Introduction

This project examined the evidence for Chalcolithic (or Terminal Neolithic) and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in Northeast England (c. 2500-1500 BC) using the records of mortuary deposits from nineteenth and twentieth century AD excavations. The research involved the acquisition and analysis of detailed contextual information on 355 mortuary deposits from 150 different sites in the region. This archive consists of a dataset derived from existing publications and grey literature on these mortuary deposits, combined with summarised results from the osteological assessment or re-assessment of human remains from the period currently curated by Tyne and Wear Museums, and radiocarbon dating of selected remains from those collections (see Gamble and Fowler in press). In carrying out the first synthesis of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age burial practices in the region, the project examined uses of material culture in mortuary practices, the treatments of the body, the nature and use of the mortuary features, the nature and emergence of sites where mortuary deposits appear, and the landscapes in which these are situated. Among other features, the study examined changing strategies in the treatment of the dead, changes in the rituals involved in funerary practice, attitudes towards death and identity, and understandings of place and cosmology in the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age (Fowler 2013; in press).

References

Fowler, C. 2013. *The Emergent Past: A Relational Realist Archaeology of Early Bronze Age Mortuary Practices.* Oxford University Press.

Fowler, C. In press. '"The more things change, the more they remain the same"? Continuity and change in Northumbrian Early Bronze Age mortuary rites', in R. Brandt, H. Ingvaldsen and M. Prusac (eds) *Ritual Changes and Changing Rituals: Function and Meaning in Ancient Funerary Practices*. Oxbow Books.

Gamble, M. and Fowler, C. In press. A re-assessment of human skeletal remains in Tyne and Wear Museums: Results and implications for interpreting Early Bronze Age burials from Northeast England and beyond. *Archaeologia Aeliana* 42 (2013).

Summary description of dataset

This dataset records the key information pertaining to each of the mortuary deposits. This includes details of the contents of the deposit, any associated architecture, and the location of the deposit. The contents documented include human remains, artefacts and any materials recorded in the source literature. Where material from the deposit has been radiocarbon dated relevant details are provided. The features in which the deposit was placed are detailed, as are any associated monuments and/or natural features. The local landscape is described, and national grid references as well as data ready for importation into GIS software are provided. The primary sources used to compile each entry are listed. An estimation for the probable

date range in which the deposit was made is also provided. The data is contained within an excel spreadsheet.

Notes to accompany *Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age Burials in Northeast* England dataset

Each entry is a unique mortuary deposit, and the unique field identifier lies in column two ('DepositName').

Notes for specific fields:

Many fields require little explanation (e.g. 'FeatureOrientation'). The following elaborate on key features of some fields.

RelationToNearestSummit: The direction cited indicates where the site lies with respect to the nearest summit: i.e. if the entry reads 'East', the site is East of the nearest summit.

LandscapeZone: Provides a summary of the local topography type.

LocationType: Describes the location of the site with respect to local landscape features, including views of these. Results are based on mapwork rather than field observation.

RelationToLocalSites: Identifies whether the site is one of a group of known monuments or, as far as is known, isolated.

SiteType: Identifies the final form of any mortuary monument where the deposit is located.

FeatureLocation: Identifies the location of the feature: this may outline the local landscape situation (e.g. if the feature is an isolated cist) or the position of the feature with respect to a monument or group of other mortuary features.

TreatmentOfRemains: a narrow range of terms has been selected. Most are intuitive, but some require explanation. 'Uncremated burial' indicates that human remains were reported and that these were not cremated: the category includes all 'inhumation' practices but is used when there is insufficient information to confirm the presence of a crouched burial or other practice (e.g. burial of selected bones). The term 'uncremated' is preferred to 'unburnt' due to the presence of localised scorching on some bones which have not been cremated, indicating that bones may have become burnt some time after the remains were initially buried (Fowler 2013, chapter 4). 'Crouched burial, burning within cist' is used to denote scorching on a crouched skeleton. Where the burial seems to have been crouched (e.g. based on the size of the cist and/or the fact that it sounds as though a complete skeleton was present) but this cannot be confirmed and no details are given about the position of the skeletal

remains it is denoted ‘Uncremated burial, ?crouched’. Where bones were clearly present but are not adequately described though one or two details given indicate a crouched burial is likely, or the bones were removed before expert inspection, but the feature is a short cist and circumstantial evidence suggests a crouched burial, it is denoted ‘crouched burial?’.In other cases where there is less to indicate the burial was crouched (e.g. the feature is large enough to permit an extended body, or the nature and size of the feature is not recorded) it is listed as ‘uncremated remains’. No attempt was made to analyse degrees of flexing or contraction of the body (e.g. to identify ‘flexed’ compared with ‘crouched’ burials), partly since the quality of information in the dataset did not support such analysis. Since cremated bone survives in acidic soils far better than unburnt bone, it has been presumed that where no bones survive in a short cist any bones originally present had not been cremated. Where bones are described as burnt but it is unclear whether they were cremated or not, the notation ‘burnt bones: cremation?’ is used. Where it is recorded that remains were disturbed prior to discovery this has also been noted in this field.

HeadSideFace: For crouched burials; lists recorded information about the position of the head, the side the body lay on (i.e. is left, the body lay on its left, with its right side uppermost), and the direction the front of the head faced.

MNIWithinDeposit: Minimum Number of Individuals indicates the lowest number of human individuals that comprise the remains. A result of 1 does not necessary confirm that one individual was present, but can be used in conjunction with other information to confirm this is likely (e.g. MNI 1 based on a recent osteological analysis in combination with a record that this is a crouched burial would indicate one individual was present). Where MNI is likely to be one but cannot be confirmed the notation ‘1 (?)’ is used. ‘Indet.’ Indicates the MNI could not be determined.

SexOfIndsWithin Deposit: A question mark symbol ‘(?)’ indicates ‘possible’ (e.g. ‘male (?)’ indicates the remains are possibly of a male).

AgeOfIndsWithinDeposit: Estimation of the age at death of the individuals whose remains have been recovered.

AccessionTWAMHumanRemains: Provides the accession numbers for sets of remains in the collections curated byTyne and Wear Archives and Museums and identifies which of those museums holds the remains. ‘N’ indicates the remains are not in a TWAM collection – this does not necessarily mean the remains do not survive elsewhere. No re-analysis was undertaken on surviving human remains from the dataset that are curated at museums other than TWAM museums.

BoneAnalysisUsed: Denotes which analysis of the human remains the conclusions drawn are based on; usually either that provided in the reference provided in the ‘ExcavationReferences’ field, or the analyses carried out by Michelle Gamble in 2011 (see ADS archive arch-1192-1, DOI 10.5284/1017462; Gamble and Fowler in press).

ArtefactsInDepositList: Brief summary of the type and number of artefacts found in the mortuary deposit. These provide only the most basic level of typological information. Occasionally reference is made to artefacts found in related features or near to the deposit – these are clearly stated as such.

ArtefactDescriptions: Where descriptions of the objects have been made, these are offered here. Some fields have been left blank. The dataset does not aim to provide a comprehensive detailed account of all the artefacts, and for that detail the user is referred to the sources cited in the spreadsheet.

VesselType: Provides a general level of typological information about ceramics present. Food Vessels divided into: Bowl Food Vessel, Vase Food Vessel, Food Vessel Urn, and Enlarged Food Vessel; use of the term Food Vessel without a further term indicates that the exact form is unknown.

RefinedTypologies: Provides detailed typological information on all artefact types. Artefacts types are attributed according to the following schemes:
Beakers: Needham (2005) modified according to Wilkin (2009), then, following a comma, Clarke (1970). Key: SN = Short Necked (ECN = Elongated/Cupped Necked: Wilkin 2009), LN = Long Necked, TSN = Tall Short–Necked, HBSP = High–Bellied S–Profile, GSP = Globular S–Profile, SMB = Slender Mid Bellied. Clarke's scheme: AOC = All Over Cord; N/NR = Northern British/North Rhine group; N1/D = Primary Northern British/Dutch group; N2 = Developed Northern British group; N3 = Late Northern British group; N4 = Final Northern British group; S4 = Final Southern British group.
Food Vessels: Bowl Food Vessel, Vase Food Vessel, Food Vessel Urn, and Enlarged Food Vessel; use of the term Food Vessel without a further term indicates that the exact form is unknown. Reference numbers refer to vessels identified by Gibson (1978).
Copper alloy blades: Types as outlined by Gerloff (1975); numbers refer to blades identified by Gerloff (1975).
Jet buttons: Types as identified by Shepherd (2009).
Where the artefacts have not been included in published corpora with a specific identification to these types the author has identified the artefact to type based on drawings, photographs or visual inspection.

DatingOfDeposit: Cites radiocarbon dates and materials dated where these derive from the deposit or a related feature, but are not based directly on human remains.

DatingOfHumanRemains: Provides information on the radiocarbon dating of human remains from the deposit.

EstimatedDateRange(Fowler2012): Outlines the chronological range in which the author thinks it likely the remains were buried. This estimate may be based on radiocarbon dates, artefact types and/or the mode of treatment of the dead and the funerary architecture. Some dates are listed between question marks (e.g. '?2300-1750?') indicating there is little on which to base an estimate.

ExcavationReferences: Details the primary written sources used in compiling the entries for each deposit. This is not an exhaustive bibliography of references where the deposit may be discussed.

UsedforFowler2013?: indicates whether or not the deposit was included in the dataset analysed by Fowler (2013). All deposits in the dataset at the time of submission to the ADS were so included.

UsedforRitualChanges Analysis?: indicates whether or not the deposit was included in the dataset discussed in Fowler (in press), in a text drafted before 2012.

Osteological analysis 2011 and radiocarbon dating 2012

The detailed results of all of the human remains analyses carried out by Michelle Gamble, and photographs of the remains, are accessible via the ADS at archive arch-1192-1, DOI 10.5284/1017462. The results for all remains examined except for those from the Whitton Hill henges are discussed elsewhere (Gamble and Fowler in press). Full reference is made to pre-existing osteological reports and any discrepancies between these and the 2011 analysis in that publication.

General notes

Where possible specific conclusions about the nature of artefacts, human remains and materials have been drawn, but where no firm conclusions can be drawn or where it is most helpful to do so, text has been quoted from original sources: these are the sources identified in the ExcavationReferences field unless otherwise stated.

Note on selection of material for inclusion:

The dataset is not an exhaustive survey of all known Early Bronze Age mortuary deposits in the region – it rather comprises the data for deposits for which there is at least a reasonable amount of reliable contextual information.

Only grey literature or interim reports exist for some sites but fuller publications are expected in coming years. Some of the mortuary features mentioned by Bonsall (1984) at Low Hauxley have not been included in the current dataset is no complete information currently available, and all information on Low Hauxley is derived from more recent sources. The details of the monuments, features and burials for Low Hauxley are currently being re-assessed following excavation in 2013 and a new analysis of the archaeology of the vicinity as a whole as part of the 'Rescued from the Sea' project. The sites at Turf Knowe North and Turf Knowe South are also currently being prepared for publication. The entries for all these sites should be used cautiously, but are included here since these details were those used in Fowler (2013).

One entry for Copt Hill, marked in grey, is very likely not an Early Bronze Age burial and was ignored in the analyses for Fowler (2013).

Queries:

Please contact chris.fowler@ncl.ac.uk if you have any queries about the information in this dataset.

References cited:

Bonsall, C. 1984. Low Hauxley, Northumberland. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 50, 398.

Clarke, D. L. 1970. *Beaker Pottery of Great Britain and Ireland.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fowler, C. 2013. *The Emergent Past: A Relational Realist Archaeology of Early Bronze Age Mortuary Practices.* Oxford University Press.

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Gamble, M. and Fowler, C. In press. A re-assessment of human skeletal remains in Tyne and Wear Museums: Results and implications for interpreting Early Bronze Age burials from Northeast England and beyond. *Archaeologia Aeliana* 42 (2013).

Gerloff, S. 1975. *The Early Bronze Age Daggers in Great Britain and a Reconsideration of the Wessex Culture.* Munich: Praehistorische Bronzefunde VI(2).

Gibson, A. 1978. *Bronze Age Pottery in the North-East of England.* Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, British Series 56.

Needham, S. 2005. Transforming Beaker Culture in North-West Europe: Processes of Fusion and Fission. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 71, 171–218.

Shepherd, I.A.G. 2009. The V-Bored Buttons of Great Britain and Ireland. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 75, 335–69.

Wilkin, N. 2009 *Regional Narratives of the Early Bronze Age: A Contextual and Evidence-Led Approach to the Funerary Practices of East-Central Scotland.* University of Birmingham: unpublished M.Phil. thesis.