

# THE BARROW CEMETERY AT ROYSTONE GRANGE

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## INTRODUCTION (RH, MW)

In the course of ten seasons of fieldwork at Roystone Grange (1978-1987) most of the many monuments in this White Peak valley have been recorded, and some excavated. The Roystone Grange project has added a new dimension to the archaeology of this upland region, where only three barrows were known before it began. Indeed, it has become apparent that even the record of barrows at Roystone is far from complete. Five new barrows have been discovered and, in addition, valuable information pertaining to those investigated by Thomas Bateman, the Victorian antiquarian from Middleton-by-Youlgreave, has come to light. In this short paper it is our intention to summarise this new evidence in advance of a final report. It should be made clear, however, that we are not yet in the position to relate the barrows to the spreads of prehistoric lithic debris traced in the many hundreds of test-pits excavated within the survey zone. These data will be described in the final report.

## THE BARROWS (RH, MW)

Thomas Bateman describes several visits to Roystone Grange. Notably he relates (Bateman, 1861: 61-62) how

On the 13th. August we opened a barrow at Rystone (sic) Grange, close to Minninglow farm, which is a tolerably perfect mound, 11 yards across and near four feet high, but crossed by a thick stone wall which greatly impeded our operations, and which there is reason to believe prevented the discovery of the primary interment. At one side of the wall we found many bones, both human and animal; the only undisturbed skeleton being that of a child, buried about a foot from the surface, and unaccompanied by anything of interest; among the animal bones were some teeth of dogs. On the other side of the wall we found an iron knife, of the usual Saxon shape, about a foot beneath the turf; and on the natural surface below, a deposit of calcined bones containing a bone pin. By undercutting the wall as far as practicable, we ascertained that the centre of the barrow was principally of earth surrounded by large stones inclining inwards, and from this locality we drew out a piece of curiously ornamented pottery of primitive manufacture.

This barrow we shall refer to as Barrow 1.

Two days later Bateman returned and (Bateman, 1861: 62)

examined the site of a large barrow, near the last, 25 yards across, the circle being yet well defined from the foundation of the mound consisting of very large stones round the verge. The interior had been completely destroyed, about 6 inches only of factitious earth remaining, which, near the centre, was mixed with an enormous quantity of rats' bones.

This barrow will be referred to hereafter as Barrow 2.

A third barrow was excavated at Roystone in recent times by Barry M. Marsden (Marsden, 1982a), initially in the belief that it was that excavated by Bateman on 13 August 1849. In fact, this barrow (the lime-kiln barrow, No. 3) proved to have eluded Bateman, and contained a group of bronze age interments as well as evidence of at least one Romano-British burial.

In the course of the Roystone Grange project five more barrows have been discovered. The fieldwork has also enabled us to make a fuller assessment of the barrows examined by Bateman and Marsden. The list of barrows, therefore, currently stands as follows:

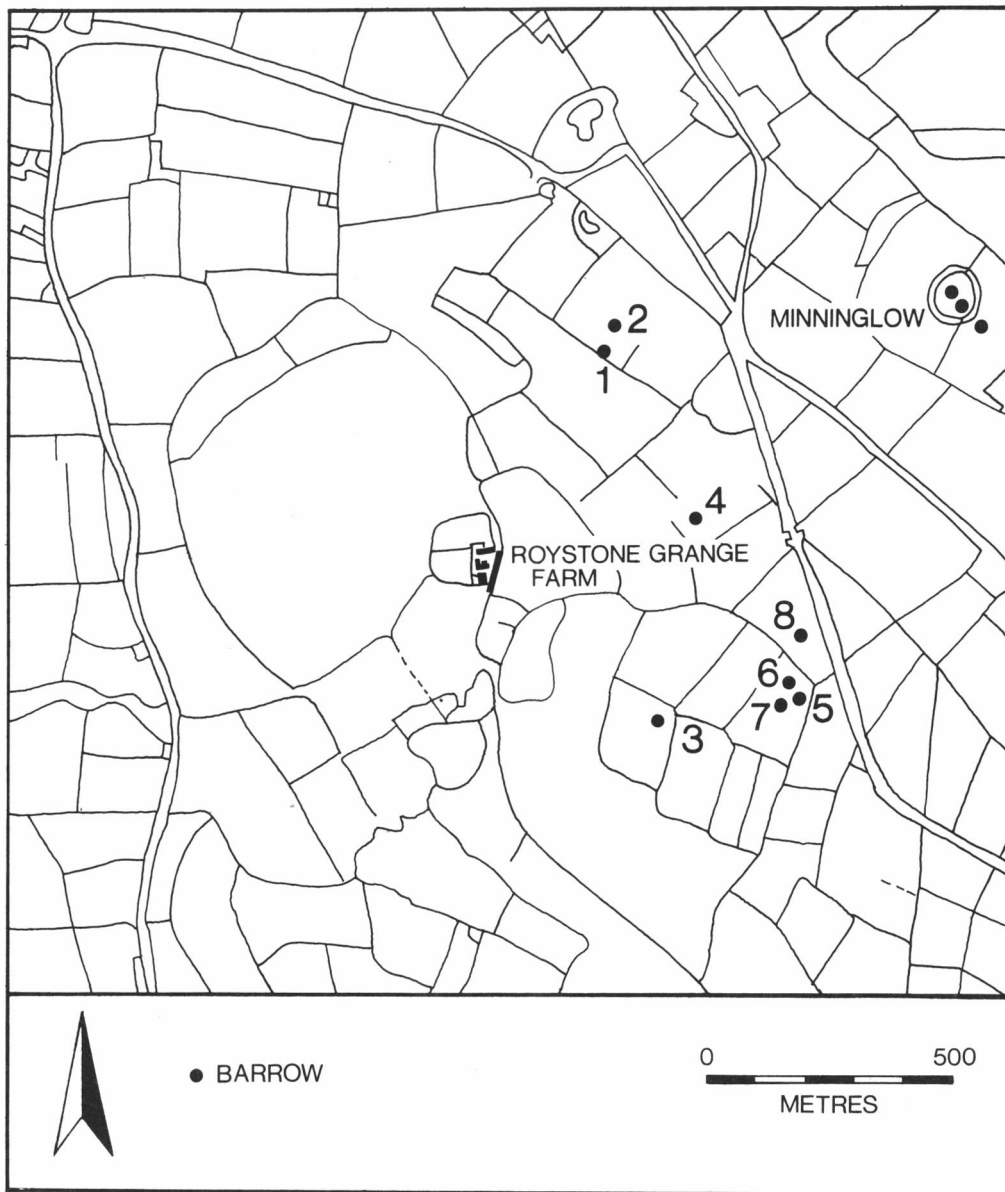


Fig. 1 Roystone Grange barrow cemetery: location map.

**Barrow 1** (excavated 13 August 1849)

This barrow is situated at SK20255700 (Fig. 1:1) on the ridge below Minninglow, overlooking Roystone Grange Farm. Originally, before quarrying on this ridge, the barrow would have been as prominent as Barrow 3. The barrow has been partially removed on its west side by a tramway, excavated alongside it early this century. In fact, the tramway has sliced through the barrow leaving its profile clearly visible underneath the nineteenth-century field wall mentioned by Bateman. Animals have recently burrowed into one part of this section revealing a cist, associated with which were cremated bone, a plano-convex knife and a pair of iron tweezers (the last of modern manufacture).

The barrow is 9.90 metres long (north-south), and 3.0 metres wide at its widest point (east-west). The section through it suggests that the primary interment — almost certainly a cist grave — was situated at the northern end of the barrow (Fig. 2, Pl. 1). It appears that the burial was undisturbed until the tramway chopped it in half. The bulk of the mound, however, lies a little to the south of the cist, and has clearly been penetrated by a hole about 1.50 metres in diameter. The centre of this hole lies directly below the field wall. This secondary barrow rises up about 1.00 metre above the primary one, and presumably distracted Bateman from his principal target in 1849. In summary, therefore, it seems that a low cist-mound was partially destroyed in Roman or early Anglo-Saxon times to make a secondary barrow. The finds from this barrow (see below) suggest that the primary cist belongs to the early Bronze Age, while Bateman was probably correct in his belief that the secondary grave was Anglo-Saxon in date. It is tempting to associate the iron tweezers found here with Bateman's excavation in August 1849.

Finally, mention must be made of the field wall crossing the monument. Bateman (1861: 61) explains how the wall "impeded our operations....and prevented the discovery of the primary interment." He also describes how he undercut the wall as far as practicable. Nevertheless, it is evident that the wall crossing the higher part of the secondary barrow has been rebuilt from miscellaneous stones, for it is quite different in its construction from the lengths of original walling either side. On balance it appears likely that Bateman also hurriedly dismantled one section of the wall, backfilled some of the stones, and repaired the gap with a mixture of blocks and stones found in the excavation and nearby. Of course, Bateman's memory of this detail, published twelve years after the excavation, may have been at fault. Alternatively, he may have wished to conceal the fact that he went so far as to dismantle walls on his digging expeditions.

**Barrow 2** (excavated 15 August 1849)

This barrow (Fig. 1: 2) is possibly the feature about 30 metres north (SK20265700) of Barrow 1, which has been entirely destroyed by ploughing in recent years. However, as Bateman already described it as "completely destroyed", one may assume that it was robbed for its stone when the walls were being built hereabouts in the early-nineteenth century. The feature at present measures *c.* 10.00 metres (north-south) x 5.20 metres (east-west). No finds are associated with it.

**Barrow 3** (lime-kiln barrow)

Roystone Grange Barrow 3 (Marsden's Ballidon 12) is a small (*c.* 9.00 metres in diameter) but prominent cairn, situated at SK20365650 (Fig. 1: 3). It was investigated between 1975 and 1976 by Barry Marsden (Marsden, 1982a), who was originally under the impression that it was one of the mounds excavated by Bateman. However, the condition of the burials encountered indicated that they had not been disturbed in modern times.

These burials make an interesting comparison with the finds from Barrow 1. As with that mound, the primary burial had been in a cist, situated to the east of the centre of the tumulus

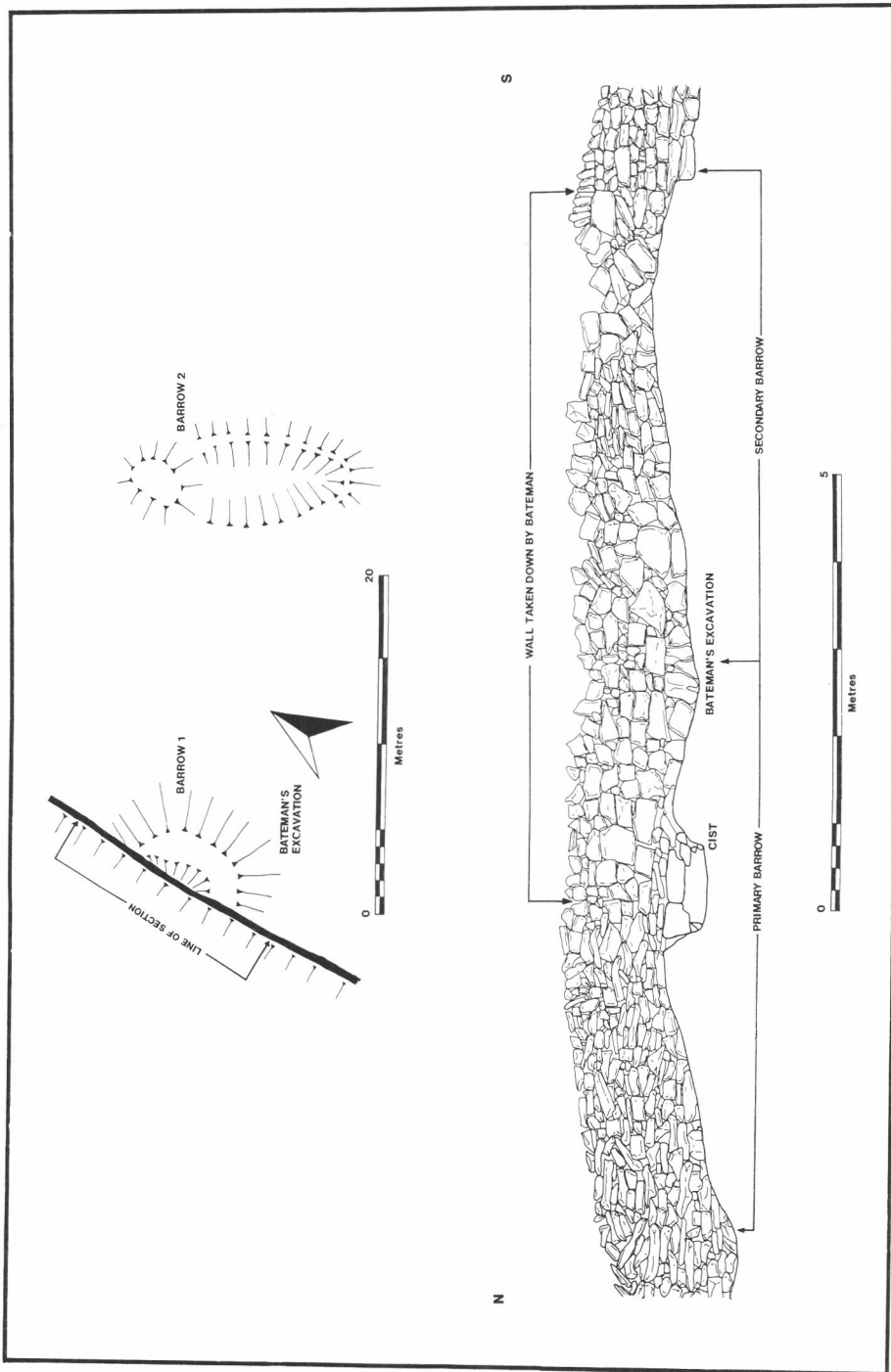


Fig. 2 Roystone Grange barrow cemetery: general plan of Barrows 1 and 2, and the exposed west-facing section of Barrow 1.



Plate 1 Roystone Grange barrow cemetery: the exposed section of Barrow 1, looking eastwards towards Minninglow.

(Marsden, 1982a: 23). The cist had originally contained the bones of a young person. While the body had been much disturbed by the later insertion into the cist of a cremation in a Collared Urn, the weathered condition of the bones makes it possible that they had been exposed before burial (Marsden, 1982a: 24). Three white flints were found in the cist, again presenting a remarkable parallel with Barrow 1, since two of these were plano-convex knives.

To the south of the cist were found the disarticulated remains of two individuals, associated with a Handled Food Vessel, and a further cremation with a shattered Collared Urn (Marsden, 1982a: 26). Nearby were three skulls, with no other associated bones. A final, unurned, cremation was found in the west side of the mound. Finally, an extended skeleton was found further south from all of these remains, interpreted by Marsden as being of later date.

To the north of the barrow lies the remains of the nineteenth-century lime-burner's kiln from which the barrow takes its name. The furnace, now collapsed, measures approximately 4.00 metres in diameter and stands to about 1.50 metres in height. The kiln and its associated stoke hole are cut into the side of the prominent limestone knoll, on which the barrow stands, to a depth of approximately 2.00 metres. The stoke hole, measuring 6.00 x 4.00 metres, leads to a firing hole at the base of the north side of the kiln. Associated with the kiln are three small quarries; two of these are 20 metres to the east, and the third lies immediately to the south, almost undercutting the barrow. These quarries presumably provided the raw limestone needed for the kiln.

#### **Barrow 4** (Powder House barrow)

This barrow lies 100 metres to the south-east of the nineteenth-century explosives store at SK20355675 (Fig. 1: 4); it has been severely damaged in recent years by the burrowing of rabbits. In its present state it measures 11.00 metres (north-south) x 11.00 metres (east-west), and stands 0.50 metre high.

#### **Barrow 5** (Daisy Bank barrow no. 1)

This, the largest of the Roystone group, lies 140 metres to the north-west of Daisy Bank Farm at SK20605649 (Fig. 1: 5). Despite being a very prominent mound, it appears to be undisturbed,

measuring 18.00 metres (north-south) x 18.00 metres (east-west), and standing 1.50 metres high.

**Barrow 6** (Daisy Bank barrow no. 2)

Barrow 6 (SK20605650) lies 40 metres to the north-west of Barrow 5 (Fig. 1: 6), and measures 10.00 metres (north-south) x 10.00 metres (east-west), and stands *c.* 0.50 metre high. This barrow/feature also appears to be undisturbed.

**Barrow 7** (Daisy Bank barrow 3)

This mound (SK20575648) lies 25 metres to the south-west of Barrow 5 (Fig. 1: 7), and survives in a very disturbed condition. The mound measures 10.00 metres (north-south) x 13.00 metres (east-west).

**Barrow 8** (Daisy Bank barrow 4)

This very obvious feature (SK20655670) lies 120 metres to the north of Barrow 5, in a field adjacent to the High Peak Railway (Fig. 1: 8); it measures 5.00 metres (north-south) x 5.00 metres (east-west) and stands approximately 1.00 metre high. It also appears to be undisturbed.

### THE FINDS (RH, JT)

The following relates to the finds from Barrow 1.

**Beaker sherd**

The sherd recovered by Bateman is of a moderately hard paste, creamy orange/red outside with a brown to black core and interior (Fig. 3:1). It has a hackly fracture with few relatively poorly-sorted inclusions of calcite (less than 1 mm in diameter) and grog—powdered fragments of fired pottery (*c.* 2 mm in diameter). The sherd is decorated with paired finger-pinch impressions, so arranged as to produce a form of plastic vertical ribbing. Above these is a single horizontal line of impressions, possibly also executed by finger-tip, or perhaps with a reed or stick. This use of finger-pinch to provide ribbing or rustication is characteristic of later Beaker domestic assemblages, as at Risby Warren, Lincs. (Riley, 1957) or Islam, Suffolk (Clarke, 1970: 227; Gibson, 1982), and indeed on the late Veluwe potbeakers of the Netherlands (Van der Waals and Glasbergen, 1959). Its development out of earlier finger-nail and paired finger-tip decoration seems to have taken place relatively late in the Beaker sequence, given the close association between these vessels and decorative traits of the Southern Beaker tradition (Clarke, 1970: 214). In consequence, finger-pinch ribbing is characteristic of the last three steps in Lanting and Van der Waals' (1972) seven-stage developmental sequence of Beakers in Britain, dated to 1700-1450 BC.

While the size of the vessel (*c.* 40.0 cms in diameter) and its domestic connotations must place its association with a burial in question, Beakers with this kind of decoration have been found in mortuary contexts. For instance, a very similar vessel was found with one of the burials in the Eynsham (Oxon.) cemetery (Clarke, 1970: fig. 1038). Furthermore, large rusticated vessels were frequently used as accessories to fine Beakers with burials (Clarke, 1970: 201). Bateman's sketchy description of the provenance of the sherd (1861: 62) makes the question as to whether it was associated with burial, pre-cairn or constructional phases difficult to answer.

**Bone pin fragments**

Two fragments were found with calcined human bone in 1986; they are probably not from the same pin.

*Fragment 1* (Fig. 3: 2)

76 x 9 mm. Shaft fragment. Polished over most of its surface; possibly distorted by heat.

*Fragment 2* (Fig. 3: 3)

39 x 9 mm. Point. Polished over most of its surface.

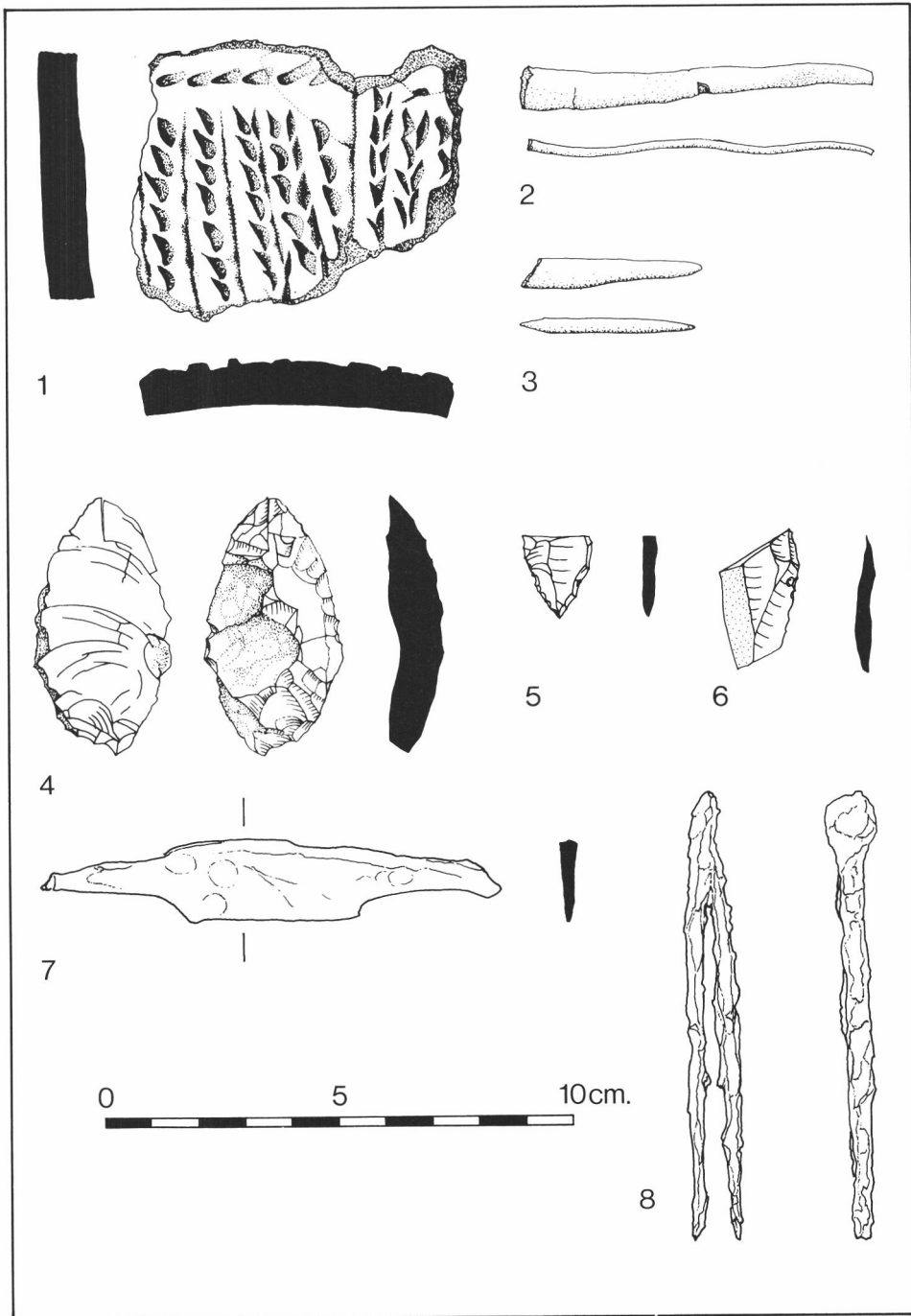


Fig. 3 Roystone Grange barrow cemetery: finds from Barrow 1. 1: beaker sherd; 2: bone pin fragment; 3: bone point; 4: plano-convex knife; 5: flint arrowhead(?); 6: flint flake; 7: iron knife found by Thomas Bateman; 8: iron tweezers.

It is tempting to suggest a later neolithic date for the cremation found by Bateman, since cremations with bone pins are characteristic of the 'Dorchester series', Kinnes' (1979) Stage F. However, neolithic bone pins tend to be round in section (Kinnes *et al.*, 1983: 88-92), and are often made from a fibula (as in the case of unfinished examples from Sutton Courtenay, in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford). Both fragments from the Roystone barrow are relatively flat in section, and have been made from slivers of longbone. They are thus not chronologically diagnostic.

### Flintwork

*Plano-convex knife* (Fig. 3: 4)

A flaked flint knife of plano-convex form, 54 x 29 x 11 mm, was found in 1986. It is made from a flake with a pronounced bulb. White, with a little grey mottling, in colour, the whole of the surface of the item is calcined and in places badly fire-crazed, perhaps as a result of the heat of the pyre. The bulbar surface of the knife is also marked by cracks which follow the fracture of the flake surface. The convex side of the item shows evidence of relatively fine flaking, although much of the detail has been lost as a result of burning.

*Broken point* (Fig. 3: 5)

Found by Bateman.

*Flake* (Fig. 3: 6)

Found by Bateman.

### Iron objects

*Knife* (Fig. 3: 7)

A badly corroded, tanged knife, with a blade 65 mm and a tang 30 mm in length, was found by Bateman. Audrey Ozanne believed it to be of Anglo-Saxon date (1962-63: 42), but it might as readily be assigned to the Romano-British period.

*Tweezers* (Fig. 3: 8)

A pair of corroded iron tweezers, of nineteenth/twentieth-century type, was found in 1980, close to the exposed part of the barrow. The tweezers are 96 mm long, with arms measuring *c.* 75 mm. It is difficult to explain the presence of small tweezers on this exposed hilltop, except as part of Thomas Bateman's excavation kit, lost in 1849. Although he makes no mention of using delicate tools of this kind, Bateman's particular interest in small mammal bones suggests that he and his workmen were equipped with a range of fine tools, as well as picks and shovels.

## DISCUSSION (JT)

The Roystone Grange group of barrows represents one of the denser concentrations of tumuli in the Peak District. Large numbers of bronze age barrows are found to the west, around the Manifold valley, and there are many cairns on the gritstone of the East Moors (Barnatt, 1987: 394). However, these are not always concentrated into such dense clusters as that found at Roystone. As with barrow cemeteries in other parts of the country (for example, at Winterbourne Stoke, Wilts; Radley, Oxon.; and Garton Slack, Yorks), the Roystone barrows are spatially related to an earlier monument, namely the neolithic cairn of Minninglow. The round cairns are scattered in a broad arc to the south of Minninglow Hill (Fig. 1).

Arguably this need not indicate anything more than the continued importance of the Roystone Grange area as a place of settlement. However, the recovery of Beaker sherds from Chamber 1 at Minninglow (Marsden, 1982b: 17) indicates that the tomb continued to be of interest for some while after the cessation of its primary use. It is probably wise in considering the Roystone



barrows not to isolate each mound too rigidly as a separate object of study, but to emphasise the continuous process through which the landscape is manipulated by human activity (Bradley, 1984). Marsden is at pains to suggest that Minninglow was a multiphase site, starting as a small cairn with a single orthostatic chamber and passage. Just as the enlargement of the Minninglow tomb was an act which elaborated upon an existing monument, so too the foundation and development of the barrow cemetery in the immediate area of Minninglow might be seen as a conscious fostering of continuity with the past. Such an hypothesis must be tentative, but may eventually be confirmed by the findings of the shovel-testing campaign, carried out by Dr Robin Torrence, concerned as it was with questions of settlement location and stability. (This campaign involved the excavation of a grid of small soil pits over a wide area of the Roystone valley in order to investigate the spatial distribution of worked flint and pottery held in the topsoil.)

The details of the two excavated sites deserve some consideration. The similarities between Barrows 1 and 3 (primary cist; plano-convex knives of white flint) suggest a degree of contemporaneity or continuity of tradition in their construction. It is also likely that each mound had a complex history of construction and deposition. The late-Beaker sherd from Bateman's excavation is ambiguous in its context. It may relate to pre-cairn activity; or the vessel may have been associated with the construction of the mound, or even the primary or a secondary inhumation. All that can be said of the cist is that it contained a flint knife; by analogy with Barrow 3 it may also have contained an unburned skeleton. Neither of these observations precludes a Beaker date for the cairn.

Late-Beaker pottery could easily overlap chronologically with the Food Vessel pottery found with secondary or satellite burials in Barrow 3. Marsden (1983a: 31) notes that the urned cremations at that site post-date the Food Vessel inhumations, in common with similar sequences in other barrows on the Peak. However, we should heed Burgess' warning (1974: 176; 1986: 348) that such a distinction between ceramic traditions is as likely to be as much social as chronological; that is to say, different vessels may have been used at the same time by separate social groups. Indeed, in the south of England, Food Vessels are frequently in secondary positions to Collared Urns.

The disarticulated bones at Barrow 3, and the skulls which had clearly rotted free from their cervical vertebrae before their interment, provide an interesting link with the barrow at Wigber Low, only five kilometres to the south. Here, Collis (1983: 96) interprets bronze age activity (again associated with Food Vessels) as being connected with the excarnation of corpses on a stone platform. The removal of skulls and longbones from the site left only phalanges, teeth and the bones of infants. While one would not wish to suggest that the skulls and longbones at Roystone Grange 3 had actually come from Wigber Low, the possibility of a mortuary rite which involved a number of sites, or even types of site, again indicates the need for a consideration of landscapes rather than isolated sites.

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