

Assessment For Longstone Edge

This essentially is a short resume of the state of play of the project as well as an assessment, a full assessment of the ecofacts cannot be given as funding has not been agreed to finish the processing.

The purpose of this assessment is to review the volume and potential of the site and the artefacts retrieved and the archaeological records created during the excavations of 1996. A point to note is that all the soil samples have been sieved and sorted down to 4mm. No true assessment can be given for the environmental samples until they have been sorted down to 2mm, as requested by the specialists.

1.0 - Site Elements - A Statement of Quantity and Quality

1.1 - The Paper Archive

1.1.1 - Context Sheets

112 Context Record Sheets covering all areas of the site excavated during the fieldwork.

1.1.2 - Drawing Records

11 Drawing Record Forms covering 71 drawings. These consist of 42 plans, 25 sections, 1 elevation and 3 void records.

1.1.3 - Photographic Records

31 Photographic Record Sheets covering 217 photographs and slides.

1.1.4 - Video Records

Although this formed a separate project (Video Evaluation - CAS 589) the records were produced during the fieldwork at Longstone Edge and contain information of importance for the specialists involved in post-ex analysis and report writing. Valuable information may be gleaned from the footage taken for future use in education or presentation purposes. The archive consists of 5 Hi8 video tapes and 224 record Sheets.

1.1.5 - Sample Records

185 Sample Record Sheets
167 Sample Evaluation Sheets

This covers 3570 litres of samples contained in blue buckets, and 35.5 Kg of material in bags, which have been sieved and sorted down to 4mm.

1.1.6 - Object Records

89 Object Record Forms listing 889 objects. All are from safe contexts and are 3D recorded.

1.1.7 - Boxed Finds Register

5 sheets listing 55 boxes (Note sorting of sampling residues is incomplete).

1.1.8 - Other Paper Records

A4 Ring File of Environmentalist's notes.

3 A4 Chartwell Laboratory Books - Site Diary, Finds Notes and General.

3 Notebooks of Survey Notes.

A sheaf of papers equivalent to 2 Notebooks containing original finds data.

1.2 - The Finds Archive

The boxed find's archive consists of 55 boxes of artefacts and ecofacts these are subdivided and listed below:

1.2.1 - Animal Bone

5 Standard sized boxes of sorted animal bone. A mixture of hand retrieved and sample retrieved bones. The larger animal bones are of particular importance as they remained in-situ and uncontaminated by other deposits until their retrieval during fieldwork. Those placed at the juncture between the old land surface and the lowest levels of barrow construction are of particular significance.

1.2.2 - Human Bone

5 Standard sized and 2 Skull boxes contain the human bones sorted so far. Of these boxes 2 of the standard and 2 of the skull boxes contain the three skeletons retrieved from the Beaker cist (Note one was headless). The other boxes contain the cross section of bones from the Neolithic, Bronze and Roman periods. Although there has been severe natural truncation at the site these bones come from fairly safe contexts. That is: the whole stratigraphy was dislocated downward with little internal mixing. The whole skeletons are in very good condition as are most of the bones from the Bronze and Roman phases of the site. The Neolithic bone is abraded but as the bones are generally small this does not have much of an impact for interpretation and analysis.

1.2.3 - Bone

3 Standard and 1 Skull box of unsorted bone all in good condition and safe contexts.

1.2.4 - Pottery

3 Standard boxes containing ceramics from all periods. Archive to be added include the two complete vessels housed in Sheffield City Museum. The ceramics have been retrieved from safe contexts either by hand or through the sample processing.

1.2.4 - Lithics

1 Skull box contains all the lithic material retrieved during fieldwork, all pieces are in good condition and are from safe contexts.

1.2.5 - Small Finds

1 Skull box each of Iron Objects, Lead/Copper Alloy and Glass. A smaller box containing the glass and jet/shale bead is held in the cool store at the AML. All these finds have been 3D recorded and retrieved from safe contexts. These boxes contain some of the really important finds from the site. Beads associated with the central Beaker burial and the lead tag which proves that it was Bateman that excavated Barrow 2.

1.2.6 - Samples

25 Standard boxes of flotation samples all from secure contexts and requiring further sorting. 2 Standard boxes of Snail samples. 1 Standard box of Soil samples.

1.2.7 - Other

Stone and Brick 1 Standard box.

Fired Clay 1 Standard box.

Marine Shell 1 Skull box.

2.0 - Site Elements - A Statement of their Potential

The statement of potential is written in dual format, for fast assessment read the headings which are followed by level of complexity and then level of importance. The section paragraphs then flesh out the quick qualifiers. The level of complexity is based upon the number of records and quality of material. Level of importance is measured on the archaeological value of the material retrieved and how it will contribute to current models and theories extant in the academic world.

2.1 - Structural Record - simple - national importance.

Overall the stratigraphic sequence of the site was very simple only being complicated in localised regions where the stratigraphy had been truncated by fissuring and dipping of the underlying geological strata. The structural elements have been set out in cultural phases (below) and each is discussed in terms of simplicity and importance.

2.1.1 - Neolithic Phase - simple/complex - national importance.

Clearance of the site, construction of the excavation enclosure wall, the use of the enclosure area furthest from the entrance as an excavation area.

This phase of activity and the type of monument excavated was totally unexpected and only revealed during the fieldwork stage of the project, because of this the original Project Design does not contain any material relating to such potential discoveries. Consequently the updated Project Design will have a new chapter added to it.

New questions will have to look at how the site compares to other excavation sites, method of construction, usage and how the site fits into the regional pattern of the ritual landscape. Importance is heightened because all of the enclosure remaining was excavated and 80% of deposits sampled, the last 20% being lost through cliff collapse and fissuring.

2.1.2 - Beaker Phase - complex - national importance.

Quite complicated and potentially split into three sub-phases, two parts of which are going to be very difficult to prove. At some time the Neolithic enclosure entrance is closed and three rock cut graves are inserted into the enclosure. The northern and most central rock cut grave then has a cist constructed within it " the other two are emptied and three bodies are placed within the central cist". The two rock cut graves, now empty, are covered with slabs of limestone the cist remains as a visible upstanding monument just south of centre of the former excarnation enclosure. Finally "a small barrow is built up over the beaker cist".

Again because not anticipated the original Project Design does not contain any research aims and objectives aimed at this specific phase of the site. The sites profile is raised again to national level because of the apparent sequence suggested in the Beaker burial ritual. The updated project design will have to consider whether there is enough evidence to prove the sequence of events and whether a chronology separating the events can be calculated.

2.1.3 - Bronze Age - simple - regional importance.

This phase is fairly simple and straightforward, conforming with the ideas set out in the Project Design the aims and objectives pertaining to burial ritual and practise were therefore fully met by the fieldwork. Briefly, on barrow 1 a shallow impression is cut into the limestone surface and a food vessel burial placed within it, a mound is then raised over this and the earlier Beaker barrow. As the barrow is raised burials, inhumation and cremation, are placed within the mound structure. These burials are not scattered as expected but placed, sometimes in roughly constructed niches. This is the final phase of construction on the monument.

Barrow 2 is constructed with the food vessel burial placed at the base of a rock cut grave, this is the only phase of barrow 2. Construction design and method is totally different from that observed on Barrow 1 and, the ritual/practice of placing bodies within the mound structure during construction was not observed.

This phase is of regional importance because although conforming to the general principles governing construction and use of Peak District barrows there is a definite dichotomy between barrow 1 and 2. New questions that need to be asked of the site are. Can this pattern be observed anywhere else locally, regionally or nationally? By absolute dating, if possible can we establish a chronological difference between the two and therefore observe advances/changes in ritual/cultural development.

2.1.4 - Roman Phase - simple - regional importance.

Only evident on barrow 1 consists of the insertion of at least one if not two cremations into the surface of the barrow. From previous research it seems to have been quite a common practice in the area for Romano-British citizens to bury their relatives on high points. Unfortunately Neolithic and Bronze age peoples had had the same idea centuries before so the Romans simply reutilised the existing barrows. The fieldwork therefore fully met the aims and objectives of the Project Design and upholds the current model of Romano-British utilisation of extant prehistoric burial sites. No new questions need be asked here.

2.1.5 - Bateman - simple - regional importance.

This was an element of the site that was discussed in the Site History section of the original project design but was excluded as an aim or objective of the fieldwork. Although the project had highlighted Barrow 1 as a candidate for antiquarian investigation it was barrow 2 that Thomas Bateman had excavated in 1848. This discovery is of significant regional importance for three reasons. Firstly, although precise geographical location of his sites leaves a lot to be desired Longstone proves that Bateman used best means possible to locate his investigations. Second, that Batemans records of what he found and how he found it are quite accurate and that his notes recording discoveries can be relied upon, it is only the illustrations of Jarret that can be queried (drawn some 50 years after the event based on Batemans notes). Third, the discoveries made at Longstone go some way to support the corpus of work undertaken and published by J Barnatt who by using Batemans notes is trying to locate all his excavations and tie in associated grave goods.

A possible new objective is to try and establish the reason behind Bateman's decision to enter the much smaller barrow rather than barrow 1 which covered the Neolithic enclosure. Was it due to geographical positioning or due to previous experience.

2.2 - Human Bone - difficult - regional/national importance.

Although badly truncated by strata collapse and the opening of fissures the human bone collected by hand or through the sampling process remained largely in situ i.e. they were not contaminated by other deposits of later or earlier date. Of regional importance are the burials distributed throughout the mound during its construction, unlike other barrows where all the specialists can say is 'there were x number of individuals scattered throughout at Longstone we can deduce a more reliable body count.

2.2.1 - Neolithic Human Remains - difficult - regional/national importance.

The range of bones retrieved during fieldwork and the sample processing appear to cover the entire age spectrum of the human population. This was not evident on site and underlines the importance of the intensive sampling strategy undertaken on site. The result is of regional importance (potentially national) because such a rich cross section of the Neolithic community has never been retrieved previously and because such a find was unforeseen in the original project design adds a wealth of new academic questions to be asked of the retrieved material. What is the age, sex, pathology of the individuals being incarcerated at Longstone and, is there any evidence for depositional segregation by age or sex within the enclosure.

The human remains appear to have undergone a lot of abrasion. Those of the Neolithic period placed within the excarnation enclosure appear to be fragmented remains of long bones and the small digit bones both of which appear to have been weathered naturally and abraded by trampling?

2.2.2 - Beaker Burials - simple - regional importance.

Combined with the suggestions made by the structural record (see above) bones from the Beaker periods of activity seem to have undergone relocation, the beaker burials possibly moving between the three rock cut graves within the Neolithic enclosure.

This specific phase of burial was not highlighted in the original project design and therefore a new set of questions should be aired. The bones are regionally important because they comply generally with the model for Beaker burials within the Peak District. However, when combined with the

structural evidence significant differences appear. Were two of the skeletons relocated ? Combined with the rodent bones (see below) was the cist left exposed before being covered up and for how long? How do the beaker burials compare with others in the same region, age, sex, positioning and grave goods.

2.2.3 - Bronze Age Burials - complex - regional/national importance.

As with the Neolithic remains (see above) the range of bones retrieved during fieldwork and the sample processing cover the entire age spectrum of the human population. This was not evident on site due to the speed of excavation and the lack of on-site processing. The fact that such an assemblage was retrieved serves to underline the importance of the intensive sampling strategy undertaken on site, it is also, unfortunately, an indicator of what has been missed in the past. The resultant assemblage is of regional importance (potentially national) because such a rich cross section of the Bronze Age community has never been retrieved previously and, because such a find was unforeseen in the original project design adds a wealth of new academic questions to be asked of the retrieved material. What is the age, sex, pathology of the individuals being incarcerated at Longstone and, is there any evidence for depositional segregation by age or sex within the enclosure.

2.2.4 - Roman Insertion (s ?) - simple - regional importance.

A fairly straightforward exercise of identifying age and sex, the find confirms current models on Romano-British burial practise and the reutilisation of existing barrows.

2.3 - Animal Bone - simple - local importance.

Very few bones from the larger mammals have been retrieved, 90% of these bones were retrieved by hand during the fieldwork the sample processing yielding very little. Most of the retrieved bones were found in symbolic/ritual locations. That is: they were either placed within burial deposits or, were found lain at the interface between the lowest level of barrow construction material and the old ground level. The horizon in which the 'placed' bones were located is referred to as 'ground level' loosely due to the lack of concrete evidence of a buried remnant soil.

2.4 - Rodent Bones - very difficult - national/European importance.

Archaeologically the rodent bones are important in that they may be able to indicate how long the cist remained open before being covered by the barrow mound during the sites Beaker phases. The rodent assemblage is highly important for interpreting the nature of the surrounding environment prior, during and subsequent to the construction of the barrows and the use of the immediate area for ritual practises. In zoological terms the vast number of bones and species type have caused a considerable amount of interest in the academic world. One of the spin offs from any research is the study of history and nature of raptorial birds inhabiting the area during the sites use in the Neolithic and Beaker periods. For example: if it is deduced that the bird of prey was an eagle owl, this species tend to be solitary birds, and the number of rodents per week taken by the bird is calculated, it may be possible to deduce the amount of time the cist was open in which the owl was able to take shelter by dividing the number of whole rodents calculated from our retrieval by weekly consumption total of the owls. Could it be demonstrated whether any of the other raptors could have contributed toward the defleshing of the human bodies.

The finding of such a large assemblage of rodent bones was quite important in that it tallies with references made by Thomas Bateman whilst conducting excavations on quite a large number of

Derbyshire barrows. Objectives for the new project design would be: Do these bones occur on likely excavation sites, do these bones belong specifically to the Beaker period, do these bones indicate a different environment from that currently postulated for the White Peak i.e. the Longstone bones do not represent a different micro climate but that the model for the entire White Peak is wrong.

2.5 - Amphibian, Fish and Bird Bones - complex - regional importance.

The sorting of the small bones has yet to be taken down to 2mm as recommended by the specialists, due to lack of funds. The retrieval of further species in these categories of fauna may add weight to the possibility that a micro environment existed around Longstone Edge that is at variance with the current environmental model theorised for the White Peak area of the Peak District.

2.6 - Pottery - difficult - regional/national importance.

2.6.1 - Neolithic Pottery - complex - regional/national importance.

The vast majority of sherds were hand retrieved and 3D recorded during the fieldwork, a large number of highly abraded fragments were also retrieved during the sample processing stage. Although small the fabric types of Neolithic Pottery are quite distinct and therefore identification should be quite easy. As with all areas of the project pertaining to the Neolithic no aims or objectives were contained in the original project design because artefacts of the period were not expected.

These sherds may form our only dating evidence for the Neolithic Phase of the monument and therefore are of vital importance. Is only one type of fabric present and therefore is this indicative of specific ritual use. These are all questions to be asked of the retrieved data and are to be put forward in the updated project design.

2.6.2 - Beaker Pottery - simple - regional/national importance.

Sherds belonging to a single vessel were all found in direct association with the 'central' Beaker burial. Beakers in this country are divided into broad regional types the Peak District is situated right on the boundary between the Northern and Southern type's.

Again such a find was not anticipated in the original Project Design and this issue will have to be addressed in the Updated design. The objective being to determine whether the sherds retrieved at Longstone belong to the Northern, Southern or an Indigenous Group.

2.6.3 - Bronze Age Pottery - simple - regional.

The assemblage consists principally of a badly crushed but complete food vessel retrieved from Barrow 1 and, two complete vessels retrieved by Thomas Bateman from Barrow 2 in 1848 (in Sheffield City Museum).

2.6.4 - Roman Pottery - very simple - regional.

A couple of sherds retrieved from the immediate vicinity of the Romano-British insertion.

2.6.5 - General - complex - regional/national.

The Peak District falls on the boundary between Northern and Southern types of Beakers and has

been regarded as a Neolithic backwater. The author suggests that something has been missed in the past, principally because; a lot of excavation in the area was undertaken by antiquarians who failed to publish proper records and who were unable to undertake the level of scientific research that is available to the archaeologist of today. Second; because of the areas inaccessibility many 'modern' method archaeologists have been dissuaded from tackling sites in the region. It may be that this inaccessibility in the past shielded a culture with a separate identity from outside influences, or that the peoples who inhabited the Peak District did so in a very similar manner to, or had common links with, peoples living in a broad band of upland area stretching south west throughout the uplands of north east and south west Wales. This arc of commonality could tentatively be extended into southern Eire and into northern Central Europe.

2.7 - Lithics - simple - local importance.

Very few lithics were recovered from the site. Two tools were found with the central Beaker burials and three arrow heads were found at the edge of barrow 1. Unlike most prehistoric sites Longstone revealed almost no background lithic scatter, a pattern duplicated in the sampling strategy and the sieving process.

New questions have to be directed at the site which take into account the positions of the arrowheads and the lack of background lithic material. With regard to the arrow heads are we observing the ritual shooting of the barrow, ceremonial burial at the edges of the barrow, the site of the butchering of a feast animal, or are they derived from pre barrow activity.

A major point of note is the complete lack of background lithic material, almost as if the site had been swept clean prior to the monuments construction (all phases of monument). Can similar observations be traced elsewhere and if so what is the significance.

2.7 - Beads - simple - regional/national importance.

In addition to the single jet/shale bead retrieved during excavation the sample taken at the find spot has yielded five glass disc beads. I have yet to hear as to whether these are in fact made of quartz, this latter point would add significantly to their importance. Unfortunately these beads were not found in direct association with the central Beaker burials being separated from the latter by a 2 metre wide fissure. The fact that all the beads come from the same sample bucket could indicate that they were placed or dropped as a strung set. Whether this set of beads is indicative of a necklace or bracelet can only be deduced through research.

2.8 - Molluscs - complex - regional/national importance.

As with the rodents the barrows at Longstone Edge appear to have snails within them that should not be there if, the current thinking on a) the local environment and, b) snail habitat and distribution, is correct. It is unlikely that the current thinking regarding both the small mammals and the snails can be so different to the evidence found on site and, that if anything we are looking at rewriting the environmental history of the area, at least the history of the White Peak. Study and conclusions regarding the faunal assemblage retrieved from Longstone Edge may elucidate the floral environment the ecofacts for which are sadly lacking from the site archive - due entirely to the nature of the limestone soils.

3.0 - Résumé of Site Phases and elements of the above linked for the Analysis Stage.

3.1 - Neolithic Phase - simple/complex - national importance.

Clearance of the site, construction of the excarnation enclosure wall, the use of the enclosure area furthest from the entrance as an excarnation area. Elements of the archive most needed to answer and promote questions are; context record, human bones, pottery and samples.

3.2 - Beaker Phase - complex - national importance.

Neolithic enclosure entrance closed, three rock cut graves inserted into the former entranced enclosure. The northern rock cut grave has a cist constructed within it " the other two are emptied and three bodies are placed within the central cist". The two rock cut graves, now empty, are covered with slabs of limestone the 'central' cist remaining as a visible upstanding monument just south of centre of the former excarnation enclosure. Finally "a small barrow is built up over the beaker cist".

Although the written and drawn archive we illustrate these phases no absolute dates or breaks in stratigraphy were discerned. The above sequence of events appears to have taken place but the project at present has no method of determining when and the duration between each event. The project in attempting to answer these riddles will have to rely heavily on the environmental evidence; human bone, small animal bones and floral remains.

3.3 - Bronze Age - simple - regional importance.

The Bronze Age phase on barrow 1 begins with the cutting of a shallow impression into the natural limestone's surface and the placing of a food vessel burial within it, a mound is then raised over this burial and the earlier Beaker barrow. This is the final construction phase of the monument. Barrow 2 is constructed with the food vessel burial placed at the base of a rock cut grave, this is the only phase of construction on barrow 2.

3.4 - Roman Phase - simple - regional importance.

The only activity occurring during the Roman (Roman-British) period is only evident on barrow 1 and consists of the insertion of at least one if not two cremations into the surface of the barrow. From previous research it appears to have been quite a common practice in the Peak District for Romano-British citizens to bury their relatives on high points, reutilising existing prehistoric barrows if they existed in the chosen burial sites.

3.5 - Bateman - simple - regional importance.

Thomas Batemans excavation of Barrow number two.

3.6 - Modern - very simple - local importance.

The sites use during the Second World War as a practise area and the mining activity which caused the site to be excavated in the first place.

4.0 Summary of Sites Importance

The site taken as a whole unit is obviously of National importance being one of a kind. The rodent

bones are of greater significance than originally anticipated with researchers from Bradford, Manchester and Liverpool University's all wanting to undertake research on them. The current estimate for quantities of rodent bone is 320,000 at 4mm sort.

At the regional level the site is probably the most important site, second only to Arbour Low, in the Peak District and is certainly the most important site at local level (the White Peak).

The sites only short comings were its heavy truncation by natural elements leading to blurring of some of the precise interfaces that would have been found in stratigraphy at any other location, and, the haste at which the site had to be excavated. The excavation has however given archaeology a very important site and enough material has been retrieved through the enforcement of saturation sample taking to yield a reasonably sound chronological and social report of events at Longstone Edge spanning the millennia of Neolithic to present day.

5.0 - Archive Deposition

At present the archive is held at Fort Cumberland by the Central Archaeology Service for English Heritage. When all analysis is complete it will be deposited with Sheffield City Museum. This is stated with permission having been received from Laportte Minerals, the landowners and the Regional curator's, the Peak Park Joint Planning Board (Archaeology Service's Manager Ken Smith). At some later date the curator of the area may wish the archive to be deposited at Bakewell (the Peak Park Exhibition Centre).

Due to the academic interest shown by the various University's any discard policy will be reviewed upon completion of analysis. Although most of the material archive must be retained the rodent bones could be jettisoned, it may be worth considering the idea that they should be deposited with one of the interested institutions for further analysis.

6.0 - Publication

The preferred option is to publish the excavation report in the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society. Because of the sites importance it is envisaged that a number of theoretical and factual papers will be presented to other Journals, for example Antiquity and Nature. Due to the sites possible pan European significance an article for the European Association of Archaeologist's annual publication must also be considered.