

Carterton East (CACE18) Metalwork

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A single copper alloy awl was discovered during the excavations at Carterton East. The awl was discovered in context 20002, the sole fill of cremation pit 20001 from in the centre of ring-ditch 20000, radiocarbon to the middle Bronze Age. The object is not burnt, and could not have been on the pyre during cremation.

The awl is just 0.3g in weight, 24mm in length, and 2mm in width on the widest point, along the tang. The object is essentially complete, although there is very minor modern damage to both the tips of the point and tang. The object was examined with a binocular microscope at 10x and 20x magnification and no traces of use-wear were evident. It is common for early Bronze Age awls to be in a slightly worn or fresh state (Woodward and Hunter 2013, 95).

The awl conforms to Thomas's (2005) Group 2A. These are awls that are single-pointed with a chisel-ended tang, with the point end circular in section. Group 2A have tangs that were formed by hammering/squashing, and Group 2B have tangs formed by filing or grinding (Woodward and Hunter 2013, 89).

A recent survey of early Bronze Age awls found that those of Group 2A/B were 24.2-42.2mm in length, although had a wider size variation at the width (Woodward and Hunter 2015, 89). The Carterton awl therefore is at the very smallest end of this range. The transition between the point and the tang is approximately halfway along the object, and the tang and point are therefore the same size. The tangs of Group 2A/B awls tend to be shorter than the point (Woodward and Hunter 2015, Table 4.6.3), although the relative longer tang on the Carterton example might in part be explained by its rather diminutive size.

It has been noted that awls of Group 2A/B tend to occur with Collared Urns, and buried with women (Woodward and Hunter 2015, 89). It is of note that a Collared Urn sherd was found in the base of ring-ditch 20000 around the cremation, and two sherds with a very similar fabric were found in cremation pit 20001 associated with the awl.

Awls are also present in the middle and late Bronze Age and generally conform to Group 2A/B in shape (Coombs 2001, 287-8; Cunliffe 1970, 10-1; Drewett 1980, 382; Needham 1986, 141-2; PAS, WILT-038191; Rowlands 1976, 48; O'Connor 1991, 235). The lack of typological variation in this object type precludes accurate dating on form alone, although the Carterton example appears to be significantly smaller than the later Bronze Age awls.

Overall, an early Bronze Age date is probable although it is possible that the object belongs to the later Bronze Age.

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