

The Grave Goods project database – detailed construction information

The Grave Goods project database (GGDB) is a relational Filemaker Pro database that uses as its starting point information from Historic Environment Records (HERs) for the six project case study areas (Cornwall, Dorset, East Yorkshire (Humber HER), Gwynedd and Anglesey, Kent, and Orkney and the Outer Hebrides (CANMORE, supplemented by information from individual island group HERs)). The database was designed by the Grave Goods team in consultation with digital consultant Christopher Green, who also built it. Where possible (HBSMR-using and Welsh HERs), HER Monument, Event, Source and Finds records were provided in xml or xls format for known or likely funerary sites (Table 6) and sites where funerary-related terms were identified in descriptive fields (Table 7), for the period 4000 BC to AD 43. In cases where individual HER officers identified significant potential for further funerary sites with grave goods to be identified beyond the key funerary site types (eg in Dorset), all data for the period 4000 BC to AD 43 was provided. CANMORE supplied a broadly equivalent dataset for Orkney and the Outer Hebrides in four separate tranches: information about 'sites', 'sites with notes and events', 'sites with events only' and 'sites highlighted via a free text search' using the same funerary-related terms mentioned above/listed below. Although we were interested only in funerary sites that were investigated at some level (via excavation or where funerary evidence was recovered and reported during development work), in practice HER Event information was too partial to allow us to select only information from excavated funerary monuments recorded only patchily and thus could not be used as a reliable indicator of whether or not a site had been investigated. All the records provided were mapped and uploaded directly into an interim FileMaker Pro database grouped around site-based records for initial refinement (Find, Event and Source records were attached to Monument records). Each site-based record (eg a round barrow) was assessed individually and all of the records associated with sites thought likely to have produced grave goods were transferred to the Grave Goods database.

Within the Grave Goods database, the basic HER information was enhanced using details from published period specific syntheses (eg Bristow 2001; Henshall 1972; Lynch 1970; Whimster 1981), other published accounts, grey-literature, online sources (eg the British Museum research database, Historic England research records, etc.) and unpublished information directly from fieldwork organisations and individual researchers. Site-based information was used to create individual records at 'grave', 'human remains' and 'object' levels. For instance where a site-based record existed for an Early Bronze Age round barrow, separate, related records were created for each grave within the round barrow, and then for each body and for each object buried within the grave. Where HER finds records representing individual grave goods existed already, these were retained and enhanced. Where excavated sites which produced grave goods which were not represented by an HER or CANMORE monument records, new site-based records were created. All monument, object and material terms used in the database were based on FISH vocabularies (<http://www.heritage-standards.org.uk/fish-vocabularies/>). These terms were either used directly or, where relevant, more specific terms were used and a record was kept of how these mapped onto SENESCHAL terms.

The following list of FISH 'funerary' monument search terms was given to HER officers to ensure broad consistency in the data provided:

BANK BARROW
BARROW
BARROW CEMETERY
BELL BARROW
BOWL BARROW
BURIAL
BURIAL CAIRN

BURIAL PIT
CAIRN
CAIRN CEMETERY
CAIRN CIRCLE
CAIRNFIELD
CART BURIAL
CAUSEWAYED RING DITCH
CEMETERY
CHAMBERED BARROW
CHAMBERED LONG BARROW
CHAMBERED CAIRN
CHAMBERED LONG CAIRN
CHAMBERED ROUND CAIRN
CHAMBERED TOMB
CINERARY URN
CIST
COFFIN
CONTRACTED INHUMATION
CREMATION
CREMATION BURIAL
CREMATION CEMETERY
CREMATION PIT
CROUCHED INHUMATION
D SHAPED BARROW
DISC BARROW
ENTRANCE GRAVE
ENCLOSED CREMATION CEMETERY
EXTENDED INHUMATION
FLEXED INHUMATION
FUNERAL PYRE
FUNERARY ENCLOSURE
FUNERARY SITE
GRAVE
GRAVE MARKER
HUMAN REMAINS
INHUMATION
INHUMATION CEMETERY
KERB CAIRN
LONG BARROW
LONG CAIRN
LONG CIST
LONG-HORNED CAIRN
MAES-HOWE CAIRN
MIXED CEMETERY
MORTUARY ENCLOSURE
MORTUARY HOUSE
MOUND
ORKNEY-CROMARTY CAIRN
OVAL BARROW
PASSAGE GRAVE
PASSAGE TOMB

POND BARROW
RING BARROW
RING CAIRN
RING DITCH
ROUND BARROW
SAUCER BARROW
SHORT CIST
SQUARE BARROW
STALLED CAIRN
TOMB
TOR CAIRN
TUMULUS
URN
URNFIELD

Free text searches were undertaken using the following terms in order to identify funerary evidence that was not identified using monument terms (e.g. burials within a settlement):

Burial
Cremation
Cremated bone
Human remains
Grave
Inhumation
Skeleton
Burnt bone
Urn
Calcined