

BARROWS TEXT

Barrow No.	Internal diameter (m)	No. cremations	No. inhumations	Pottery, ring ditch (no. sherds)	Pottery, all contexts (no. sherds)	Flint, all contexts
1	7.01	1	0	≥5	≥5	>25
2	11.58	1	0	>70	>100	>50
3	10.67	0	1	22	21	35
4	10.06	0	0	>26	>42	>29
5	6.10	1 (2?)	0	42	53	>198
6	7.01	?	1	'Many flint-gritted sherds'	'Many flint-gritted sherds'	13
7	2.44	1 (2?)	1	0	0	1
8	6	0	0	>225	>225	Not reported

Table 1. Characteristics of Mucking barrows

Barrow 1

Barrow 1 is a relatively isolated barrow, centred on 735N/300E (although it may be related to Barrow 8; see below). Its ditch describes an almost complete circle but is cut by a grubenhaus in its southeastern sector. The diameter of the barrow, including its ditch is 9.75m. Its internal diameter is 7.01m. The internal area of the barrow contains six post-holes; a seventh slightly cuts the surrounding ditch.

The barrow ditch had a shallow v-shaped profile and was between 1.37 and 1.68m wide and *c.*0.5m deep. It contained three fills of gravelly loam. The lowest of these was deposited soon after the ditch's construction and contained no occupation debris. The second appears to have accumulated at a slower rate but still contained no indication of nearby occupation. The third fill appears to have accumulated at an even slower rate than did the second. This fill indicates the presence of nearby occupation. At a later date, a small 'hearth' was cut into the top of the ditch. The fill of this burnt patch contained a single sherd of possible Iron Age pottery.

A number of worked flints were recovered from the ditch. These included two blades, several possible cores, 24 fragments of possibly worked flint and one calcined flint disc. Pottery was found only in the upper (tertiary) ditch fills and consisted of small, very abraded fragments. These included Romano-British sherds as well as prehistoric pottery. Surface finds were fragments of red/brown vesiculated Graffito ware rim. A scrap of Romano-British tile was apparently seen by Margaret Jones in the finds tray, but was not identified during the post-excavation process, and a possible nail does not have its precise location noted.

Although no human bone was recovered from within Barrow 1, a shallow soil mark almost at the barrow's centre contained a few charcoal flecks. It is possible that this was originally a central cremation, which was truncated either by the box-scraper or at an earlier point in the site's history.

No absolute date is available for this barrow. Dating evidence is therefore available only for the uppermost ditch fill which contained both Romano-British and prehistoric

pottery. Given that the ditch fills appear to have accumulated very slowly, the only inference that can be drawn is that the barrow was dug a considerable time before the Romano-British period.

The presence of a mound associated with Barrow 1 is suggested by the presence of primary ditch silting from the inside of this feature. This indication may, however, be contradicted by the presence of a series of postholes forming an arc just inside the barrow ditch. These could result from the construction of some form of barrier between the inside and outside of the barrow. Unfortunately, they cannot be dated as no finds were recovered from them. In relation to this, it is worth noting that a grubenhaus cut Barrow 1 and an Anglo-Saxon pit was dug within it. Yet it is difficult to imagine why Anglo-Saxon features would have followed the former outline of the barrow so carefully. For this reason, it is more likely that the postholes are contemporary with Barrow 1 itself.

Barrow 2

Barrow 2 was situated in the main area of barrows at the northern end of the site, centred on 1872N/701E. It consisted of a ring ditch with an external diameter of 14.0m and an internal diameter of 11.6m and contained a central possible cremation. Several other possibly contemporary features were found within and around the area of the barrow. To the northwest it was cut by a modern ditch. Two prehistoric pits have been cut into the ring ditch.

The ring ditch was 1.21m wide on average and 0.23-0.48m deep, varying at different points in the circuit. It contained up to four fills, of which the lowest was a dark brown sandy loam with occasional pebbles. Above this was a very pebbly (although variable) fill incorporating small quantities of brown loam. The final fill was a medium brown loam with occasional pebbles.

The material filling the ditch appears to have come mostly from the interior of the barrow: the bottom fill is present largely along the inner side of the ditch, whilst the pebbles within the second fill increase markedly in size from the inner to the outer edge, suggesting that the largest pebbles have rolled furthest. The excavator suggested that the sorting of the ditch fills was indicative of natural erosion of a mound rather than deliberate backfilling and that the gravelly second deposit may have built up after the loss of a revetment, or when it eroded over any flat area created by a berm. The topmost fill is likely to represent the stabilisation of surrounding soils, possibly related to a turf cover that had developed over an internal mound. The thinness of the primary ditch deposit may indicate that the ditch had been recut.

The ring ditch contained significant quantities of worked flints and pottery: more than sixty worked flints and over 70 fragments of pottery were retrieved (numbers were not indicated for all ditch sections so this may be a substantial under-estimate). Late Bronze Age pot forms were found in the upper fill, but also in the second fill. The presence of decoration on a significant proportion of sherds further places them in the later Late Bronze Age (Birley N.D.). This may relate to the recutting of the barrow ditch, which perhaps took place some considerable time after its original construction (Birley N.D.). Although present throughout the barrow circuit, the pottery was more

concentrated in the northern half than the southern, with a particular 'spike' between north-northeast and northeast (**figure ?**).

The flints recovered included flakes, cores, a blade and a barbed and tanged arrowhead. Additional finds were a fragmentary loomweight of unknown date, an iron nail and a possible iron object or slag. It is not indicated whether these were found on the surface or within the fill, but it seems most likely that they were in some way intrusive.

Almost in the centre of the internal barrow area were two small, inter-linked 'postholes'. Bone powder was found on the surface of these features and the upper fills contained bone powder, occasional bone fragments and charcoal. It was suggested by the original excavators that these represented two consecutive post-holes (with the larger being slightly earlier than the smaller). The burial of cremation debris of some sort (cremation 1041) then followed the removal of the second post. It should be noted, however, that the 'postholes' show no evidence of post-pipes and there is no other indication of a structure within the barrow, making it uncertain why these features were not regarded simply as two small pits dug for the placing of cremated remains.

The cremated human remains from 1041 consisted mainly of bone powder with only occasional larger fragments of bone and were mixed with large quantities of charcoal powder. This suggests that 1041 represents the burial of pyre debris rather than a distinct 'body' as such. Only 41g of bone were recovered, of which the largest fragment was 0.9 cm long. Relatively large fragments of bone usually survive the cremation process even in the context of modern crematoria, indicating that the corpse is unlikely to have been entirely reduced to such small fragments in this case. In addition, the typical weight of a cremated adult corpse is between 1.5 and 3.5 kilos (Trotter and Hixon 1974), far greater than the 41g identified here. The bone from this cremation shows signs of intense burning, all of it being coloured white, which would support the idea that this is a token deposit of pyre debris from the hottest part of the pyre. Accompanying 1041 were several sherds of black flint-gritted pottery, one brown flint-gritted sherd and some animal bone as well as numerous burnt flints. Unfortunately, the pottery from this context does not seem to have been analysed, meaning that no precise dating is possible.

Nine additional small pits were excavated within the area of Barrow 2. Of these, several were defined by their excavators as 'postholes'. They are all around 10 cm deep and 25 cm wide with bowl-shaped profiles. Three contained flint-gritted pottery. One, situated at 1860N/705E, contained large quantities of fire-affected flint. These 'postholes' do not form part of an identifiable structure.

Several pits and post-holes immediately outside the barrow may be contemporary with it. One post-hole contained a sherd of red/black flint-gritted pottery (not further described), whilst several contained burnt flints. Of the two later pits that cut into the ring ditch itself, both contained significant number of flint-gritted pottery sherds, whilst one contained a piece of a possible loomweight.

The date of Barrow 2 must be seen as pre-Late Bronze Age, as Late Bronze Age pottery forms have been found within the fill of the recut. The barbed and tanged

arrowhead may be indicative of an Early Bronze Age date, but as its exact location and condition have not been recorded, it is impossible to tell whether it was residual. Given that the majority of barrows from Mucking can be dated to the Middle Bronze Age, this possibility seems quite likely.

Barrow 3

Barrow 3 is centred on 1960N and 1055E and is part of a loose cluster of barrows in the northern part of the site. It consists of a slightly irregular pennanular ditch and central inhumation burial and is cut by three ditches, two Bronze Age and one undated. The external diameter of the barrow is 13.1m and its internal diameter is 10.7m.

The pennanular ditch delimiting the barrow is of variable width, averaging 1.22m and 0.30-0.33m in depth. It is u-shaped in profile, with a distinct change in slope halfway down, changing from moderately sloping to near vertical sides. Between three and four fills are present, of which the uppermost consists of loose light brown pebbly sand, the next fill down of pinkish pebbles and sand and the bottom of sandy silt and gravel. The fourth fill is not described.

Over 20 sherds of flint-gritted pottery were retrieved from the barrow ditch including three rims and two bases; two sherds of grey/white-gritted sherds were also present. In addition to the pottery, 26 flint flakes, two possible cores, three fragments of flint nodules and a fragment of a possible Bronze Age cylindrical loomweight were found.

Almost at the centre of the barrow is a sub-oval pit with a pinkish sandy fill. Within the pit were found the remains of a crouched inhumation burial (1042), surviving only as a soil stain and a few fragments of bone. The individual had been placed on their right side with the head to the north. A single fragment of undiagnostic pottery (lost in excavation) and four flint flakes were retrieved from the grave fill. No other features appear to have been associated with Barrow 3.

It appears that Barrow 3 originally had an internal mound. This is suggested by the primary ditch deposit: silty material from the barrow's interior. In addition, a ditch-line of the Middle-Late Bronze Age cuts part of Barrow 3, but leaves a gap for the barrow's centre. Definite ditch terminals abut the place where a mound would be expected to be (**figure ?**).

A pocket of charcoal dug into the top of the primary fill of Barrow 3 gave a date of 1590-1105 cal BC, indicating that the barrow was probably constructed during the Middle Bronze Age. This is confirmed by the fact that it was cut by the Middle-Late Bronze Age fieldsystem ditches.

Barrow 4

This barrow was excavated in some haste after quarrying plans were changed at short notice. This meant that only its western half could be excavated. It was centred on 2190N and 1180E, had an external diameter of 12.8m and an internal diameter of

10.1m. No burials were identified within Barrow 4 and the only possible features excavated were probably of natural origin; however, it is worth noting that burials may have been placed into the unexcavated eastern half of the barrow. Barrow 4 is cut by two modern ditches.

The pennanular gully is u-shaped in section with an average diameter of 1.37m, near vertical sides and a flat base. It contains five fills, the bottom of which is a banded sand, which may be natural. This is overlain by buff-coloured sand. Above this, the fill is a grey sand with frequent pebbles, which is itself overlain by a greyish black layer with a central 'belt' of charcoal and ash. The ditch is capped by topsoil. There is some slight evidence that the initial fill, which appears to have built up from slumping, has predominantly come into the ditch from the inner side. This may be reflective of either an internal bank or a mound.

The ditch contained a small quantity of pottery, including four flint-gritted sherds and two grass-tempered sherds and coming to a total of over 25 sherds (although this is less than most of the other barrows from Mucking, it should be noted that only half of the ditch circumference was actually excavated). The pottery fabric suggested a Late Bronze Age date (Birley N.D.). Unfortunately, its location within the barrow was not recorded, meaning that it is impossible to determine whether it came from early or late fills. 16 worked flints and a considerable quantity of burnt flints were also recovered, as were a broken piece of Sarsen and various objects from later periods, including a clay pipe stem, a piece of iron and a 'modern-looking' piece of tile which may in fact be Romano-British.

Whilst Barrow 4 contains no noticeable internal features, there is a Bronze Age pit, *c.* 3.7m long, cut into the ring-ditch. This seems to have been related to an episode of burning, which has left the southern side of the ditch discoloured. It has been filled with a mixture of charcoal dust, heat shattered flint and some pea-grit. Radiocarbon dating of some of the charcoal from this pit yielded a date of 1450-920 cal BC. There were no recorded finds.

No mound is indicated by the ditch deposits, which show no evidence of slumping; however, it is striking that the barrow centre is not cut by later features until modern times (although the Bronze Age pit is cut into the pennanular gully). Although the presence of late material within the ditch (especially a clay pipe) could have cast doubt upon its prehistoric date, the fact that it is cut by a pit dated to the Middle - Late Bronze Age indicates that Barrow 4 must have dated to the Middle Bronze Age or earlier.

Barrow 5

Barrow 5 is centred on 2281N/1033E, has an external diameter of 9.75m and an internal diameter of 6.10m. It does not appear to be cut by later features, with the exception of a single modern plough mark which has slightly disturbed the central cremation.

The ring-ditch of Barrow 5 is *c.* 2.7m wide with a u-shaped profile. Its depth is not noted. The slope of the sides varies from shallow towards the top to steep from about

half way down to the bottom. All five fills consist of sand, but with different quantities of organic matter, increasing from the bottom towards the top. A small patch in the ditch bottom shows evidence of burning, although it cannot be established whether burning took place within the ditch or burnt material was added to it. The ditch section hints at at least two and possibly three recuts (**figure ?**).

Finds from the Barrow 5 ring-ditch include at least 42 pottery sherds, of which at least 41 are flint-gritted. One fragment of decorated pottery may be from a collared urn, whilst the majority belong to the Deverel-Rimbury tradition (Brown N.D.). This may hint at a relatively long use-life for Barrow 5. Flints were also common finds within the ditch, which contained at least 180. These included a probably leaf-shaped arrowhead, a hammerstone and at least seven cores in addition to various flakes, blades and scrapers. Heat-affected flint was also present as were a large piece of ferrous sandstone, some possible burnt ?tooth fragments and a piece of possible slag.

At the centre of the barrow was a pit measuring 48cm wide and 28cm deep containing cremated human remains (cremation 1045). The gravel surrounding the pit edges was of a reddish colour, indicating that it had been subjected to intense heat. Within the pit, several layers could be made out. The bottom contained fine grey ashy sand with occasional pebbles. There was no bone at the bottom of this layer, but bone did begin to appear towards the top. Above this was a deposit of very charcoally material containing many fragments of cremated bone and reddened and calcined flints. The top layer consisted of sand with moderate pebbles and some fragments of cremated bone.

Just to the east of the pit was a small hollow containing more cremated bone. It is just possible that this is the very truncated remains of a second cremation, but it is more likely to be material from the central cremation, disturbed by the plough that created the mark just to the side of this. Within this material was a perforated bone button (**Figure ?**).

The cremated bone from 1045 came to a total of 364g. Whilst this is not enough to indicate the burial of a complete cremated body, it does at least point towards deliberate deposition of the human remains. The largest preserved fragment was 4.9cm long. The cremation had been carried out very thoroughly and all bone fragments were coloured white, indicative of high temperatures.

Given the discolouration of the gravel surrounding 1045, it seems most likely that this represents either the remains of an *in situ* cremation, or one in which the material was buried whilst still very hot.

Two radiocarbon dates were obtained from charcoal in the primary ditch fill of Barrow 5. These gave dates of 1750-1420 cal BC and 1680-1315 cal BC. This suggests that barrow construction most likely took place at some point between 1680 and 1420 BC, placing it in the late Early or early Middle Bronze Age and making it the earliest of the dated Mucking barrows.

Barrow 6

Situated at the far northern end of the Mucking site, and only *c.*30m from Barrow 7, Barrow 6 is centred on 2369N and 623E. It has an external diameter of 7.93m and an internal diameter of 7.01m and is cut by a modern ditch (two additional ditches cutting the barrow were mentioned in the notebook, but they have not been plotted on the plans and no finds from them are mentioned, suggesting that they may, in fact, have been animal burrows). Three 'postholes' were found within Barrow 6, but these contained no finds and one cut the modern ditch, suggesting that they were unrelated to the barrow.

No description is available for the ring-ditch of Barrow 6, but it is possible to calculate an average width of 0.46m from the surviving barrow dimensions. The exact number of finds from the ditch fill do not appear to have been recorded but 'many flint-gritted sherds', all apparently from the top three fills, were found, as were eight flint flakes, a flint core and an iron object possibly introduced by burrowing animals. The pottery was of Late Bronze Age attribution and included a well-burnished carinated bowl and a shouldered jar. Analysis of the remainder of the pottery present indicated that it may all have originated from these two vessels (Birley N.D.). Birley suggests that these pots may have represented additional cremation burials, inserted into Barrow 6 during the Late Bronze Age (*ibid.*).

The inhumation grave is situated almost at the centre of the barrow. The grave pit is *c.*1.8 x 1.2m and oval in shape with vertical sides. No bones were recovered from the inhumation within the grave pit, which survived only as a body silhouette. This shows that the individual was buried on their right side in a crouching position. A patch of charcoally silt was visible just in front of the body (with the body apparently curled around it) and may represent the remains of a disturbed earlier cremation burial. One scrap of red pottery and four flint flakes are the only finds from this burial and are probably residual.

Two later deposits of cremated bone apparently cut into the central inhumation of Barrow 6, both placed at its northeastern end. These are not further described, so that it is not possible to discover their date.

Barrow 7

Barrow 7 is the most northerly and also the smallest of the barrows excavated at Mucking. It is centred on 2465N/550E and has an external diameter of just 4.27m and an internal diameter of 2.44m. Despite its small size, Barrow 7 contains the largest number of possible graves. One cremation was excavated inside the ring ditch (possibly slightly cutting into it), an inhumation was cut into the ring-ditch and a further feature cut into the ditch may have originally contained another burial, although no preserved human remains were observed during its excavation.

The ring-ditch has a relatively flat bottom and its outer side is slightly steeper than the inner. The lower fill is a light to mid brown sandy loam, above which is a band of pebbles. Only one find was retrieved from the ditch, a flint blade which had possibly been retouched into a scraper.

Cremation 1064 from within Barrow 7 was situated in the southeast sector and may have slightly cut the ring-ditch (this is suggested in one notebook entry, but another records that the ditch had not been identified at the time that the cremation was excavated and suggests that this relationship is somewhat dubious). The small pit in which it was placed was 0.51m long by 0.30m wide and 0.23m deep and contained black charcoal and pebbles together with bone (whether fragments or powder is not mentioned). Analysis of the charcoal enabled it to be identified as holly. No bone report exists for this cremation (or, indeed for the inhumation burial from this barrow).

Inhumation 1066 was placed within an oval pit apparently cut into the northern portion of the ring-ditch. The pit measured 1.07m long, 0.66m wide and 0.46m deep and had a single fill of mid brown pebbly sand. The body had been placed in a crouched position on its right side; it survived only as a soil stain.

A possible third grave was identified in the western portion of the ring-ditch. This took the form of a sub-rectangular pit *c.* 0.6m long, *c.* 0.5m wide and 0.45m deep. The fill was clean gravel with no apparent body stain, although it was suggested that a small area of slightly darker loam may be the body stain of a baby.

Barrow 8

Barrow 8 was not originally identified as such, having been thought to be an Iron Age roundhouse by its excavators. It was picked out as a possible prehistoric barrow by Sue Hirst during analysis of Anglo-Saxon cemetery II, within which it is situated. The question of whether this feature was, in fact, a barrow cannot entirely be resolved at this juncture; it is only possible to set out the available evidence for and against.

The ring ditch of Barrow 8 is centred on 850N/520E. It did not show up as a crop mark, but was identified when the area of Anglo-Saxon cemetery II was cleared. It should be noted that a period of two years passed between its original identification and its excavation, which meant that the surface had weathered considerably by the time it was dug. It had also been subject to extensive animal disturbance, and in some portions rabbit burrows made it impossible to locate the ditch sides. A number of later features cut the ring ditch, including several Anglo-Saxon graves and cremations: graves 943 and 940 were cut into and aligned on the ring-ditch, cremation 920 cut grave 940 and cremation 822 was located just inside the ditch in the northern sector. A later medieval ditch ran across the centre of the barrow. The combination of weathering, animal disturbance and disturbance by later activity has severely hampered interpretation of this feature.

The internal area defined by the ring-ditch of Barrow 8 measures *c.* 5.5 x 6.0m. The ditch is between 0.7 and 1.2m wide and from 0.25 to 0.5m deep. The profile varies considerably from a sharpish 'V' to a wide, flat-based 'U'. The fill sequence was evidently difficult to see, in part due to animal disturbance, but there seem to have been between two and three fills for most of the ditch circumference. The top fill was a mid brown loam with varying quantities of pebbles, whilst the lower fills varied, either being lighter brown with large proportions of pebbles, dark brown with fewer pebbles or clean gravel. The section at 855N/530E hints at the presence of a recut, but

is not drawn very precisely, with the exact nature of the relationships between fills being unclear. Elsewhere, the fill sequence seems to indicate gradual natural infilling, although again this cannot be determined for certain.

No prehistoric burials were identified within Barrow 8, although this possibly reflects the fact that the centre is cut by a Medieval ditch, which would have truncated away any central burial. Within the ring-ditch there are several small concentrations of human bone and charcoal. These, however, are not associated with grave pits and show no sign of having been either contained or placed with associated objects. Given the presence of Anglo-Saxon cremations in this area, the extent of animal disturbance and the very small quantities of bone involved, it is conceivable that these concentrations are an artefact of later disturbance. Despite this, the possibility that they represent the remains of prehistoric cremations cannot be ruled out.

The dating of Barrow 8 as a prehistoric feature is based upon the pottery assemblage from the ring-ditch. This was made up of *c.* 220 flint-gritted sherds, two Romano-British sherds and three possible Anglo-Saxon sherds. The latter are likely to be intrusive. The flint-gritted sherds are unfortunately not mentioned in the available prehistoric reports. This may either be because finds are not described by context, or because the pottery from this feature has not been analysed. Without this data it is hard to do more than assign Barrow 8 a general prehistoric date. The fact that Barrow 8 is situated less than 100m from Barrow 1 may indicate that a second Barrow cemetery was associated with the pre-South rings fieldsystem (Hirst N.D. quoting a reference which isn't stated), in which case it would be attributable to the Early or Middle Bronze Age.

References

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