

PGGP database input method: key information

General

Key: gg=grave goods; hr=human remains; ggdb= Prehistoric Grave Goods project (PGGP) database. Dates in brackets (e.g. 18 March 2018) denote when a particular methodological approach was defined during the course of the project. Records entered before these dates were updated where possible but some inconsistencies may arise. Updates of these kind were only made where necessary.

Dates:

Dating information included for all sites, graves, objects and human remains

- Dates (site): overall date for site (can be very broad if there's several phases of burial). No C14 dates added at this level unless provided in the original dataset
- Dates (grave): when the burial happened. Only add C14 dates at this level if pyre material OR a C14 date from the grave fill (eg charred seed)
- Dates (gg): C14 dates (including from charcoal directly associated with objects) AND broad dates added, where possible
- Dates (hr): C14 dates AND broad dates added, where possible
- Overall, graves were primarily assigned broad dates based on the objects they contained (see below for specific information about this (e.g. for pot types, etc.). More specific dates were assigned where additional information (e.g. C14 dates) were available.
- Where curated objects were included in later graves (eg a Neolithic polished axe deposited in an Early Bronze Age grave), these were assigned the date of the grave (the date the object had become at the time it was deposited) rather than the date of their creation. They were flagged up for analysis by checking the 'Old_object' field

Special cases:

- *Multiperiod sites/sites spanning several sub periods*: More than one/different sub-periods are given ONLY for clearly SEPARATE episodes of burial (eg. If there are Beaker period and LBA graves on one site)
- *Vaguely dated sites (e.g. potentially EBA or MBA)*: only enter ONE date period – use the non-specific BA or even the prehistoric date categories – and use the start/end dates to refine

Site context table

Only rarely used (e.g. where burials derive from an IA settlement site), mostly populated from source data (HER and Canmore data)

Site table

References:

- Formatting for new references:
 - Authors:

- Surname, and initial (only one unless unusual) with full stop. (e.g. Loughlin, N.)
 - Use and not &. for two authors
 - Three authors or more et al.
- Editors: initial then surname (e.g. N. Loughlin)
- Series: BAR write as BAR British Series or BAR International Series with volume numbers. (e.g. BAR International Series 465)
- Page number: Specific_page_no. refers to a page or pages within a book or article. Where a date range is given use an en-dash (e.g. 212–3)
- Grey literature IDs: ADS DOI is preferred over OASIS no.
- Key priorities for reference data entry:
 - Primary source (eg excavation report)
 - Author and date for other sources

Equivalent data sources (EDS):

e.g. NRHE, British Museum accession no., etc. Populated only where possible. Priority given to British Museum records with images where there are multiple EDSs

Equivalent Burial Site IDs from other research datasets:

Equivalent IDs for burial sites in other key existing online research databases and in published burial gazetteers were noted, where possible for:

Bristow, P.H.W. 2001 Behaviour and belief in mortuary ritual: attitudes to the disposal of the dead in southern Britain 3500bc-AD43, *Internet Archaeology* 11. <https://doi.org/10.11141/ia.11.1>

Whimster, R., 1981: *Burial Practices in Iron Age Britain: A Discussion and Gazetteer of the Evidence c. 700 BC – AD 43* (BAR British Series 90). British Archaeological Reports: Oxford.

Atlantic Europe in the Metal Ages database: <http://www.aemap.ac.uk/search/>

Site summary:

Where possible, a summary of key grave good/burial evidence for the site is provided, including details of any complexities with the evidence (e.g. antiquarian excavations) and how this is dealt with

Site description:

HER site descriptions were enhanced where key additional information was found in HE's Research Records (<https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/national/default.aspx>) or from published sources (e.g. Mortimer, J., 1905: *Forty years' researches in British and Saxon burial mounds of East Yorkshire*, London)

Quantification of no. graves with gg relative to no. graves in total:

This is tricky but it is good to get some kind of handle on it even if only for a few coherent, well excavated sites where you have a clear sense of the excavated burial population ... For simplicity's sake **this is not completed unless there was total confidence in the numbers involved and good contextual detail was available.** Not completed for:

- sites with poor contextual detail
- multi-period sites
- recent complex/major infrastructure site (eg East Kent Access route) where there was no simple quantification of no. hr/graves per site

Site names:

These were simplified for online database visualisation purposes (<https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/grave-goods/map/>).

- Where two sites had the same name (e.g. barrows in Oakley Down barrow cemetery, Dorset or on the East Kent Access Route project) the following numbering method was employed:
- For Dorset BA barrows, the relevant Grinsell (1959, 1982) barrow no. for the relevant parish was used
- For E Yorks BA barrows the relevant Greenwell (1877, 1890) or Mortimer (1905) barrow no. was used
- Where there are separate areas within the same excavated landscape, note these in brackets after the site name (eg Monkton (Area 4); Monkton (Area 7))
- Elsewhere sites with the same name (eg separate barrows within a barrow cemetery) were numbered from 1 upwards
- In all cases, further details are provided in the site summary and site name (other) fields in the ggdb

Grave table

'Missing' and 'unknown' grave types:

- grave type 'unknown' marks records where the level of recording was such that the relationship between the gg and hr is secure but not the cut/specific context in which they were deposited
- grave type 'missing' marks records where the level of recording was such that although there were almost certainly gg and hr, the relationship between the two is 'missing' (eg when finds and human remains recovered, probably together, during early 20th century quarrying).

Graves with poor contextual detail:

- where a site is described as an urnfield or cremation burial but there are no details about the human remains/objects beyond this (eg in IA Kent there are many more pots than burials so it cannot be assumed that 5 urns = 5 burials), a 'best fit' approach was taken to defining graves (e.g. SID5008 Cotton Lane Pit). A note of the specific method employed was made in the site summary field in the site table (tagged <gg_summary>)
- See below for the specific method adopted for antiquarian excavated MBA cremation cemeteries in Dorset

Grave Hierarchy:

This field was not populated unless this information (e.g. which grave came first) was clear/interpretatively relevant.

Formality factor:

Used to distinguish between clearly formal (1) (an inhumation burial in a cut grave with a pot by the head) and ambiguously formal (2) graves (arrangements of human bones and objects that may represent practices that go beyond formal burial (e.g. GID60091, Hornish Point)

Equivalent Grave IDs from other research datasets:

Identifiers for equivalent graves in other research datasets are given only for the Forged Glamour database (Giles 2012; Peixoto 2019). These are not available elsewhere online. Key references for interpretative outcomes relating to this database are:

Giles, M., 2012: *A forged glamour: landscape, identity and material culture in the Iron Age*, Oxford.

Giles, M., Green, V. & Peixoto, P. 2019, The Arras culture of Eastern Yorkshire – Celebrating the Iron Age. Proceedings of 'Arras 200 – Celebrating the Iron Age'. Halkon, P. (ed.). Oxford: Oxbow Books, 47-66.

Object table**Object_types:**

- Used cup, bowl, dish, vessel as object types ONLY for non-ceramic vessels
- Used “miniature/pygmy vessel” for EBA ‘accessory vessels’ and “Deverel-Rimbury (Miniature vessel/cup)” for MBA ‘accessory vessels’
- Used “assemblage” sparingly for items clearly deposited as a group/where they didn’t appear to have individual value eg 27 studs; flint cache, etc. (NB this was essentially a subjective assignation)

Object_completeness:

Refers to condition upon deposition NOT upon discovery (mostly not possible to know)

Object_condition:

- If an object’s condition falls into two or more categories (eg burnt and damaged) then assign the most appropriate/relevant category to it and make note of other aspects in object description notes
- This field refers to the condition of the object upon deposition NOT at the point of discovery/recording. ONLY USED WHERE THIS IS CLEAR!

Current museum location and accession number:

Only populated where this information was readily to hand. Population prioritised for BM finds.

Related_GID_hr:

Only populated if an object relates specifically/mainly to one individual (NOT populated if the gg are shared between the people interred (eg one urn with two burnt people in it)

Object_body_relationship:

- Used 'indirect' for objects recovered from the grave fill (possibly not directly associated with the initial burial) OR for objects that were almost certainly gg but which could not be linked immediately to the hr (e.g. objects placed alongside urned cremations, objects deposited in open chambers/cists). The idea was to flag up where it was not possible to comment directly on the relationship between bodies and objects.
- Used the following qualifications in the object_placement field:
 - in grave fill
 - on capstone/cist
 - in chamber
 - secondary association (where hr are mainly associated with one gg (eg pot) but gg being described is in close proximity and likely buried at same time)
- Note: Objects inserted into a grave after the initial burial should not be recorded as gg (these can be mentioned in the grave description field)

Hr table

Hr_description

In addition to summarising key information about human remains (inhumations and cremation burials) in general, this field was used to log specific, potentially helpful interpretative info about cremation burials where this was readily available (mostly not the case). Recording hr in detail was not a priority in this database so this information is not systematically included.

- Key info noted where possible includes: Total weight (McKinley 1997); Largest fragment size and smallest fragment size (mm) (reflect collection strategies of scooping or hand picking); skeletal elements present or missing (especially skulls)
- The following format was used, where possible:
 - Total weight:
 - Fragment size:
 - Skeletal elements present:

Hr_rite:

Mainly an IA issue (e.g. Durotrigian burial, warrior burial, East Yorkshire Type A burial, etc.). This was completed if mentioned in HER description OR in key overarching gazetteer eg Whimster (1981). Left blank where burial rites are NOT specified. This information could be used to reconsider these categories

Update to human remains recording (13 April 2018)

After direct consultation with Jackie McKinley, the following refinements were made to the hr_condition field in cases where such conditions could be determined from the report.

Original hr_condition field	New hr_condition field	nb
Diseased/Disabled	Biography: Diseased/Disabled	Flag up as 'Human biography' under grave good theme and provide detail in hr_description box
Injured	Biography: Injured	As above
Crushed	Burial (Cremation): Crushed	Crushed could also perhaps relate to taphonomic processes such as tree roots/ frost/freeze/worm action etc. Assign to separate field where clear: hr_treatment
In-situ	Burial (Cremation): In-situ	Remove? It is covered in our grave type category (various types of pyres) so possibly duplicated here
Cleaned/Sorted	Burial (Cremation): Ordered deposit	Reassign to separate field: hr_treatment
Partially Burnt	Burial (Cremation): Partially Burnt	
Scattered	Burial (Cremation): Scattered	Need to check whether possible to say scattering deliberate rather than due to taphonomic processes
Articulated	Burial (Inhumation): Articulated	
Bound	Burial (Inhumation): Bound	Perhaps flag up under separate field to avoid any conflation: hr_treatment
Curated	Burial (Inhumation): Curated	Define this in relation to redeposited. How to distinguish? Is curated when there is only one or two fragments of bone? Can cremated remains not also be curated? (eg small bag of bones on chest etc)
Disarticulated	Burial (Inhumation): Disarticulated	
Mummified	Burial (Inhumation): Mummified	This is rarely identified. Flag up under separate field: hr_treatment
Partially Articulated	Burial (Inhumation): Partially Articulated	
Redeposited	Burial (Inhumation/Cremation): Redeposited	
Decomposed/Degraded	Taphonomy: Decomposed/Degraded	This can at least help explain why gender/ age may not be assigned
Disturbed	Taphonomy: Disturbed	
n/a	Multiple (Additional Notes)	Use where several of these categories apply and are important interpretatively
Unknown	Unknown	

Other recommendations from this meeting were implemented where possible but data already inputted was not revised since detailed recording of hr was not a PGGP database priority. In particular it is worth noting that hr_ages in the ggdb do not align precisely with J McKinley's recommendations and it was not possible to change the existing assignments retrospectively in part because age ranges from other published sources did not accord with these recommendations either.

For future reference Jackie McKinley's recommendations for 'middle age adult' assignments are as follows:

- 19-30 years old—young adult
- 30-40/45 years old—middle adult
- >40/45 years old—old adult

Object/material-specific methods

Flint/lithic implements

Objects initially assigned to the object type 'flint (unknown/unspecified)' or 'lithic (unknown/unspecified)' were reassigned to the following categories midway through data input:

Characteristics/HER object type	Eg GID_gg	Object type code	Object type
Flint assemblages (no further details)	71243		Assemblage
Struck flint (no further details)	50334	219	Worked stone
Burnt flint (no further details)	50121	211	Unknown object
Tools other than scraper/flake/blade/core	50272	256	Tool (specified type)

In all cases the material type (flint/chert) will identify the object(s) as lithic objects; the condition field will identify if the flint is burnt

Bronze Age pottery chronologies/typologies (10 April 2018)

The following dates were assigned in consultation with the relevant specialists (Ann Woodward, Henrietta Quinell) to graves with Bronze Age pots unless there was strong evidence to suggest otherwise:

<i>Pot type</i>	<i>Start date (BC)</i>	<i>End date (BC)</i>	<i>Specialist advice/source</i>
Beaker	2450	1600	Parker Pearson et al 2019
Food Vessel	2200	1500	Wilkin 2014
Collared Urn	2200	1500	Law 2009
Biconical Urn	1750	1500	Anne Woodward pers. comm.
Trevisker	1850	1500	Quinnell 2012
Deverel Rimbury	1500	1000	Woodward and Ladle 2009
Post Deverel Rimbury	1100	800	Woodward and Ladle 2009

Objects not directly associated with hr

It became clear on compiling the database that objects are commonly deposited at funerary sites without human remains particularly in certain regions of Britain at certain times in prehistory (e.g. the Bronze Age in Cornwall and Orkney and the Outer Hebrides)(see Cooper et al 2020). It was therefore not possible to assume that all objects found at burial sites are grave goods. A decision was made early on therefore only to record objects that were (a) directly associated with human remains (even tiny quantities) and/or (b) from sealed burial contexts (where it is likely that the objects were deposited at broadly the same time as the human remains). As a result, graves and grave goods from certain contexts are undoubtedly underrepresented in the ggdb. This includes:

- Antiquarian finds (human remains were not always noted)
- Stray finds by members of the public (human remains are not always noted)

The following exceptions have been made to this rule:

- In contexts where inhumation burials in graves/cists might be expected, where soil conditions are highly acidic (ie total decomposition of the body is likely) and where there is NOT a confirmed tradition of making 'bodyless' object deposits at funerary sites of that date (e.g. the Iron Age in Cornwall and East Yorkshire), objects from graves/cists lacking human remains are recorded as gg. In these cases, a MNI of one burial is linked to these objects and the association with hr is

recorded as “missing” in order to exclude this ‘grave’ from quantifications of objects per burial, etc..

- Where antiquarian excavators/gravel diggers removed large quantities of material from cremation/mixed cemeteries but the specific association between finds and human remains was not noted (e.g. MBA Dorset, LIA Kent), surviving/recorded objects that lack direct associations with human remains are grouped into one grave record which is linked to an MNI of one burial (e.g. SID20187: Suckton Quarry, Dorset, where 260 vessels were reputedly excavated, 19 were ‘saved’ and there is no mention at all of human remains. In order to represent the site in our database at some level, only the 19 ‘saved’ vessels and an MNI of one cremation burial was recorded, almost certainly an underestimation of the total number of burials with grave goods. As above, the human-object relationship was recorded as “missing”

Regionally/period-specific methods

Dorset:

MBA cremation cemeteries

- Urns were only logged as grave goods where they are stated specifically to have been *directly associated with hr* - it is clear that urn burials without hr alongside urned cremations is common practice in MBA Dorset, so it cannot be assumed that urns/sherds recovered from a barrow mound necessarily represent a burial
- Where nos. of upright/inverted urns, urns with/without cremations, urns in pits/on the ground surface, etc. were not attributed specifically in antiquarian excavations (eg SID 20061: Bagber Barrow, part excavated by Mansell Pleydell in 1895 – 23 urned crems, 4 globular urns, 2 inverted, 21 upright, etc. but it is not clear which specific graves had which urns and which were inverted/upright), these details were assigned using a ‘best fit’ method (e.g. at the grave level in the ggdb there are the right number of vessels and the right number of each criteria overall but the specific associations of these criteria (e.g. which globular urns were also inverted) is assigned arbitrarily
- Where hr are not mentioned directly (antiquarian excavations) but there is good reason to assume that hr were recovered (e.g. discussion of sepulchral character of the site; Grinsell (1959) describes them as urned cremation burials) an MNI of the surviving vessels from the site (in museums/published accounts) together with an MNI of 1 associated hr record was logged (e.g. GID74311; SID20060). See the site summary field <gg_summary> for specific details. The relationship between the hr and the urns is recorded as missing.
- Unlocated barrows that produced MBA urned cremation burials are understandably underrepresented in the HER. They are also typically poorly recorded. In these cases (and where the numbers of urns and burials recovered is vague – e.g. Plush Hill (SID73033) and Wynford Wood (SID73034) barrows, Dorset) an MNI of cremation burials for each of the surviving urns is recorded (e.g. 18 and 1 respectively). Details are recorded in the Site_summary field (Site table).

Antiquarian excavations of large Durotrigian cemeteries (e.g. Jordan Hill):

Where these provide very little contextual detail, where the provenance of the objects is uncertain, and/or where the IA origin of the objects is uncertain (in many cases) these sites/graves/grave goods were not included in the ggdb, even if it is likely that the cemetery had IA origins. It may be possible to revisit these assemblages to refine this approach, but it is not possible based on published material.

Unlocated round barrows (Oct 2018):

Where barrows listed in Grinsell (1959, 1982) and Warne (1866) and also sometimes by the RCHME are described as 'unlocated', the associated burials were attached to new 'unlocated barrows from XX' records in the ggdb. This was sometimes only attributable to the whole parish but could sometimes be refined to a particular area of the parish or to a barrow group. Burials/barrows grouped in this way were tagged in the site summary field as <grouped unlocated barrows> so that they could be dealt with separately for site quantification purposes. Where burials could be attributed to a closely spaced barrow pair and both barrows were represented in the HER, the burials/grave goods etc. were attached to one of these barrows and this is noted clearly in the site summary field.

Cornwall:

BA burial sites (08 March 2018)

These are problematic because of the long currency of Trevisker ware and the absence of clear chronological patterning over the period 1900-1100 BC in Cornwall (Quinnell 2012). Following consultation with Henrietta Quinnell, the following method was defined:

- All BA burials at round barrows were assigned to the EBA, unless there is clear evidence to suggest otherwise
- All BA burials containing Trevisker urns (or urns described as EBA, MBA, LBA or Deverel Rimbury based on now-dismissed chronologies) were assigned to the EBA, unless there was clear evidence to suggest otherwise
- Isolated BA urns/objects (even those excavated by antiquarians) that were NOT certainly associated with hr were not recorded as gg given the high incidence of object deposits without hr in Cornwall in the BA

LIA/early Roman sites (10 April 2018)

Porth Cressa sites in the Isles of Scilly were generally assigned broadly to the LIA/early Roman period and often span this period. Occasionally it was possible to identify definitively Roman material but often it was not. Given the lack of clear Roman colonisation in this area, a more generous approach is taken with LIA/early Roman graves than is the case in other case study areas. Following consultation with H. Quinnell, graves assignable to the 1st centuries BC/AD were included in the ggdb in Scilly.

Orkney and the Outer Hebrides:

A similar approach to that described above was taken for IA burials in Orkney and the Outer Hebrides where Iron Age chronologies are very different and the PGGP database cut-off point of AD 42 was not especially relevant.

Neolithic complexities

The complex dynamics in evidence within many Neolithic burial monuments often made it difficult to enter data about grave goods for that period in the same way as was possible for other periods. In many cases, it was impossible to tell without further detailed primary research, for example, how many bodies had been buried, how many individual (but subsequently fragmented) artefacts were in evidence, whether an artefact had been introduced with a specific person, etc. As we discuss in substantial detail within the Prehistoric Grave Goods monograph (Cooper et al. 2021), mortuary practice in many Neolithic contexts simply did not lend itself well to the format of the GGDB that was necessary to capture the information required for the majority of our study period. Consequently, for many Neolithic sites, data had to be entered into the GGDB in a different way. Often, the number of 'burials' (with grave goods)

could not meaningfully be established; consequently, for those sites, a separate record was not created for each recorded burial within a grave context (e.g. the chamber of a tomb). Equally, 'grave goods' were defined, in these circumstances, as objects that had been found in *direct* association with human remains (a subjective decision in many cases); other objects which were in the wider mortuary realm but not directly associated with human remains were not recorded. As a consequence of these 'Neolithic complexities' (as we have termed them in the database in order that these burials can be excluded from quantitative analysis where necessary), it is important to recognise that the Neolithic might in some ways be said to be underrepresented in our dataset.

Recording method:

- Where there is a direct hr-gg relationship, record as normal
- Where there are several hr and at least one likely gg within a burial context (eg in a chamber), flag this up in the gg_theme field as 'neolithic complexities'
- Enter summary hr record for burial type(s) represented (eg cremation, inhumation, etc.) with MNI people represented plus other details in the grave description field
- If there are cremations/inhumations of various ages/sexes and so on (eg good hr data) note this in the grave description field and chose hr_age; hr_sex, 'multiple' and ignore all other more detailed hr fields
- If there are multiple C14 dates for hr in these burials, use the overall date bracket for grave date and make a note that there are more detailed C14 dates <more_C14>.
- Add any convincing gg with the body-object relationship as 'missing'

Key references

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