

# Reconsidering the Neolithic Round Barrows of Eastern Yorkshire

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## Introduction

Throughout much of lowland England it is usually the long barrows which dominate our evidence for early Neolithic funerary practices. In their appearance they are an extremely heterogeneous group of sites, yet such variability is often seen to be secondary to the similarities in their overall shape, size and layout (Ashbee 1984; Kinnes 1975). The result is that acts of burial and commemoration in our accounts of this period often appear to be exclusively framed and mediated by the basic architectural features which are common to these monuments (Barrett 1988, 34-6). However, the uplands of eastern Yorkshire (fig. 1) is one of the few areas where these sites must be considered alongside a distinct form of Neolithic funerary monument which appears to have little in common with the standard architectural repertoire of the long barrows. The region contains a large concentration of burial sites which have round rather than long mounds. At these monuments the dead were often placed in pits and shafts rather than the more architecturally complex linear chambers commonly associated with the long barrows (Kinnes 1979). Their design and appearance is therefore in direct contrast with the long barrows which were also located across this region, and while these sites are known from elsewhere in lowland England the earliest dated round barrows are from eastern Yorkshire. Their chronological primacy is illustrated by the three sites which have produced a series of dates which range between about 3900BC to 3600BC (Brewster 1984; Kinnes 1979, 13; Smith 1974, 132; Walker *et al* 1991, 107). It is evident, in other words, that the earliest of these monuments were in fact contemporary with many of the long barrows known from the region.

The importance of these general observations should not be underestimated. The presence of both long and round barrows in eastern Yorkshire could suggest that there were two distinct traditions of burial monument which were chronologically parallel with one another for at least a part of the early Neolithic. The contrasts in the shape, size and layout of these monuments has certainly been seen as emphasizing the difference between

'collective' and 'individual' burial rites in that a basic distinction can be made between these barrow types in terms of the treatment of the human body (Bradley and Edmonds 1993, 28; Manby 1963, 198). It is apparent that 94% of the long barrows from eastern Yorkshire with mortuary evidence either contained the disarticulated remains of a relatively large number of individuals or a crematorium deposit. This contrasts with the round barrows of the region since 69% of those sites with appropriate evidence covered fully articulated burials of usually between one and three individuals. The development of these funerary practices has therefore been portrayed as representing a radical departure from the social 'collectivity' celebrated at many of the long barrows, and the impression of a break with existing tradition is accentuated by the common association of these burials with grave goods and in some instances Towthorpe Ware (Manby 1970, 21). The round barrows are seen to be indicative of a newly emerging elite whose ascendancy is illustrated by the eventual replacement of earlier funerary practices with those which commemorate the individual at death (Pierpoint 1980, 212-42). It seems that this new funerary rite and associated form of monument construction was to continue in use throughout the later Neolithic (Manby 1988, 59; Thorpe and Richards 1988, 72).

The character of this transformation in mortuary practices is demonstrated by the substantial evidence for the overlap between these two traditions. There are at least three long barrows in eastern Yorkshire which contained burial remains reminiscent of those normally associated with round barrows. The site of Kilham, for instance, has been dated to between 3700-3500BC and was associated with five crouched inhumations (Manby 1976; Kinnes 1992, 42). The complexity of the relationship between these two traditions is more strikingly evident when we consider that at least eight of the excavated round barrows are known to have contained crematoria or disarticulated burials in linear chambers or on pavement, and a number of these sites are associated with structural components, such as facades and mortuary enclosures, which generally accompanied long barrows (Kinnes 1979, 58-63; 1992, 84ff; Manby 1963, 196; 1970, 14-5). The

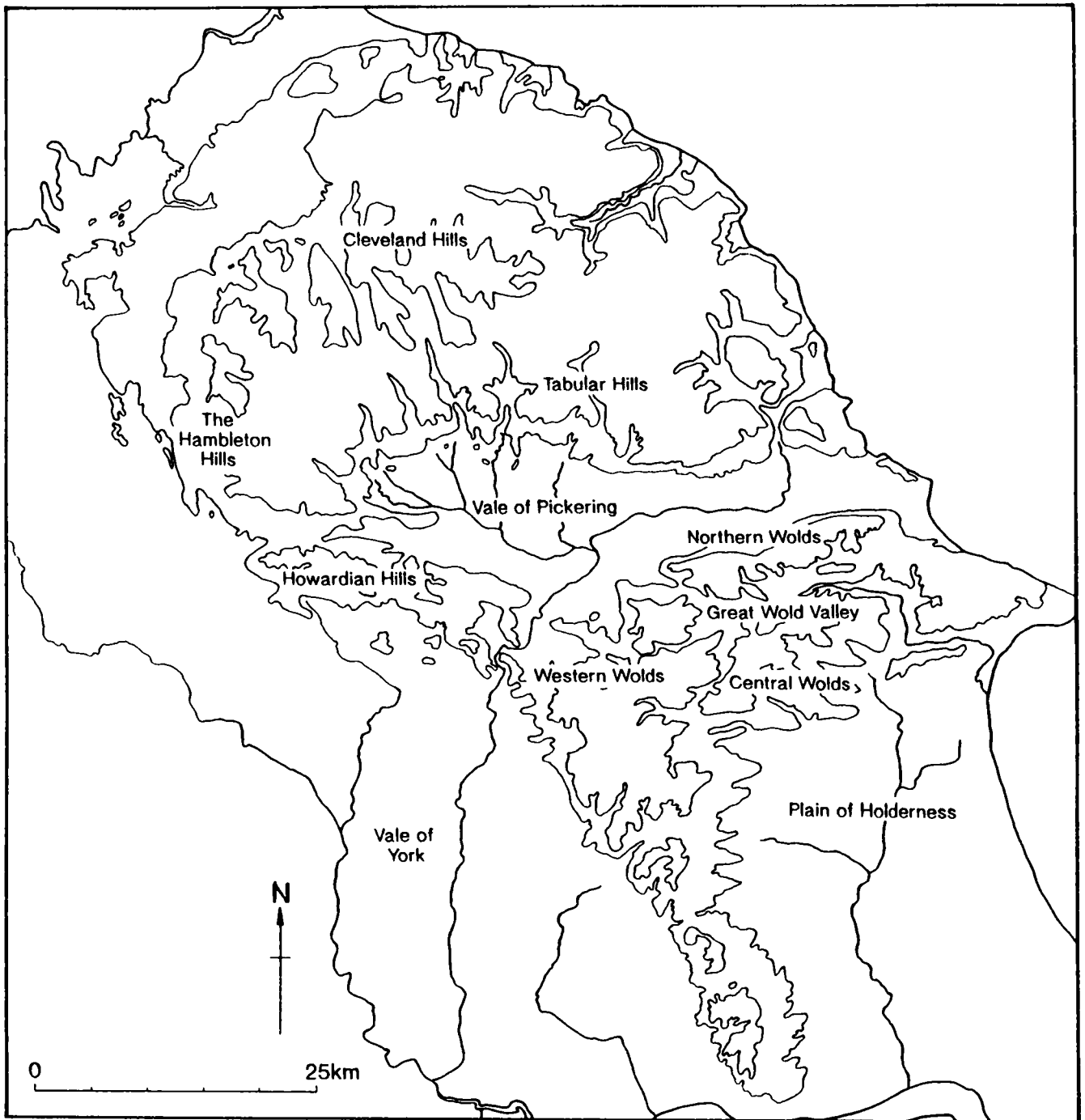


Fig. 1. The parts of eastern Yorkshire mentioned in the text.

similarities between some of the long and round barrows has a significant implication. They suggest that the study of mortuary practices in eastern Yorkshire should not assume to separate the burial evidence into a series of simplistic contrasts such as that between 'communal' and 'individual'. It is important, in other words, that the two types of monument and their associated burial rites are not opposed to the extent that one is discussed without reference to the other. It certainly seems that the development of the round barrows can not be considered as a strategy for commemorating the dead which was unaffected by existing practices, while on the other hand the newly emerging burial rite was represented at the later long barrows. It is evident, however, that while the available evidence illustrates the complexity of the relationship between these monument traditions this is an area of research which remains largely unexplored. The purpose of this paper is to extend the scope of present research by examining the fundamental but apparently gradual transformations which occurred in the funerary strategies employed across the upland landscapes of eastern Yorkshire during the early Neolithic.

There are significant problems associated with any detailed interpretation of the changing mortuary traditions in eastern Yorkshire. There are certainly limitations with the quality of much of the recorded evidence, and it seems that agricultural practices since the Roman period could have destroyed a large number of barrows along the valleys and surrounding dale slopes of the Yorkshire Wolds (Manby 1980; Pierpoint 1980, 13-5). On the other hand, the relatively high levels of antiquarian and more recent excavation in this region have generated evidence from a large number of sites, and it is this very quality which could enable the identification of basic differences between the groups of surviving burial monuments. The focus of this study will therefore be the relationship between changing funerary practices and the distribution of burial monuments. I wish to stand back from the details of individual sites, since this information is widely reported in the existing literature, and adopt a more general approach to the evidence. I will argue that the location of burial monuments was significantly altered during the Neolithic and that this can be related to the transformations in funerary practices. It seems that the link between the distribution of these sites and the allied burial evidence adds considerably to an understanding of the developing round barrow tradition, and that the history of these monuments illustrates an increasing concern by social groups with the expression of their own unique ancestry and identity.

## **Alternative funerary traditions in Eastern Yorkshire**

The siting of both the long and round barrows in eastern Yorkshire is distinctive and a brief examination of their distribution is enough to identify distinct groups of monuments (fig. 2). The barrows to the north of the region can be divided into three obvious concentrations. The

most spatially extensive of these is located along the escarpment edge of the Tabular Hills with the low-lying Vale of Pickering to the south. They form distinct clusters of sites which are divided by topographically impressive valley systems. Their distribution then skirts the high central sandstone of the North Yorkshire Moors with most of the barrows located on either the gently sloping Cleveland Hills to the north or the elevated valley heads of the Hambleton Hills to the west. The greater concentration of burial monuments on the Yorkshire Wolds presents a more complex pattern, but a discontinuous distribution can again be identified. The location of many of the barrows along the edges or heads of the dales and slacks which dissect the chalk upland effectively divides their distribution into distinct groups. They form clusters on either side and at the head of the Great Wold Valley, and those to the north are sited along the high escarpment edge of the chalkland which overlooks the Vale of Pickering. A similarly striking distribution is evident with a large group of barrows on the western wolds which look out over the Howardian Hills and Vale of York in one direction and the Plain of Holderness in the other. Finally, there are a number of barrows located in more low-lying situations. This includes a group of sites at the extreme eastern end of the Howardian Hills on Langton Wold and a discrete concentration at the bottom of the southern wolds escarpment.

It is therefore apparent that the burial monuments of this region are located across a number of topographically distinct landscapes and this assumes more importance if we distinguish between the distribution of long and round barrows. At a general level of observation there are a similar number of the former monuments on the uplands to the north and south of the Vale of Pickering. The round barrows, on the other hand, are not so equally distributed on either side of this low-lying corridor with 83% of all known sites located on the Yorkshire Wolds. At a more local level it is evident that each of the discrete groups which can be identified consist of a clear majority of either round barrows or long barrows. The most northerly of these concentrations, on the Cleveland and Hambleton Hills, are totally dominated by long barrows. The only round barrow is that of Great Ayton Moor, located some distance from the sites found to the north and west of the central moors, and it is significant that this monument displays many similarities with the long barrows of the area (Kinnes 1992, 83; Manby 1970, 16). The other round barrows which occur in this half of eastern Yorkshire are all sited on the southern periphery of the Tabular Hills and are usually downslope from the long barrows of this group. However, the latter still clearly outnumber the round barrows (68% and 32% respectively). The proportions of these two monument types is only reversed on the other side of the Vale of Pickering where 67% of those sites located along the northern edge of the Yorkshire Wolds are round barrows. This situation is continued elsewhere on the chalkland and 74% of the sites at the head of the Great Wold Valley and across the western half of this upland are round rather than long barrows. The exception to this pattern is a discrete concentration in the

central wolds where the latter again outnumber the former by 71% to 29%. It is also apparent that the three most southerly monuments are all long barrows.

The identification of such spatial patterning can be clearly linked with differences in the associated mortuary practices. The long barrows which are known to have exclusively possessed crematoria and disarticulated burial remains are widely scattered across the region (fig.3). There is, however, a concentration of such sites on the central and northern part of the Yorkshire Wolds, with a further two sites in the low-lying area to the south. On the other hand, it appears that those sites which contained complete inhumations are concentrated in different parts of eastern Yorkshire. As fig.3 illustrates, the only long barrows with such deposits are to be found along the southern edge of the Tabular Hills at Cropton, although

one of these two sites additionally contained disarticulated human remains (Kinnes 1992, 44). There is also the example of Kilham on the south east edge of the wolds, although it has been suggested that the articulated but disturbed inhumations at this site represent an unfired crematorium deposit (Manby 1963, 194-5). In contrast, most of the round barrows which covered complete inhumations are located at the head of the Great Wold Valley and across the western half of the chalk upland (fig.4). There are eight sites from this area with just such burial deposits - Aldro 94 and C75, Callis Wold 275, Duggleby Howe, Huggate Wold 229 and 230, Painsthorpe 118, and Towthorpe 18 - and the round mounds at Aldro 88 and Painsthorpe 99 contained both complete and disarticulated inhumations. It is also worth noting that the sites of Whitegrounds, Hedon Howe and Langton II were

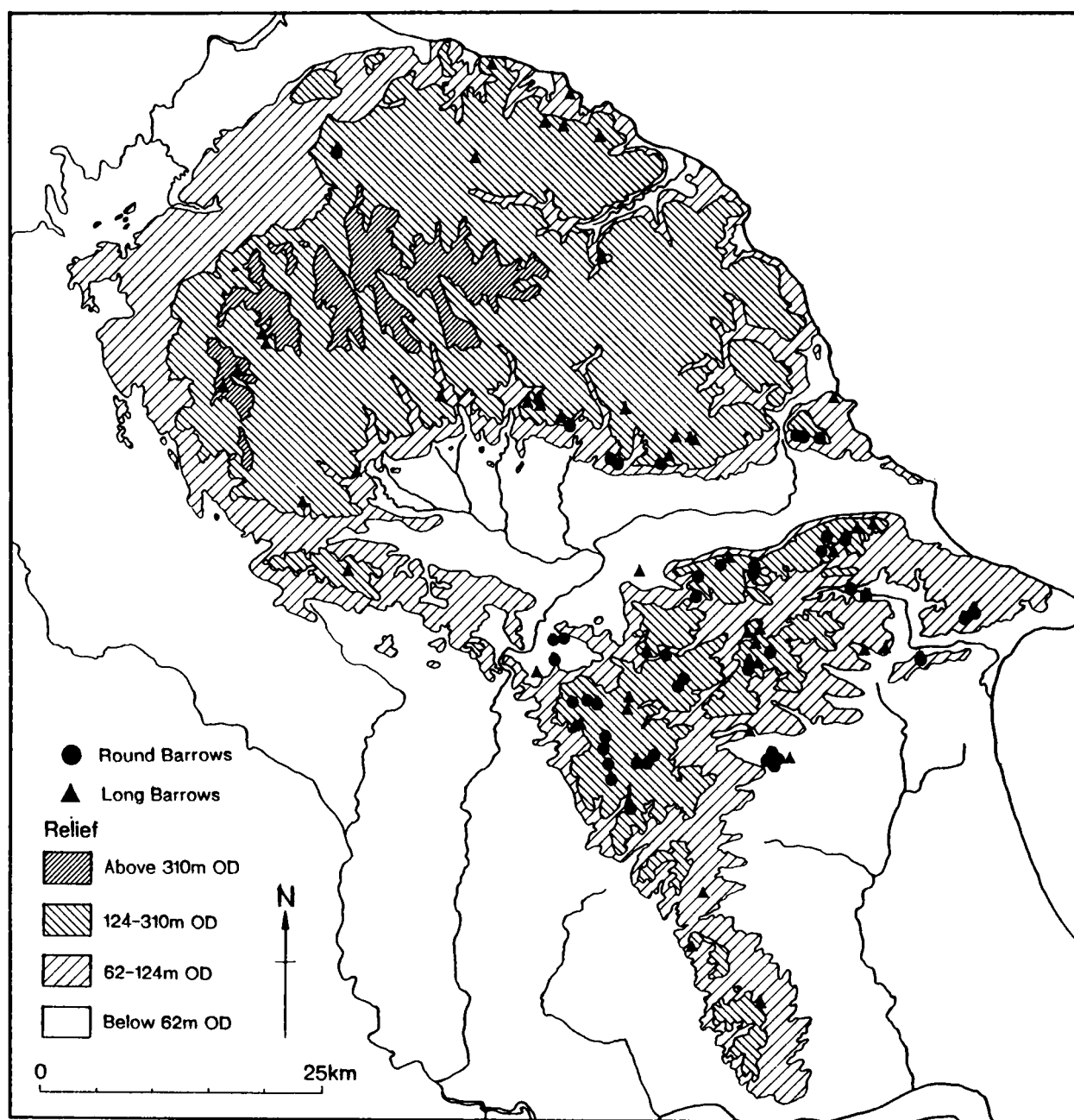


Fig. 2. The distribution of long and round barrows in eastern Yorkshire.

all associated with articulated inhumations, and that these monuments are located on Langton Wold immediately to the north west of this concentration. Those other round barrows from eastern Yorkshire with such burial deposits include the low-lying site of Garton Slack 112, adjacent to the southern edge of the central wolds, and Elf Howe and Wold Newton 284 to the east of the chalk upland. There is also the monument at Pickering to the east of the Tabular Hills. This is the only round barrow from the northern half of the region which is known to have contained complete inhumation burials.

It appears that one of the most striking of the above contrasts is between the group of monuments on the western edge of the Yorkshire chalkland, in which I will include those round barrows at the head of the Great Wold Valley, and the other discrete concentrations of sites for which there is available burial information. The former area contains the highest proportion of round to long mounds and is largely associated with individual burial at the expense of other mortuary practices. Indeed, if we consider that Huggate Wold 224 and Warter 254 - located on the southern edge of the western wolds - might be denuded long mounds (Kinnes 1992, 18-9, 90; Manby 1970, 15), then it would seem possible that the round barrows of this area exclusively covered individual interments. This is in contrast with the nearby group of sites on the central wolds which consists mainly of long barrows associated with crematoria or disarticulated human bone. The only example of an articulated burial deposit were the four adults found in association with a large number of disarticulated remains at the Cowlam LVII round barrow (Kinnes 1979, 13, 17). The western wolds group can also be clearly differentiated from the monuments located along the northern part of the chalk upland. While the latter group includes a far higher percentage of round barrows when compared to the central wolds, it seems evident that these sites are again more readily associated with disarticulated rather than articulated burial deposits. The round barrows of Heslerton and Sherburn VIII contained the disarticulated remains of 14 and at least 5 individuals respectively, and while Sherburn VII was associated with a number of articulated inhumations there was also a large amount of disarticulated human bone (*ibid*, 12-3, 15). The only exception to this overall pattern is the single male burial at Elf Howe, to the extreme east of the group, although the round barrow at Rookdale contained 19 inhumations in what was an unspecified state of burial (*ibid*, 17, 20).

These differences between the western wolds and other parts of eastern Yorkshire may have chronological implications. The available radiocarbon evidence from the region suggests that the long barrows which covered crematoria or disarticulated remains might possibly have earlier origins than sites with complete inhumations. The determinations from Kemp Howe, Garton Slack 37, and Willerby Wold produce a chronological range which dates each of these long barrows from the first quarter of the fourth millennium BC, while Raisthorpe has been dated to between 4475-4250BC (Kinnes 1992, 42, 117). In contrast, the round barrows at Callis Wold 275 and

Whitegrounds 1 both covered articulated burials and have been dated to 3900-3500BC (Manby 1988, 46). However, while the available evidence suggests an element of chronological distinction between the onset of these different burial deposits such a division seems more likely if we consider that Callis Wold 275 and Whitegrounds 1 may both be early round barrows. These two monuments contain a relatively large number of inhumation burials in association with structural features which are reminiscent of the long barrows. A rectangular platform of flat stones at Callis Wold 275 contained eleven closely packed inhumations and was surrounded by a facade and a rear bedding-trench (Coombs 1976). At Whitegrounds an entrance grave was associated with three decapitated inhumations and the disturbed remains of a further five individuals (Brewster 1984). Therefore, on the basis on this admittedly limited evidence it appears that the numbers of articulated individuals which were buried together may have decreased during the Neolithic, and at Whitegrounds this view is emphasized by a single inhumation in a grave pit which has produced the significantly earlier date of between 3350-3050BC. This conclusion is important if we reconsider those round barrows located on the western half of the wolds for which there is burial evidence. A striking five out of six were associated with graves which contained either one or two individuals, and if these were notably later than the earliest round barrows then it seems likely that the western part of the chalk upland may have assumed increasing importance as a location for burial monuments.

The possibility of a decline during the Neolithic in the number of individuals interred under round barrows receives additional support if we consider the dating of the grave goods found with the burials. A detailed examination by Kinnes (1979) of these artefacts in relation to their associated mortuary features has produced a chronological seriation which consists of six stages. This can be employed to illustrate that those sites with between one and three complete inhumations are usually later than those with a greater number of individual burials. The round barrows at Callis Wold 275, Towthorpe 18 and Wold Newton 284 contain the fully articulated remains of eleven, six and five individuals respectively, and the grave goods at these sites have been assigned to the first half of the sequence (stages A-C) when mortuary structures appear to be largely allied to those documented from the long barrows. It should also be noted that Aldro 88, Cowlam LVII, Hedon Howe, Heslerton, and Painsthorpe 99 contained multiple burials in at least a partly-disarticulated state. These sites were similarly associated with grave goods which have been classified to stages A-C, although the complexity of the Cowlam LVII deposit is evident when we consider the apparent association of these burials with artefacts which belong to stages B-E. In contrast, those round barrows with between just one and three articulated burials all contain grave goods which can be classified to the second half of the sequence. In terms of conventional chronology this is generally the period of the later Neolithic, and it is at this time that there appears to have been a distinct shift from the use of mortuary structures

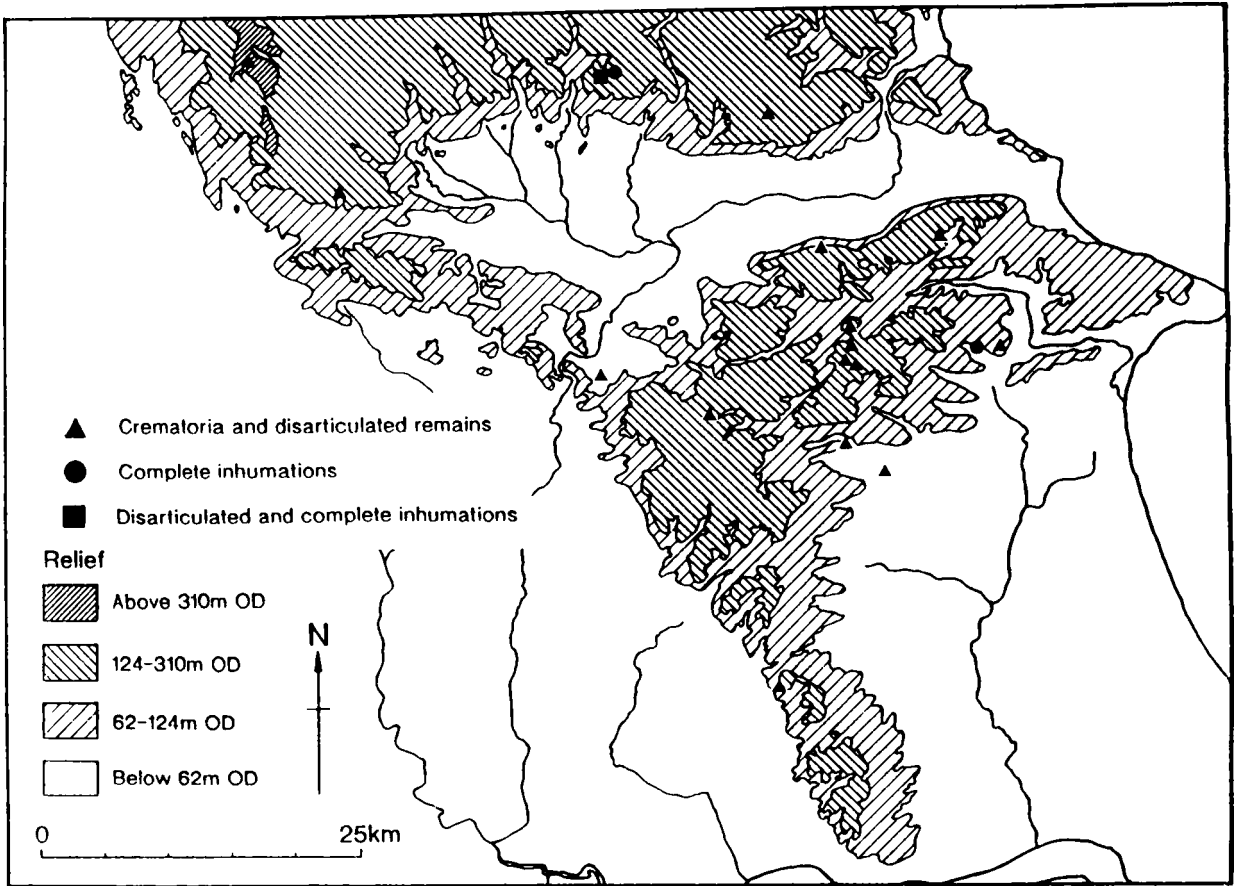


Fig. 3. The distribution of long barrows with excavated burial deposits.

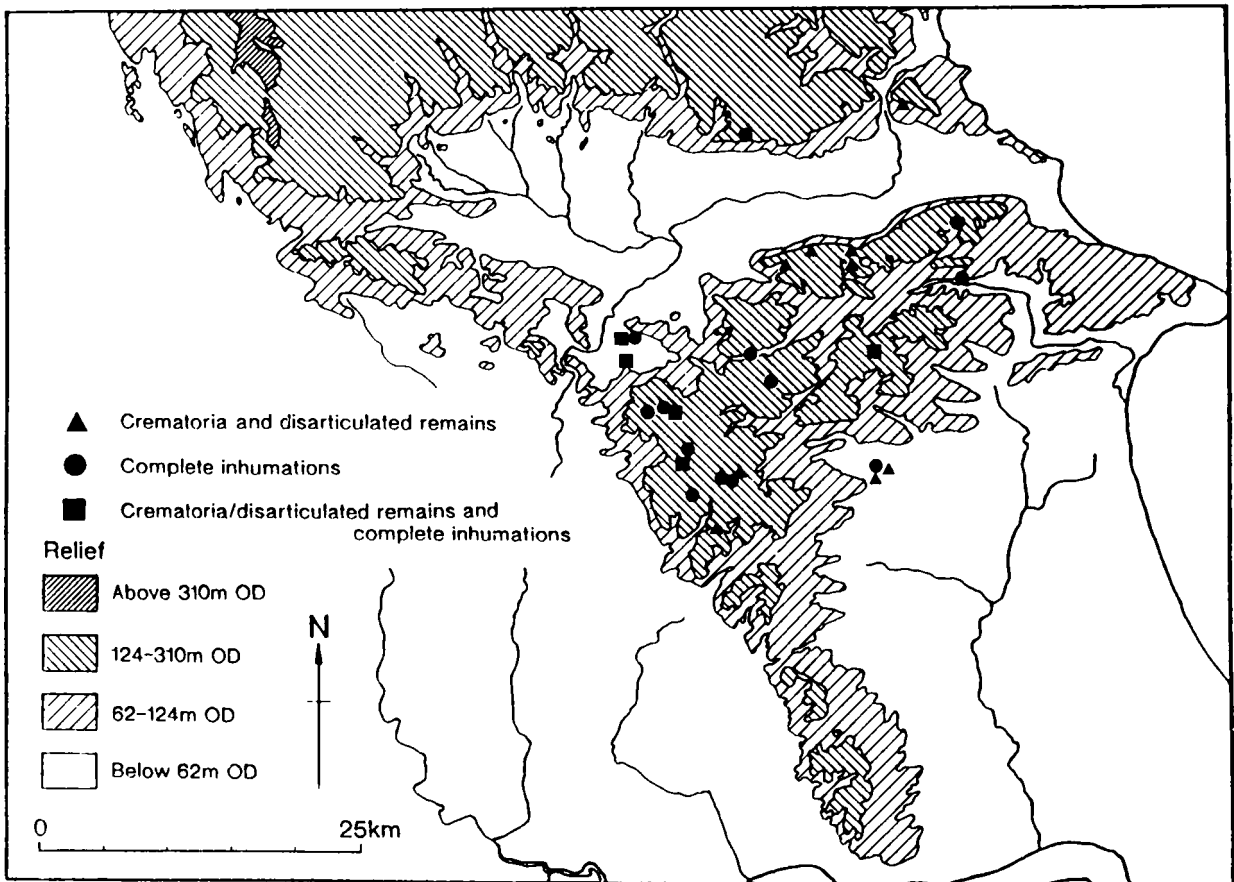


Fig. 4. The distribution of round barrows with excavated burial deposits.

which are characteristic of long barrows. The round barrows of Aldro 94 and C75, Garton Slack 112, Huggate 230, Painsthorpe 118, and Pickering are all associated with artefacts which can be assigned to Stages C-F. It is noticeable that four of these six sites are located on the western part of the wolds (fig.5), and while the nearby round barrow of Duggleby Howe contains a relatively large number of individual interments, each of the separate grave deposits contained no more than three inhumations (Manby 1988, 65).

The evidence suggests, in other words, that the majority of the monuments distributed across the western part of the chalk upland may indeed be later in date than other burial sites found elsewhere in eastern Yorkshire. While this group includes the exceptionally early long barrow of Raisthorpe the only other site which has been dated to the earlier Neolithic is the round barrow of Callis Wold 275. Rather, the monuments across this part of the chalkland, including those sites at the head of the Great Wold Valley, generally date from stage C of the sequence outlined by Kinnes. This clearly presents a contrast with those dated round barrows located elsewhere in the Yorkshire Wolds. The latter includes the sites of Heselton and Wold Newton 284, both of which have produced grave goods which can be assigned to stages A-C. Furthermore, the burial deposits at these two monuments clearly contrasts with the sites in the western Wold group. Wold Newton 284 was associated with five closely grouped inhumations while Heselton contained a minimum of fourteen individuals in an apparently disarticulated state (Kinnes 1979, 12-3). The remaining dated round barrows of Cowlam LVII and Garton Slack 112 present a possible complication to these contrasting patterns since they can be dated to Stages B-E and E-F respectively. However, the development of the former site may still predate most of the round barrows across the western chalkland, as is perhaps illustrated by the relatively large number of incomplete and disarticulated burial remains found under the mound (*ibid*, 61). The monument of Garton Slack 112 is clearly a late round barrow (*ibid*, 18), but it should be noted that its siting on the southern periphery of the chalk upland places it some distance from most of the other round barrows.

It is apparent, therefore, that the western group of monuments is clearly distinct from those other clusters of burial sites on account of their chronology and the associated mortuary deposits. When this is considered alongside the differing ratios of long and round barrows from elsewhere in the region it seems evident that none of the topographically discrete site clusters can be described as representative for eastern Yorkshire. This conclusion gains further support if we consider those monuments sited on the Tabular Hills. I have already mentioned that this is where all but one of the round barrows to the north of the Vale of Pickering are located, and the association of the area with both traditions of burial is clearly demonstrated by those excavated sites which have produced mortuary evidence. A radiocarbon determination at Ayton East Field and associated pottery at Seamer Moor indicate that both of these round barrows are perhaps early

in the sequence for these monuments (*ibid*, 10; 1992, 84). This certainly appears to be reiterated by the crematoria found at the sites, yet each of these was unusually associated with the remains of only several individuals. Furthermore, the round barrow at Pickering covers a relatively small burial deposit which consists of just an adult and two children in separate graves (Kinnes 1979, 16). It is also noteworthy that three of the four excavated long barrows in this group are known to have contained articulated burial deposits. The two monuments at Cropton were associated with three and two individuals respectively, and while Howe Hill contained a crematorium with the remains of a large number of individuals an articulated adult burial was found in a grave which was underneath this funerary feature (Kinnes 1992, 44). In contrast, the two excavated long barrows of Kilburn and Kepwich Moor in the Howardian Hills were associated with a crematorium and disarticulated burial deposits respectively (*ibid*, 43).

It is possible to identify four general phases of development, albeit with significant chronological overlap, on the basis of the above evidence. What were perhaps the earliest burial monuments in the region, the long barrows with crematoria or disarticulated human remains, are distributed widely throughout eastern Yorkshire. There are examples from the Howardian and Tabular Hills, as well as the Yorkshire Wolds, and it perhaps seems likely that similar burial deposits are associated with at least some of the unexcavated long barrows sited on the northern fringe of the Cleveland Hills. It is evident, in other words, that with the exception of the concentration on the central wolds these monuments are evenly distributed across these areas. In contrast, the apparently earlier round barrows seem to more readily concentrate across selective parts of the region. While those monuments with crematoria and disarticulated burial deposits were also widely distributed they do cluster in specific landscapes while generally avoiding the upland area to the north of the Vale of Pickering. The concentrations consist of three round barrows from the northern wolds and two low-lying examples at Garton Slack, although one of the former and the two latter might be unrecognized long barrows (*ibid*, 84; Manby 1963, 196-7; 1970, 14-5). This tendency towards a spatially restricted distribution is more clearly demonstrated when we consider the third general phase of development. All but one of those round barrows with over three complete individuals are to be found across the central and northern wolds. The distribution of these early round barrows therefore suggests that the eastern half of the chalk upland had a particular association with earlier Neolithic mortuary practices, and this is reiterated if we consider the location of those sites which are known to have structural features reminiscent of the long barrows (fig.6). A relatively high proportion of the excavated round barrows in this area covered embanked mortuary areas, other forms of linear chambers, and surrounding enclosures (Brewster 1984; Coombs 1976; Kinnes 1979, 60-3; 1992, 90; Manby 1970, 17; 1980, 39, 43). However, the most striking evidence for this possible contraction in the areas which

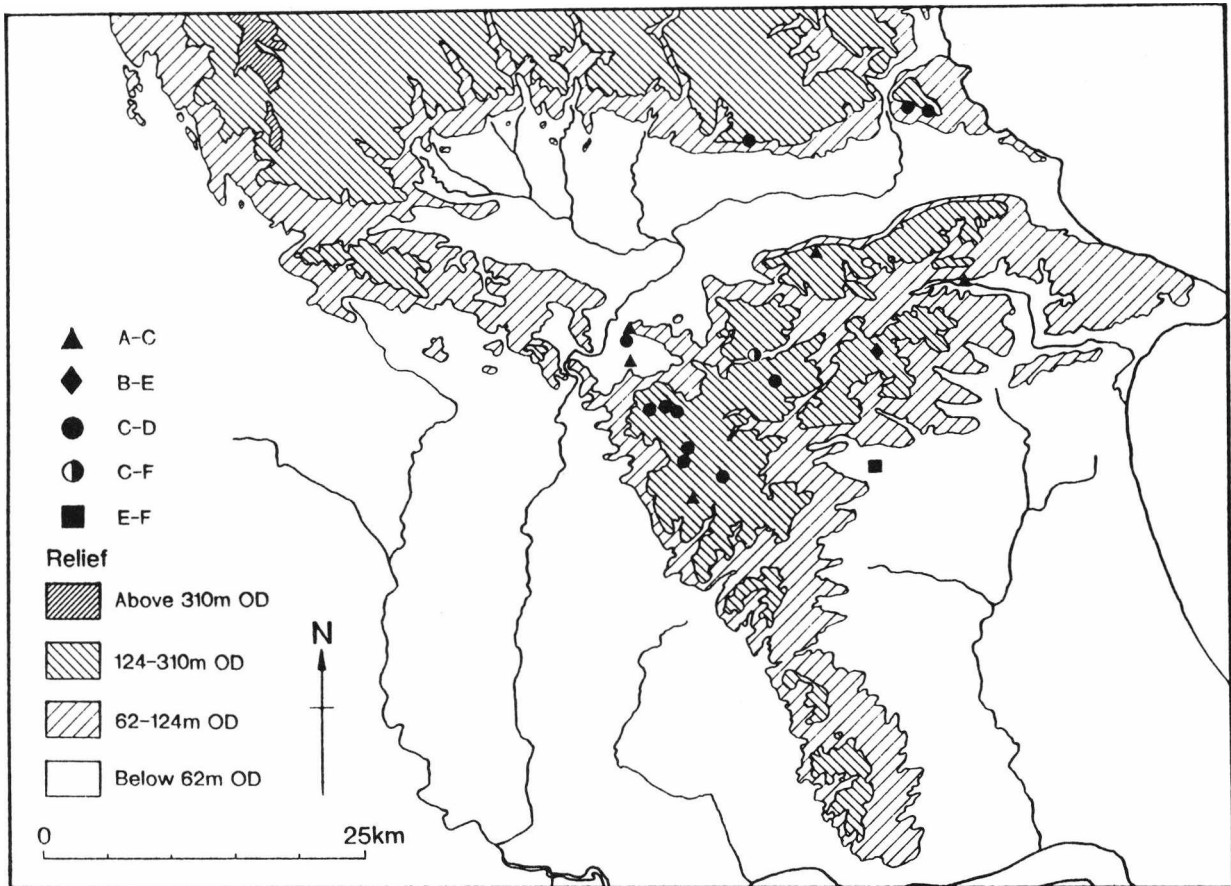


Fig. 5. The distribution of round barrows with dated grave goods.

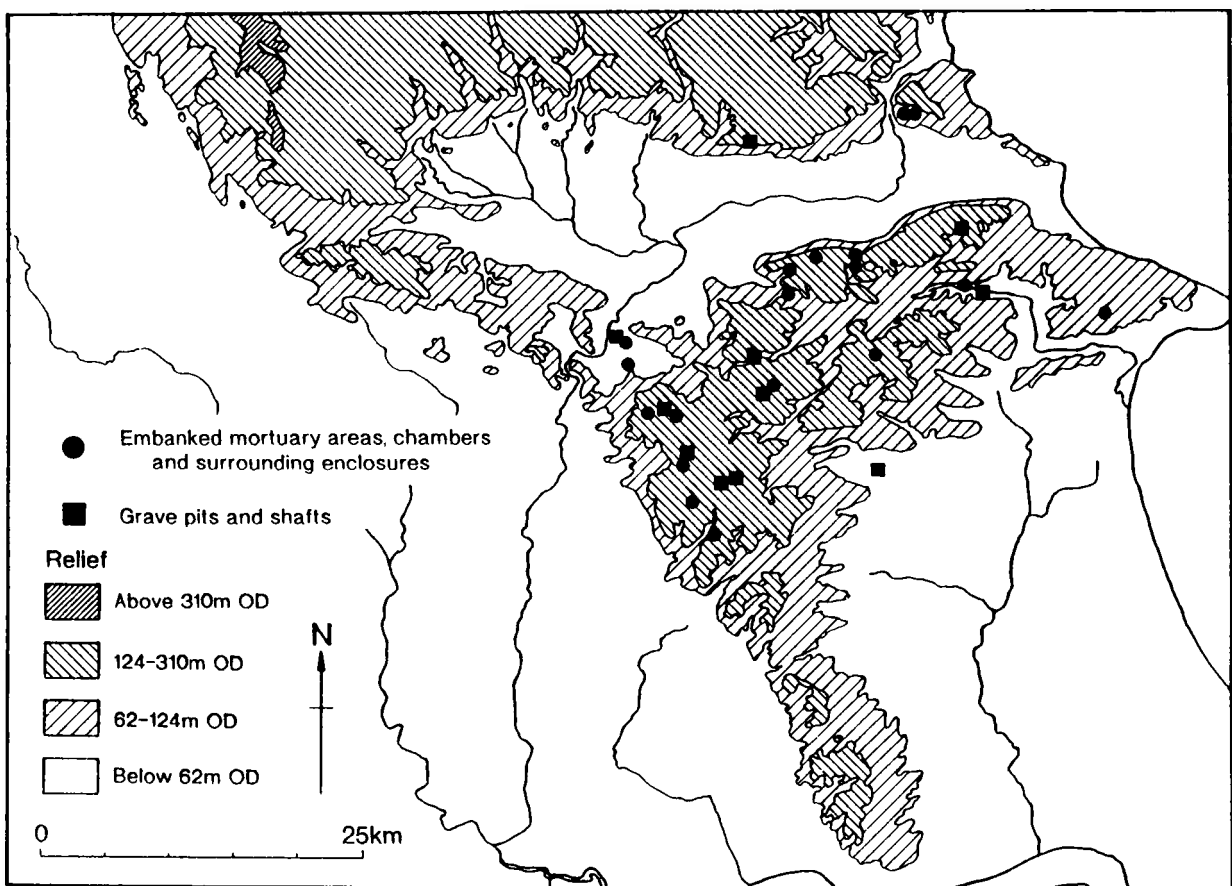


Fig. 6. The distribution of round barrows with various structural features.



were selected for acts of burial and monumental commemoration is provided by those sites which belong to the last of the four phases of development. It is evident that the majority of the round barrows which contain less than three individual burials are located on the western part of the chalk upland, and the distinction between these sites, and those elsewhere, is also illustrated by their common association with grave pits or shafts and not mortuary features allied to the long barrows (fig.6).

## Round barrows and social developments in Eastern Yorkshire

The available evidence accordingly provides a spatial and temporal framework for the development of mortuary practices during the Neolithic. It is possible to identify a series of geographical shifts in the location of those funerary monuments which can be allied to chronologically distinct traditions of burial. This is particularly apparent with those round barrows which are generally considered to date to the later Neolithic. However, such a diachronic approach to the existing mortuary evidence needs to be combined with a more comprehensive discussion of the Neolithic in eastern Yorkshire. The most striking aspect of the four general phases of development which I have suggested for the region is the basic contrast between those barrow groups across the eastern and western half of the Wolds. This distinction seems to represent a chronological development in the distribution of burial sites and this could be related to a possible contraction in the pattern of settlement. It has been noted elsewhere that many of the high quality artefacts which are associated with some of the later round barrows can also be found as surface finds which concentrate on the eastern part of the chalkland around the Great Wold Valley. The distribution of polished axes and scrapers, transverse arrowheads, stone maceheads, and polished flint knives are all strongly clustered near to the remarkable complex of monuments at Rudston (Manby 1974; Pierpoint 1980, 273). Most of the known later round barrows are therefore sited in areas which are peripheral to these artefact concentrations, and it has been assumed that this high density of surface finds reflect the agricultural potential of this low-lying landscape (Manby 1988, 62). A possible implication is that these monuments were sited in economically marginal areas. Their distribution, in other words, could be a direct consequence of the patterns of subsistence across the chalkland. There are, however, many problems with such an explanation. It is certainly simplistic in that it fails to account for the disproportionate numbers of later round barrows found across the western, central and northern wolds. Such an interpretation is also curious in that it extrapolates from general models of Neolithic land-use while failing to discuss the social implications of the transformation in funerary tradition.

Whether one accepts that the distribution of the round barrows was structured by such economic priorities - and there must be at least some doubt when we consider

recent reappraisals of the Neolithic economy (eg. Entwistle and Grant 1988; Moffett *et al* 1988) - it is important to assess those qualities which are characteristic of the western wolds when compared to other parts of the upland. It is immediately noticeable that this area is topographically distinct from the eastern half of the wolds. It is generally higher, with a more abrupt escarpment edge, and is dissected by a number of narrow and steeply sloping dales (fig.7). The rise and fall of the eastern half of the wolds, by contrast, is more gentle. This is apparent with even the most topographically dramatic section of this landscape, the ridge which runs to the north and overlooks the Vale of Pickering and the Great Wold Valley (fig.8). The later round barrows could have hence been concentrated across the western wolds simply because the topography was less suitable for extensive cultivation than other parts of the chalk upland. On the other hand, it is difficult to envisage what was probably a small-scale agricultural system requiring more than the large tracts of suitable land which would have been available from across this area. Such an interpretation is also limited in that it considers the landscape as possessing nothing more than an utilitarian function. I would therefore suggest that it is perhaps far more significant that these differences in topography imply that the actual physical setting of many round barrows on the eastern and western wolds would have been different. This can be clearly demonstrated by examining the elevation of the sites and their relationship with more low lying areas. While there is a common association between round barrows and the high ground of the dales (Manby 1970, 5), those monuments on the western wolds possess particularly dramatic settings and could have enjoyed extensive views across the surrounding vales and plains. This is best demonstrated by the sites of Aldro C75, 88 and 94, and Painsthorpe 99. These round barrows are all located near to the escarpment edge of the chalk upland.

The round barrows across the western wolds could illustrate an increasing concern with appropriating a striking locality for the siting of these monuments. Their spectacular setting would clearly enhance the perceived significance of these monuments and the associated acts of burial and commemoration. However, it is only when we consider the wider role of these monuments that this observation assumes its full importance. In contrast to the disarticulated remains or ancestral 'relics' which characterise the funerary practices of many long barrows, the immediate burial of complete and spatially distinct bodies may indicate the deliberate perpetuation of the individual 'ego' or a desired image after death (Thomas 1991, 116, 142). This would have been reiterated by the association of many of these inhumations with grave goods. These burial ceremonies would have produced a 'reading' which was probably orchestrated by the living descendants of the dead individual, and fixed in space and time by the subsequent construction of a commemorative mound (Barrett 1988, 38-40; 1990, 183-5). If we consider that it is highly unlikely that all the dead received such treatment it seems that the development of this tradition of burial constituted a strategy whereby the authority and

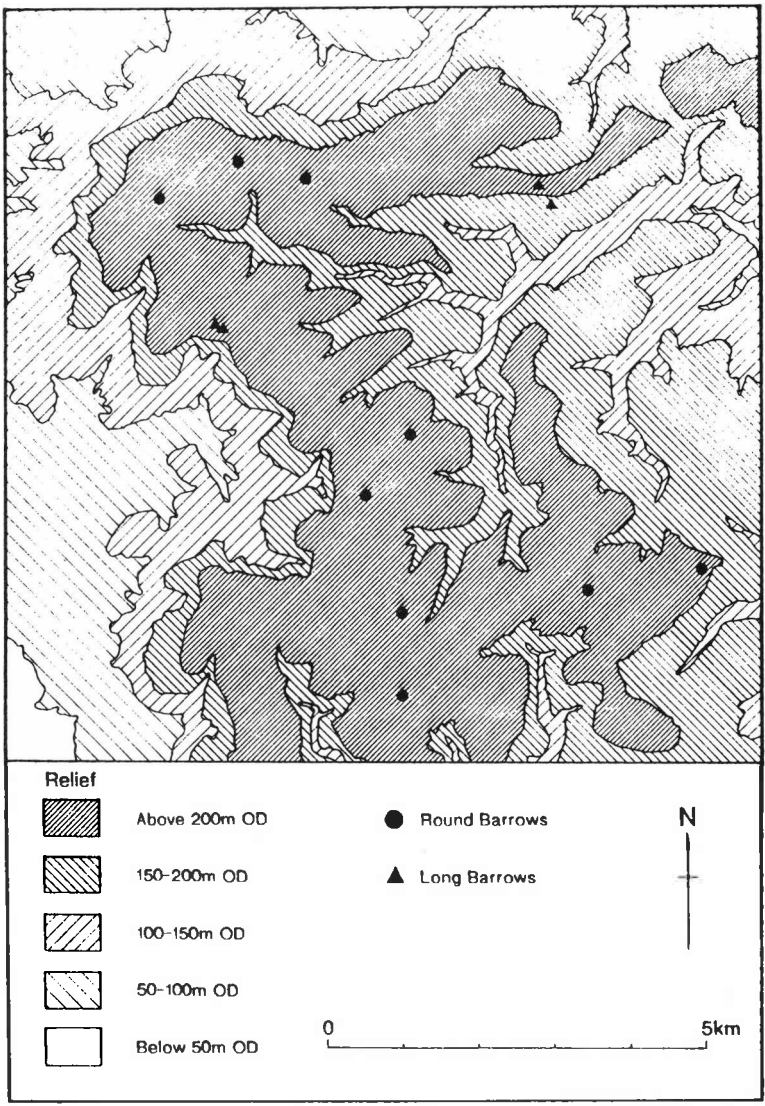


Fig. 7. The western wolds.

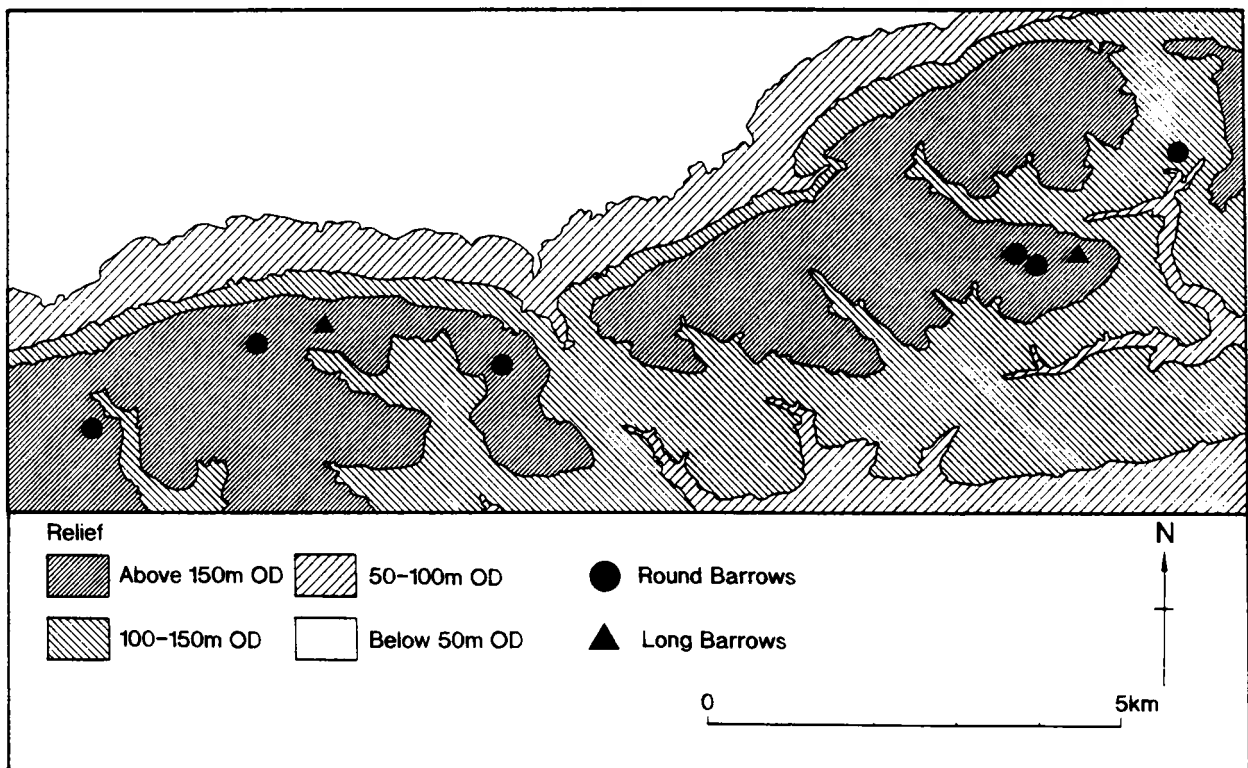


Fig. 8. The northern wolds.

power of specific groups and individuals became embedded in the landscape. The actual location of the round barrows on the western wolds could therefore be seen as a further attempt to enhance the poignancy of the desired image which was communicated to those attending the funeral. The physically impressive setting of the tombs would have contributed to the significance of the place, and consequently, the increasing importance of this area from the beginning of the later Neolithic could suggest that acts of social display were assuming greater prominence. This conclusion can certainly be linked to the relatively high number of quality grave goods found at the round barrows from the western wolds (Coombs 1976, 130; Kinnes 1979, 14; Kinnes *et al* 1983).

The nucleation and siting of many of the round barrows on the western wolds could illustrate the development of a new discourse in relations of power. This increasing concern with competition and display could also be demonstrated by an additional group of sites which are assumed to date to the latter half of the round barrow tradition. There are a series of six monuments, sited in relatively low lying locations across the chalk upland, which are clearly distinct from the other round barrows of this period. These so called 'Great Barrows' are characterized by their extremely large mound size (Manby 1988, 64), and the site of Duggleby Howe also produced a complex series of burials with a large collection of grave goods (Kinnes *et al* 1983). It is evident, in other words, that these sites similarly emphasise the transformation underway in eastern Yorkshire, albeit in a different way to those round barrows across the western wolds. While four of these monuments are located on valley bottoms their importance and symbolism is fixed in space and time by the mound size. This attempt to maximise the projected image of the dead, along with that of the living descendents, was reinforced at Duggleby Howe and Wold Newton 284 by a large enclosure which surrounds each of these commemorative barrows. Despite some uncertainty about the dates of the 'Great Barrows' - particularly when we consider the early grave goods and possible mortuary enclosure at Wold Newton 284 (Manby 1988, 65) - it appears possible that these sites are part of the same social processes which are represented by the majority of burial monuments across the western wolds. It certainly seems significant that all except Duggleby Howe are located some distance from the western wolds in markedly different topographic settings (*ibid*, fig. 4.10). This suggests that they are a direct counterpart to the latter group of round barrows.

It could therefore be argued that both the western group of later round barrows and the generally contemporary 'Great Barrows' illustrate a social dynamic whereby selected tracts of landscape assumed importance as places for overt social competition and display. This represents a marked shift from earlier practices when burial monuments were more widely distributed across eastern Yorkshire, and as such, may be related to a contraction in the pattern of settlement. If the evidence from around Rudston does indeed illustrate the existence of large population aggregations during the later Neolithic

this increase in the density of settlement may be closely related to the burial strategies which developed at this time. Individual social groups, each with their own sense of history, would more readily be in direct contact with each other. This potential increase in face to face interaction could have therefore led to strategies whereby greater importance was attached to overt demonstrations of ancestry and social power. It is clear, however, that these developments are part of a long term process which began with the interment of complete burials in selected long barrows and culminated with the widespread acceptance of a funerary tradition which was more readily suited to acts of social display. In contrast to the former group of monuments, where the burial remains were the result of deposition over a period of many years and therefore open to a renegotiation of meaning during successive visits to the site, individuals were now immediately sealed beneath a covering round mound. The finality of such an act constituted a mechanism whereby the genealogical authority of local elites would have become embedded within the perception and experience of local groups.

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