, with the arms across the stomach area and the legs drawn up to the right; the head was leaning to the right. The burial had been placed in a grave, cut through the partially filled inner ring ditch of the Whitehill Road barrow (ARC WHR 99) (Figure 5). A twenty-one bead amber necklace was recovered from the neck area, indicating an Early Bronze Age date for the inhumation.
- 1.4 The condition of preservation of bone was low, with most bones collapsed by post-depositional weight, dampness and degrading.
- 1.5 The skull was represented by a shattered cranium and the right half of the mandible (although all the teeth were present). There were fragments of vertebrae, ribs and the long bones.

## **Conservation**

- 1.6 The human skeletal elements were collected in food-quality polyethylene bags and these were packed in an archive quality cardboard box. There are no conservation requirements for the analysis stage.
- 1.7 Under the terms of the CTRL Act 1996, all human remains are to be reburied.

## **2. Comparative material**

- 2.1 Much of the known Bronze Age human skeletal material comes from cremation burials (McKinley, 1999). The inhumation here is a secondary burial but comparative sites for inhumations would be those that have produced Beaker burials, both in Kent, including West of Northumberland Bottom (ARC WNB 98) and elsewhere such as those of the Wessex culture.

## **7. Potential for further work**

- 7.1 The human remains, in this burial context with associated grave goods have the potential to contribute to the following fieldwork aims:
- *to establish a record of the changing palaeo-environment for all time periods present and the interaction with past economies.*
  - *to determine the spatial organisation of the landscape, and changes through time.*
  - *Ritual and ceremonial use of the landscape*
- 7.2 Barrow burials are typically placed in areas of high visibility, usually to be seen from both the associated settlement (perhaps within 0.5km) and any nearby routeway. The barrow and burial perhaps indicate the presence of both these associated features and the amber bead necklace places the context of the individual and, perhaps, the direction of the local influences (westward rather than eastward). As a result the burial has a good context from which further research can be directed. It can be compared with the nearby cremation and Beaker burials Northumberland Bottom (ARC WNB 98) in Area 330 Zone 3, which appear to be subject to more Kentish influences.
- 7.3 Although the state of preservation of the burial as a whole was low, a detailed examination of the bones of the skull would allow re-construction, with confirmation of the sex as female and also an estimate of the age of this individual.
- 7.4 The presence of the amber bead necklace gives a reasonably good date for the burial. The Whitehill Road site is of great importance due to the rarity of inhumation burials in association with Bronze Age ring ditches, cremation being the more normal burial rite. As a consequence of this rarity, analysis of bone for stable chemical isotopes and DNA, both human and that of pathological organisms, ought to be considered, even though it is possible they would not produce significant results, in order to maximise any information that can be gathered from this individual. Any information would add to the corpus of knowledge for human populations during this period.

**8. Bibliography**

McKinley J I 1999 'Human bone and funerary deposits' in Walker K F *M3 Bar End to Compton: archaeological investigations at Twyford Down* Hampshire Field Club monograph (in press).

MoLSS (in prep.) *Environmental Archaeology Manual*