

30540213. It is recorded as Site 10318 in the Sites and Monuments Records of the Norfolk Archaeological Unit for, perhaps not coincidentally, a barbed and tanged flint arrowhead was found at the same spot in 1971 by the same Mr. Lester.

Finds: Norwich Castle Museum

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A LATER BRONZE AGE CREMATION CEMETERY AND BEAKER PITS AT EAST CARLETON

by J.J. Wymer

In order to produce gravel for the construction of the new section of the A11 road between Cringleford and Wymondham, a borrow pit was opened in May 1986 at East Carleton. The pit was situated in the northern part of the parish, to the east of the Hethersett Road (centred at TG 17700270), with access from the road along a scraped track (Fig.1). Hitherto, the land was arable, with a shallow valley to the north along the parish boundary, in which an unnamed small stream flowed eastwards to the Yare at Keswick. The gravels form part of the outwash on the Till Plain at 30-45 m O.D.

The scraped track had been machined to a depth of up to a metre, exposing clean, sandy gravel, ideally suited for the passage of heavy lorries. In the course of searching the area, Mr. D.G. Woollestone observed some dark patches on the scraped surface; the bottoms of truncated pit-fills, containing coarse sherds, charcoal, burnt flints and fragmentary calcined bone. The Archaeological Unit was informed and the writer visited the site. The first pit, discovered by D.G. Woollestone, was found to contain the lower half of a thick, coarse bucket urn with remains of a cremation inside it. This was rescued and, with the co-operation of the manager of the gravel company, Mr. D. Minns, and his drivers, arrangements were made to make regular visits and conduct salvage excavations along the line of the trackway. A brief rescue excavation was also conducted on the north side of the trackway with the assistance of members of NARG in order to examine some linear features. The site was entered in the Sites and Monuments Records of the Archaeological Unit as No.22811.

Further discoveries of pits in the actual quarry (Fig.2) (SMR No.22652) resulted in the recovery of much Beaker pottery and flintwork and a few stray Roman and Saxon sherds. The Beaker material, in the quarry, and also in some pits close to the Later Bronze Age cemetery, is included in the record below.

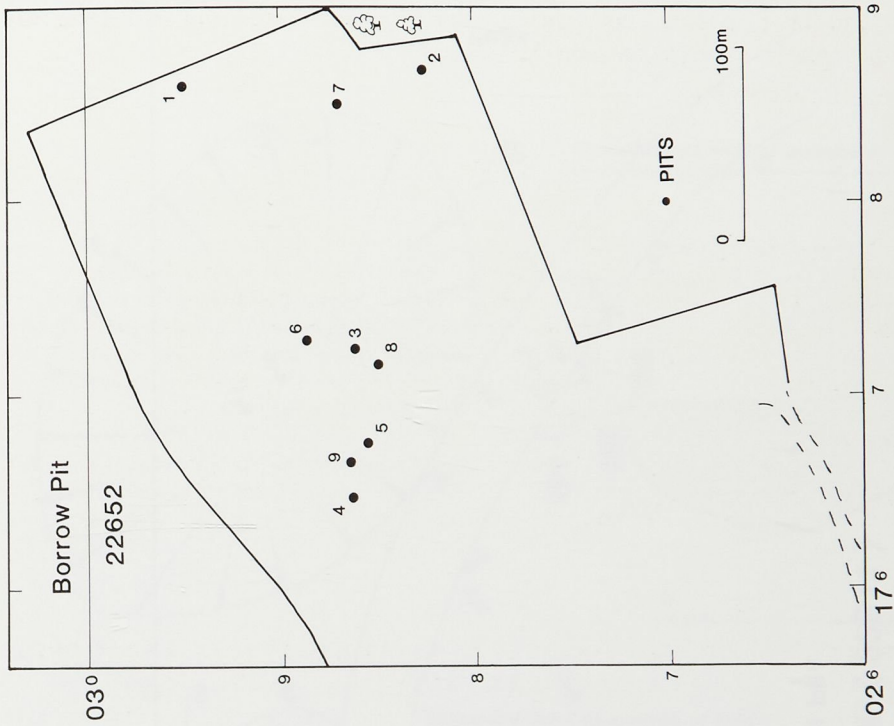


Fig. 2
 East Carleton, Plan of Borrow Pit. Site 22652.
 Scale 1:4000

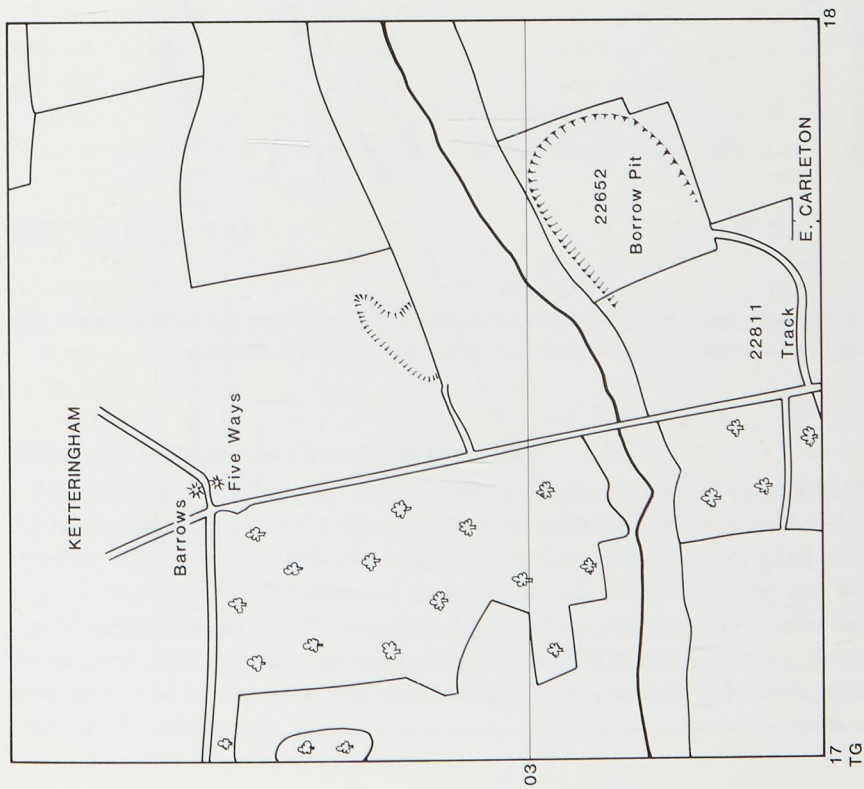


Fig. 1
 Location plan. East Carleton: Borrow Pit as opened to supply gravel for
 Cringleford-Wymondham Road Improvement Scheme in 1986.
 Site 22811: area of Later Bronze Age Cremation Cemetery and some Beaker Pits;
 Site 22652: actual quarry with Beaker Pits and other features.
 Scale 1:10,560

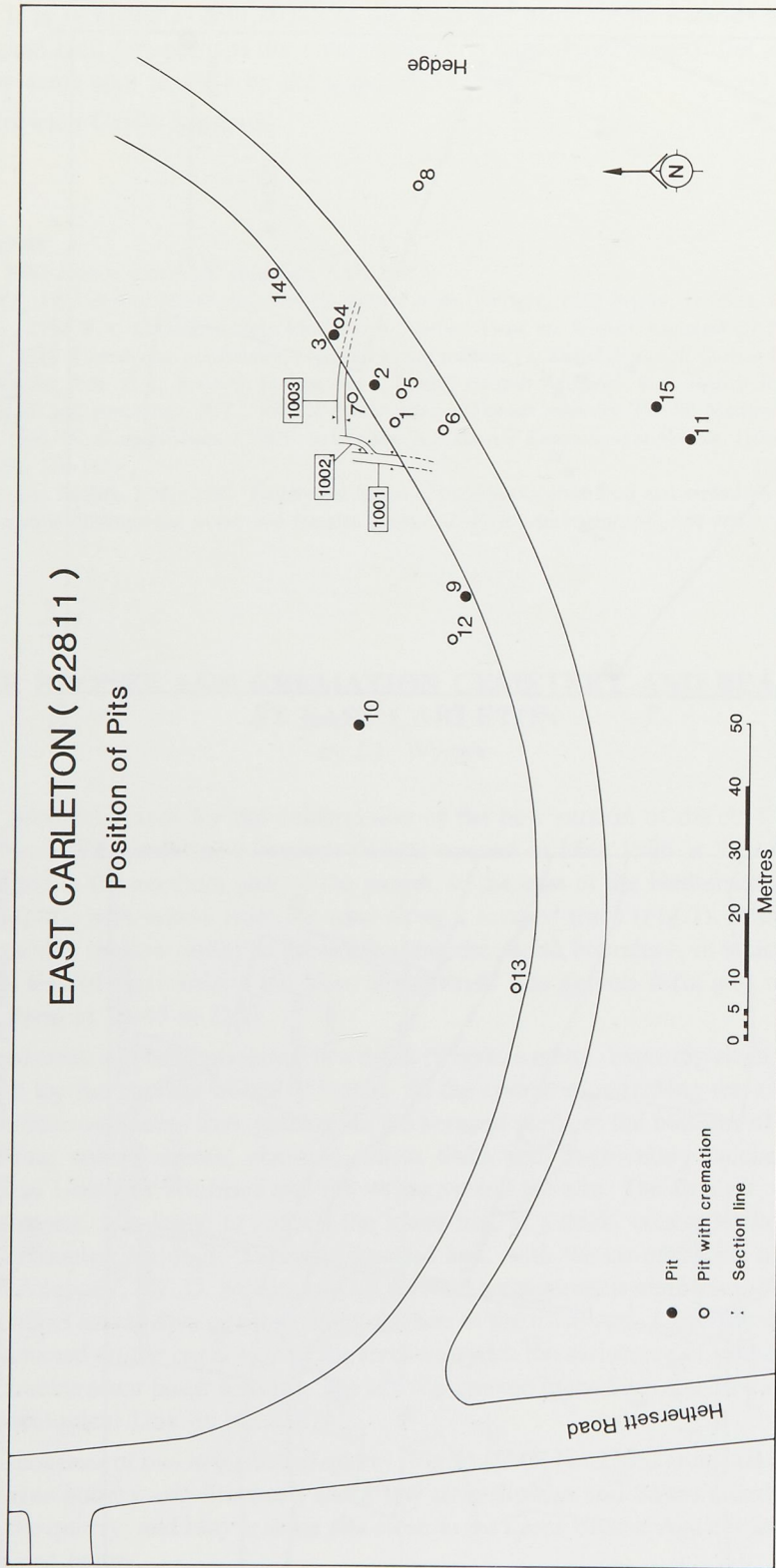
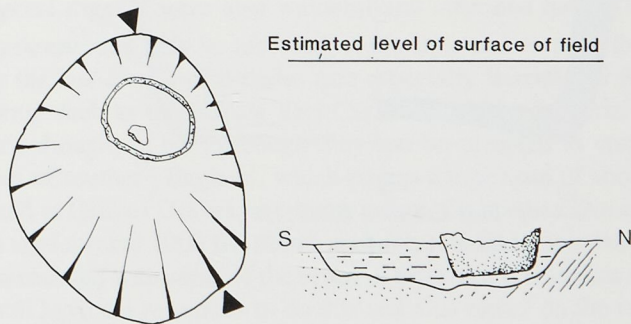
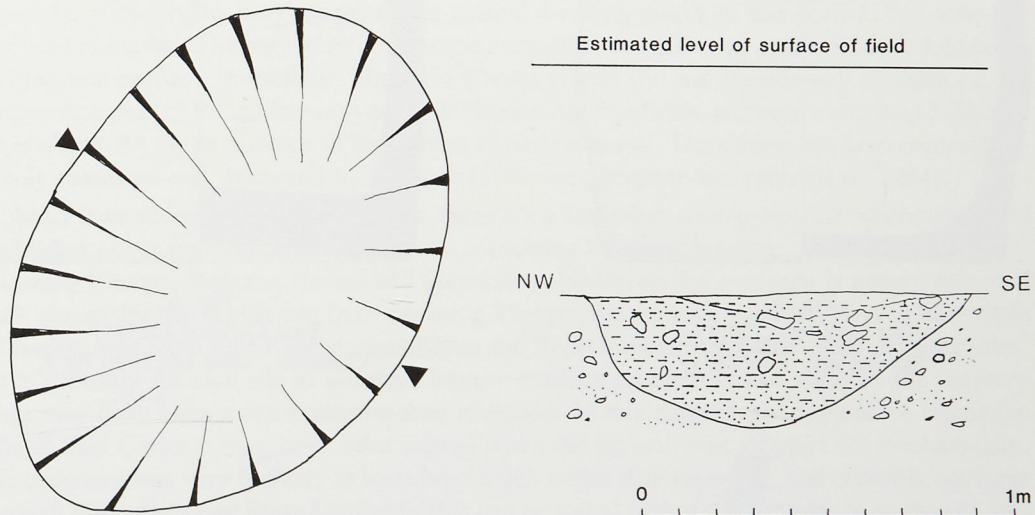


Fig. 3

PIT 3 (22652)



PIT 7 (22811)

Fig. 4

East Carleton. Plan and sections of Pit 7 (22811) containing base of Later Bronze Age urn with cremation and Pit 3 (22652) with numerous Beaker sherds and struck flints.

The Later Bronze Age Cremation Cemetery

Pits containing evidence for the remains of urned or un-urned cremations were restricted to the temporary trackway (Site 22811). Their distribution is shown on the plan, Fig.3. In every instance, mechanical scraping had removed half or more of the original pit profile. Pit 7 was found during the rescue excavation on the north side of the trackway and was dug under controlled conditions. Its profile (Fig.4) is typical of the others, with its diameter little wider than the urn within it. All the urns were placed in the pits base downwards. Several pits may have been destroyed by the quarrying without any record, so it is impossible to define the original limits of the cemetery.

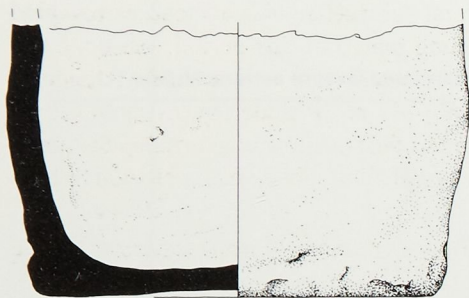


Fig. 5
East Carleton (22811).
Base of urn from Pit 1.

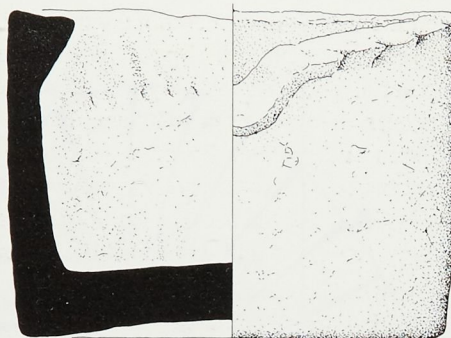


Fig. 6
East Carleton (22811).
Complete, squat urn from Pit 5.

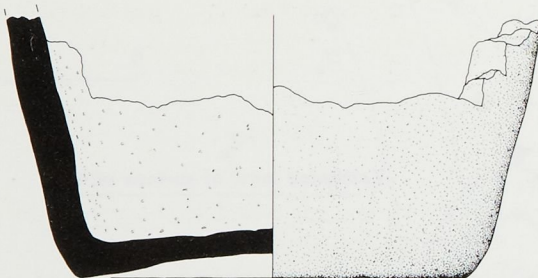


Fig. 7
East Carleton (228711).
Base of urn from Pit. 7.
Scale 1:4

Pit no.

1. Bottom half of urn containing numerous, very fragmented, calcined bones of a cremation (Fig.5).
4. Base of urn with some calcined bone.
5. Complete, very thick, squat, coarse urn containing very fragmented calcined bone (Fig.6).
6. Part of base of urn with calcined bone adhering to it.
7. Bottom half of urn with some very fragmented, calcined bone (Fig.7).
8. Un-urned cremation in dark, sandy soil.
12. Some calcined bone with lumps of burnt clay and burnt flints.
13. Charcoal and some calcined bone.
14. Calcined bone in dark, sandy fill.

The pottery is typical of the period: fairly hard exterior but very crumbly and coarse, with much sand and grog filler. The urns from Pits 1 and 7 also have crushed, calcined flint.

As far as could be seen in the truncated pits that contained urned cremations, all the cremated bone was inside the vessel. It was generally reduced to very small pieces, less than a centimetre in size. No grave goods accompanied any of the cremations.

This small, cremation cemetery at East Carleton adds to the few that are known in Norfolk which can be attributed to the Later Bronze Age. The marked discrepancy between their numbers and the wealth of contemporary metalwork in the county remains a problem, just as is the lack of settlement sites. It is possible that some of the several sub-rectangular enclosures revealed by aerial photography may represent the elusive dwelling places of this period, but none has yet been examined. The only other comparable cremation cemeteries are at Shouldham, Salthouse, Witton and perhaps Poringland. Rainbird Clarke (1960) did not include any of them on his distribution plan of Round Barrows and Late Bronze Age Urnfields, and only mentioned Salthouse as evidence for the persistence of the custom of barrow burial. The subject has been comprehensively reviewed and discussed by Lawson (1980 for gazetteer and references; 1984).

Apart from the sites mentioned above, there are a few other sites in Norfolk where cordoned or bucket urns have been found apparently containing human cremations, such as at Heacham, Morning Thorpe, Runcton Holme and Sprowston. However, the evidence is poorly recorded and, except for the bucket urn from Morning Thorpe, the material has been 'lost'. Other finds of bucket urns from East Runton, Snettisham and Syderstone are probably from domestic sites, as is certainly the rich site at Grimes Graves. Another problem is that some of the funerary sites may have been more extensive than recorded. In this respect, although some cremation pits at East Carleton may have been missed when the top-soil was stripped off mechanically, the cemetery was very unlikely to have been much larger than recorded, and certainly not large enough to be described as an Urnfield. This can be stated with some confidence as the site was patiently watched over the whole time of its quarrying by Mr. D.G. Woollestone. The operators of the mechanical diggers were also watchful and informed him of anything they spotted.

Dating, at present, can only be assessed on the style and form of the urns. Research on this period during the last couple of decades (see especially Barrett and Bradley 1980) has shown that bucket urns, such as those from East Carleton, are not the firm chronological indicators they were once thought to be. Although they can be accepted as comparable to the Deverel-Rimbury series of southern England, which covers a time span of about 1400-1000 BC, some, as demonstrated at Grimes Graves, are more recent. On a subjective assessment, a date for the East Carleton urns around 1000 BC seems probably. Radiocarbon dates could be obtained from the charcoal associated with some of the urned or un-urned cremations and it is hoped that future researchers will have the resources to do this and also report on the cremated human remains.

Other pits as marked on Fig.3 without evidence for cremations, are as follows:

2. Some charcoal and one burnt flint; 3. Scraps of coarse pottery, probably Later Bronze Age; 9. Beaker sherds; 10. Beaker sherds, some struck flint and four burnt flints; 11. Plain, gritty sherds and some finer ware, probably Beaker. Also, fragments of hazel nuts; 15. One flint flake and a burnt flint in a very dark sandy fill.

The Beaker pottery is described below with the other Beaker material from site 22652.

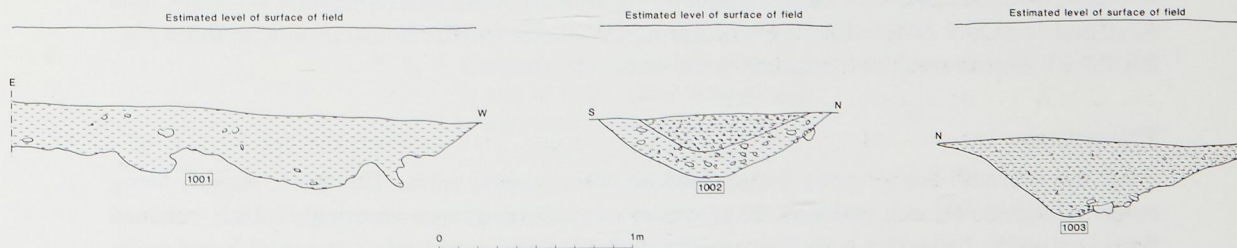


Fig. 8 East Carleton (22652). Sections across linear features.

Linear features

A brief rescue excavation was prompted by the appearance of the truncated fills of linear features on the surface of the mechanically stripped gravel close to the cremation cemetery. These are shown on Fig.3. It was hoped that the relationship could be established between these features and the cremations, although there was nothing in the plan to suggest any association. Three sections across the ditch fills showed that, estimating about half a metre having been removed mechanically, less than half a metre still remained (Fig.8). All had gently rounded bottoms.

Ditch 1001: 1.50 m wide

Fill: uniform, grey brown silt

Cuts Ditch 1002

Finds: 2 bent, hand-made nails of iron

Ditch 1002: 1.20 m wide

Fill: primary fill of gravel and brown silt. Recut, with profile 0.15 m higher, filled with dark brown stony silt

Finds: crude flint core and a flake. One small, worn ?Beaker body sherd. All from primary silt.

Cuts Ditch 1003

Ditch 1003: 1.50 m wide

Fill: dark brown, sandy silt with some stones

Cut by Ditch 1002

Finds: 8 flint flakes and a core made on a pebble.

3 small, very worn ?Beaker sherds

Dating is inconclusive, but the nails in Ditch 1001 suggest a post-prehistoric date, and the worn ?Beaker sherds are probably intrusive, as are the struck flints.

The evidence for settlement of the Beaker Period

The truncated fills of nine pits were recorded during the process of top and sub-soil stripping prior to removing gravel in the Borrow Pit (Site 22652). Pits 3, 4, 5 and 6 (see plan, Fig.2) contained Beaker sherds. Pits 8 and 9 produced little save two flint flakes in the former and a probable Beaker sherd in the latter. The remaining Pits 1, 2 and 7 were clearly much later with sparse Saxon or Roman sherds. Pit 3 was the largest and most informative pit, oval in shape 1.50 × 1.00 m, and with the bottom 0.35 m of fill (Fig.4) undisturbed by machine stripping. This was totally excavated and produced numerous sherds and struck flints as recorded below. Pit 4 was also oval but smaller, 0.60 × 0.40 m with 0.30 m of fill remaining, and produced similar but less material. There were few finds in what was left of the fills of Pits 5 and 6, but the only sherds were from beakers, and Pit 6 contained an oblique flint arrowhead.

Such buried domestic rubbish must represent an area of settlement, and seemingly an extensive one, for other pits with beaker refuse occurred around the later cremation cemetery (pits 9, 10 and 11 at Site 22811: Fig.3) about 200 m distant. Finds were not so prolific in these pits, but Pit 11 was unusual in containing some hazel nut shells.

The pottery

All the pits with beaker pottery contained no other type of ware. The fabric varied, being tempered either with calcined flint or a mixture of sand and grog with usually a little calcined flint. Unusually distinctive were four small rim sherds from apparently one vessel found in Pit 3 of a very hard, dark red, sandy ware. Various decorative motifs were applied, for the most

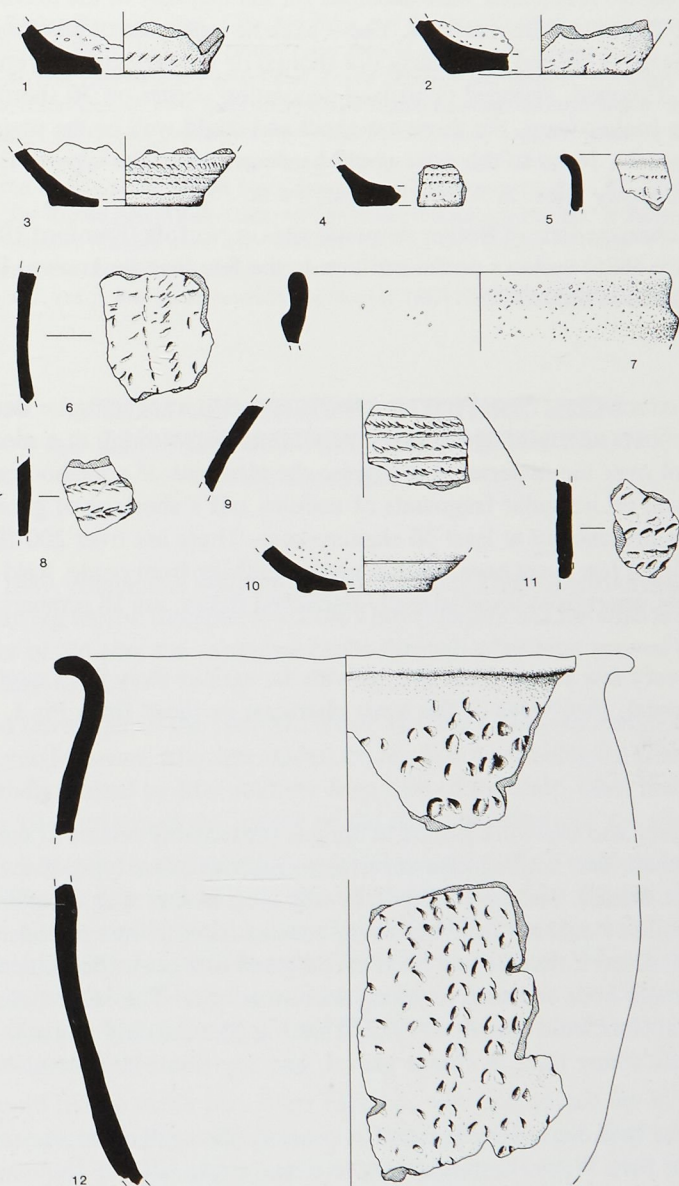


Fig. 9

Beaker pottery from East Carlton. 1-11 from Pit 3, 12 from Pit 4.

2, 6, 11: rusticated with irregular finger-nail impressions.

1, 3, 8, 9: rusticated with zoned finger-nail impressions.

7: rim of large, shouldered vessel.

4: with comb-impressed decoration.

5: with stamped decoration.

10: with thin, incised groove.

12: large vessel with flared rim, part-reconstruction from conjoining sherds.

Irregular, finger-impressed rustication.

Scale 1:4

part somewhat crudely. Rusticated ware accounts for the majority of the decorated sherds, executed entirely by finger-nail impressions. There were no examples of pinching of the surface. These impressions were applied irregularly (94 sherds) or in zones of chevrons and horizontal lines (36 sherds). Combed, stamped or incised decoration occurs on 76 sherds, and there are 40 sherds of plain beaker ware, but these are small and could well be the plain parts of otherwise decorated vessels. None of the ware could be described as the type of fine ware usually associated with funerary sites. A selection is shown on Fig.9.

Such pottery is characteristic of Beaker domestic sites in Norfolk (Bamford 1982; Healy 1986; Petersen and Healy 1986) and is a useful addition to the few that are known. It probably dates from between *c.*2000-*c.*1700 BC.

The flints

The numerous struck flints from Pit 3 are clearly contemporary with the Beaker pottery, by virtue of their numbers and mint condition. It represents flintworking of a mediocre standard, yet enough control over the material to recognise the elements of a methodical tradition. The nine cores are made on irregular fragments of nodules and a shortage of good quality flint is emphasised by the presence of at least 56 shatterpieces. There are over 200 flakes, spalls and fragments, including a few burnt ones, all apparently resulting from crude, hard-hammer technique. The only tools, apart from some partially retouched flakes, are 28 scrapers, some of which are quite elegant.

Pit 4 produced very few struck flints and, as with the various stray finds made on the surface of the stripped gravel, they were of the same character as those from Pit 3.

CONCLUSION

The Beaker pottery and flintwork buried in the pits presumably relates to settlement of some kind. It is unfortunate that nothing else survives to indicate what type of dwellings or other structures may have existed. The probability is, as with most Beaker sites apparently of a domestic nature, such structures would not have been very substantial with little of consequence remaining in the sub-soil. Even if the site had been investigated in a controlled manner it is unlikely that excavation would have revealed anything more than pits. The stake holes of a probably circular dwelling at Hockwold (Bamford 1982, Text Fig.3) were only 1 in and 2 in in diameter and such leave little if any trace in coarse gravel, and any floors or hearths would have been ploughed away.

The dating of the Beakers is very broad, but possibly the settlement was related in time to the two barrows at Five Ways, Ketteringham, less than a kilometre to the north west. One of these barrows did produce some Roman and Medieval material when excavated in 1846 (Lawson 1981, 37, finds in Norwich Castle Museum) and this could well be intrusive. At least four or five centuries must separate the Beaker site at East Carleton from the Later Bronze Age cremation cemetery described above and it is unlikely they are in any way connected.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are expressed to the landowner, Mrs. S.A. Lacey, for her permission to investigate the site and the interest she showed, and to Mr. D.G. Woollstone for watching the site during the period when it was working. Without his patient observation and recording most, if not all, of the information noted above would have been lost. The co-operation of the manager, Mr. David Minns, was greatly appreciated.

Finds: Norwich Castle Museum

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A ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY KILN AT BLACKBOROUGH END, MIDDLETON

by David Gurney

Introduction

On April 28th 1989, contractors working on a site at Sandy Lane, Blackborough End, Middleton (Fig. 1) were removing topsoil mechanically from a development site for what is now 'Kiln House' when, in a corner of the site, the excavator broke through what later proved to be the remains of a Roman pottery kiln.

The owner and developer of the site, Mr. Peter Jackson of Blackborough End, immediately notified King's Lynn Museum, who then alerted the Norfolk Archaeological Unit to this discovery. The site was initially visited by Mr. Andrew Rogerson of the Unit, who, instantly recognising this as a Roman kiln, informed the author of the date and nature of the site.

An excavation was quickly organised in order not to delay the development, and in a single day, 1st May 1989, the kiln was largely cleared and excavated by the author. This, it should be stressed, was a very rapid rescue excavation to establish the form and nature of the kiln, and, in different circumstances, the site would have taken a number of excavators several days to excavate and record fully. Given the immediacy of the threat to the kiln, the archaeological response to the situation had to be rapid, and the kiln was excavated and recorded as fully as possible in the time available.

The author would like to thank Mr. Peter Jackson, who recognised the kiln during building works, notified the Norfolk Museums Service of this discovery, and allowed the author to excavate and record the kiln. The photographs were taken by David Wicks. The records of the excavation have been deposited in the Norfolk Sites and Monuments Record, and the finds in King's Lynn Museum.

Site Location and Background (Fig. 1)

The site is situated on the west side of Sandy Lane, Blackborough End (a hamlet in Middleton parish) at grid reference TF 6646 1502, in the south-east corner of Ordnance Survey Parcel No. 3900. In this pasture field, most of which is occupied by Site 3391 in the County Sites and Monuments Record, Roman sherds of late third century date were found by Mr. John Smallwood in 1967, and iron slag is currently found in any disturbance of the ground over this field (tree-planting holes and molehills) suggesting a large ironworking site. The kiln described here is located on the southern edge of Site 3391, and is Context 2 within that site number.