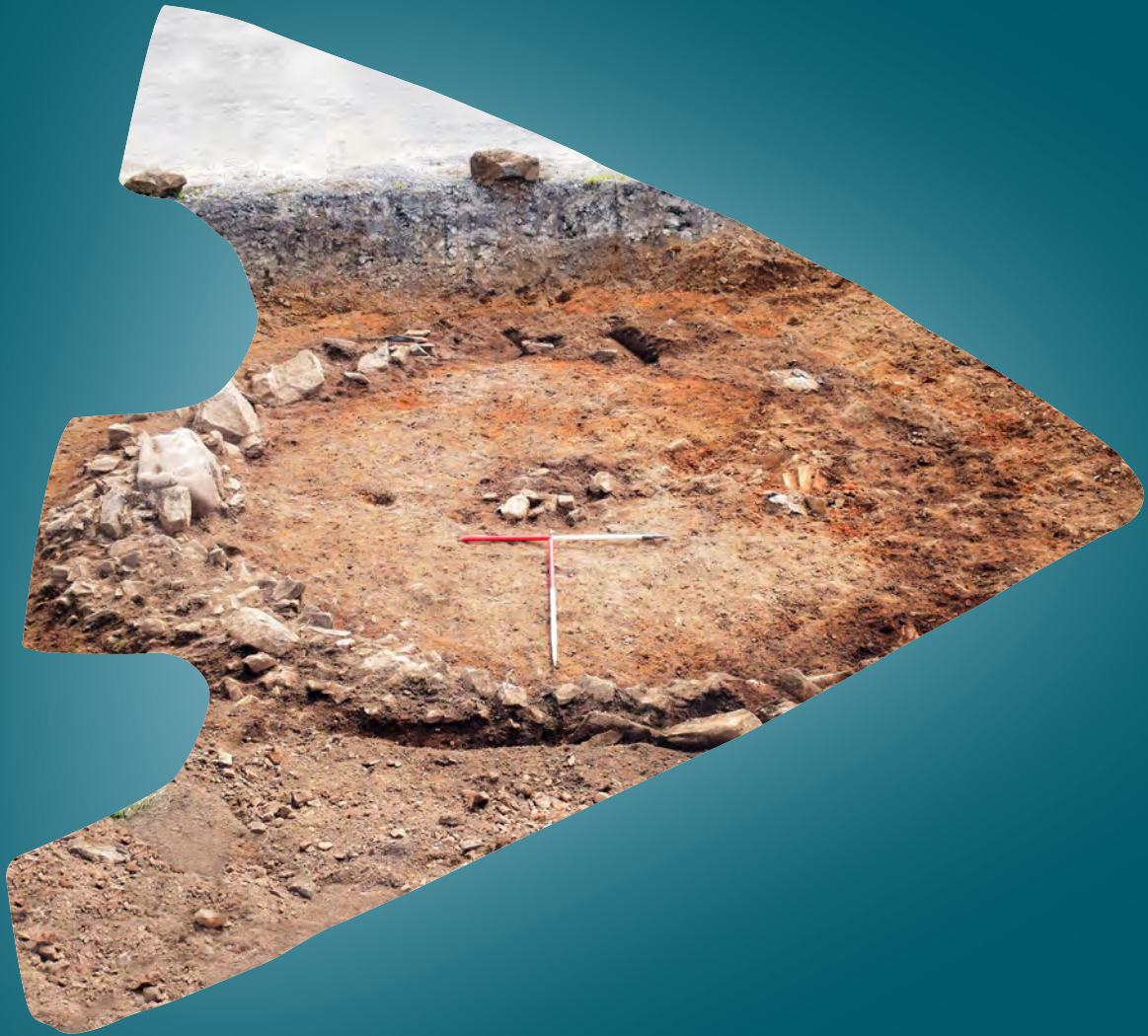




ARO64: Twentyshilling Hill Bronze Age Barrow, Dumfries and Galloway

By Thomas Muir, with contributions by Torben Ballin, Beverley Ballin Smith, Susan Ramsay and Alun Woodward

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Contents

Summary	5
Introduction	7
Fieldwork results	7
Twentyshilling barrow	8
Twentyshilling pit group	11
Drove road	14
Other sites encountered	14
Radiocarbon Dating	17
Specialist results	17
Archaeobotanical Results - Susan Ramsay	17
Cremated Bone - Alun Woodward	20
Lithic Assemblage - Torben Bjarke Ballin	26
Prehistoric Pottery - Beverley Ballin Smith	28
Discussion	33
Conclusion	38
Acknowledgements	38
Bibliography	38

List of Figures

Figure 1: Site location	6
Figure 2: The wind farm route stripped of topsoil	7
Figure 3: Plan of the barrow and sections through it	8
Figure 4: The partly excavated barrow, looking east	9
Figure 5: Pit 018 before excavation	9
Figure 6: Pit 018 during excavation	10
Figure 7: Plan of pottery vessels in the burial pit (018)	10
Figure 8: Excavated section through the ring ditch (015)	12
Figure 9: Ring ditch (015) with possible cairn material (017)	12
Figure 10: The barrow after excavation	13
Figure 11: Plan and sections of pits (004), (006) and (008)	13
Figure 12: Pits (004) and (006) partly excavated	14
Figure 13: Pit 008 after excavation	14
Figure 14: Plans and sections of the drove road	15
Figure 15: Drove road, looking north	16
Figure 16: Slot trench through drove road, looking south	16
Figure 17: Showing signs of bone growth associated with possible periostitis	22
Figure 18: Pubic symphysis fragments from Vessel 8. Note the size difference indicating different age categories	24
Figure 19: Blade/scrapper CAT 2	27
Figure 20: Pottery Vessel 1, possible urn Vessel 2, urns Vessels 7, 8 and 9	30
Figure 21: Map of sites mentioned in discussion	35

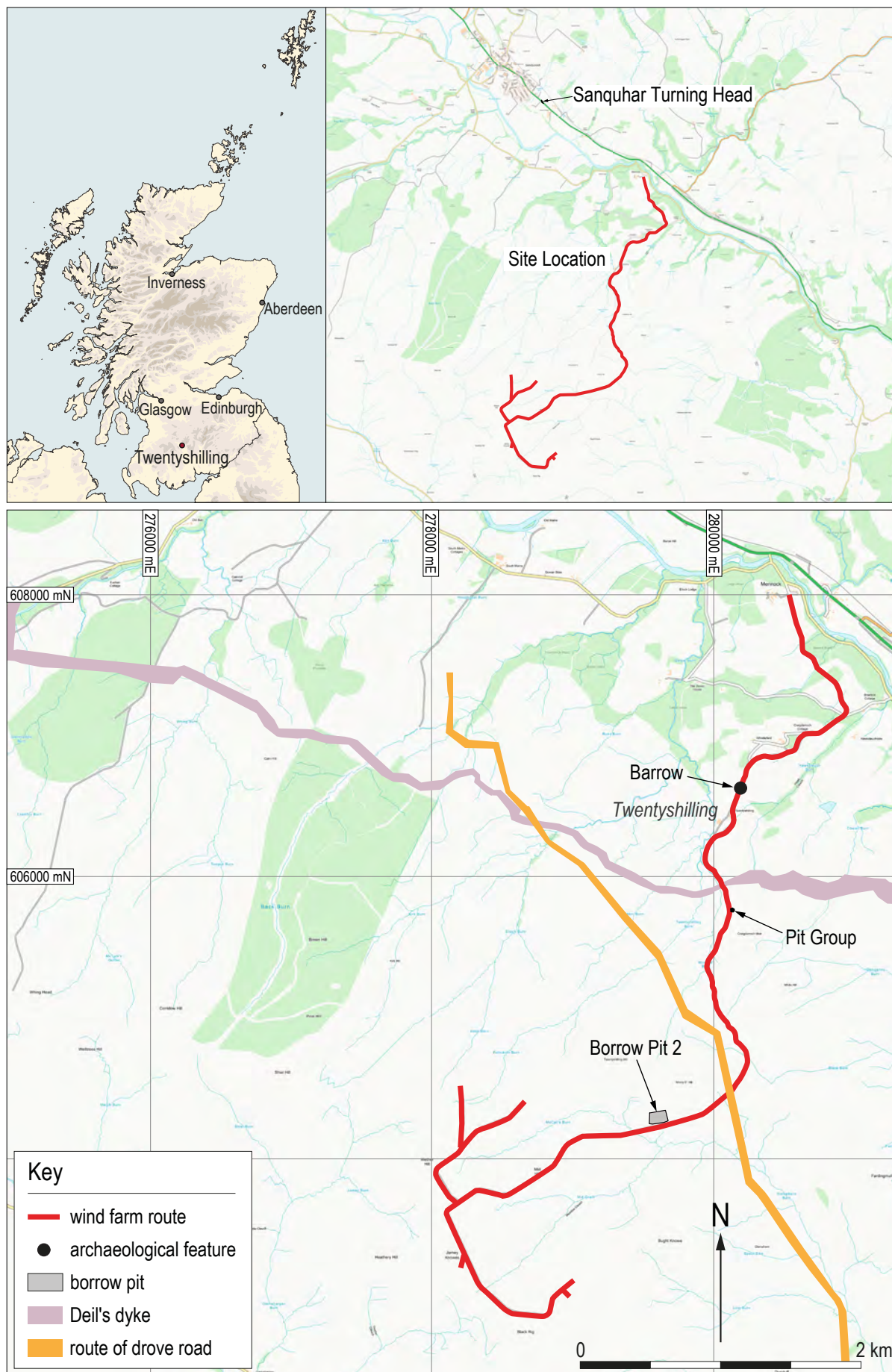
List of Tables

Table 1: Radiocarbon dates	17
Table 2: Botanical remains from pit (018) and ditch (016)	18
Table 3: Botanical remains from pits and linear features	19
Table 4: Age Categories (based on Buisktra and Ubelaker 1994)	21
Table 5: Lithic artefact list	26
Table 6: Sherd form and numbers	28
Table 7: Sherd thickness and weight	28



Summary

Archaeological excavations undertaken during the construction of a new access route to Twentyshilling Wind Farm revealed a Bronze Age barrow. Five closely packed urns containing the cremated bones of at least 8 individuals were placed in a pit within the centre of the barrow during one mass burial event sometime between 1439 – 1287 BC. A small group of pits some distance north along the same new access route was also excavated, revealing late Neolithic activity between 2867 – 2504 BC. These discoveries, in an area of south-west Scotland that has so far revealed little known prehistoric archaeological remains, demonstrate that while sporadic occupation occurred during the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods, a settled community with cultural ties to other areas of Scotland had established itself nearby during the middle of the Bronze Age.



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Figure 1: Site location.

Introduction

An archaeological watching brief and excavations were undertaken between July 2020 and May 2021 by GUARD Archaeology Ltd across an area of open rough upland terrain (NGR: NS 7200 0659 to NS 7825 0457) to the south of Sanquhar in Dumfries and Galloway. The fieldwork was undertaken on behalf of R J McLeod and Statkraft in advance of a new wind farm installation including the construction of new roads and turbine stations across the landscape. In total, an area of 213,800 m² was monitored during the project and which revealed four discrete archaeological sites, which were excavated (Figure 1).

The land-use across the proposed cable trench route has been a mixture of agriculture and pastoral farming. The bedrock underlying most of the proposed cable trench is wacke (both Portpatrick Formation and Kirkcolm Formation). To the south and east of Ulzieside Plantation is a band of Moffat Shale Group – mudstone that includes banded intrusions of chert from the Crawford Group. All of these are sedimentary rock types (British Geological Survey: Geology of Britain Viewer 2025).

A walkover survey and desk-based assessment (Rennie 2019) located the remains of three post-medieval quarries, a few possible nineteenth century quarry scoops and a circular sheepfold in areas close to the proposed cable route but they were unlikely to be directly affected by the development.

For the main wind farm area two undesignated sites were noted as being directly impacted, a possible drove road (A8) and The Deil's Dyke (A15). The evaluation of the features by Rathmell Archaeology Ltd (Gorman and Mathews 2019) confirmed the existence of a turf dyke at the location identified at Deil's Dyke which had been partially truncated. The archaeological evaluation did not find any evidence of the drove road.

Fieldwork results

As the soil stripping works took place over a very large area (Figure 2), so the road strip was divided into sections and given 'CH' numbers, beginning in the north. The area near the Sanquhar Turning Point, and from CH00 up to approximately Turbine 5, including Borrow Pit 2, revealed friable brown sandy silt topsoil (001), which was between 0.1 m and 0.5 m thick.



Figure 2: The wind farm route stripped of topsoil.

As the works moved south and further uphill, the soil changed. From Turbine 5 onwards for the rest of the main Wind Farm, the works on the grid route and the Whiteford track revealed firm brown-black peat (003), which was between 0.1 m and 2.5 m thick. The subsoil was middle brown-orange silty sand, with light to middle grey coloured clay areas, and frequent angular stones (002). Much of the topsoil stripping revealed bedrock.

While most of the area route contained no archaeology, significant archaeological features were located in a few key areas and subsequently

excavated by GUARD Archaeology. These included a large ring ditch with a cremation pit in its centre, a group of three small pits, the remains of an old drove road, and a group of stone structures.

Twentyshilling barrow

The most significant discovery was of a barrow comprising of a burial pit (018) enclosed within a ring ditch (015), located at CH1960, just to the north-east of Twentyshilling Farm (Figures 3, 4 and 5). The burial pit (018) was sub-circular in plan, measuring 0.93 m in length, 0.9 m in width and was 0.12 m in depth, with steep sloping sides

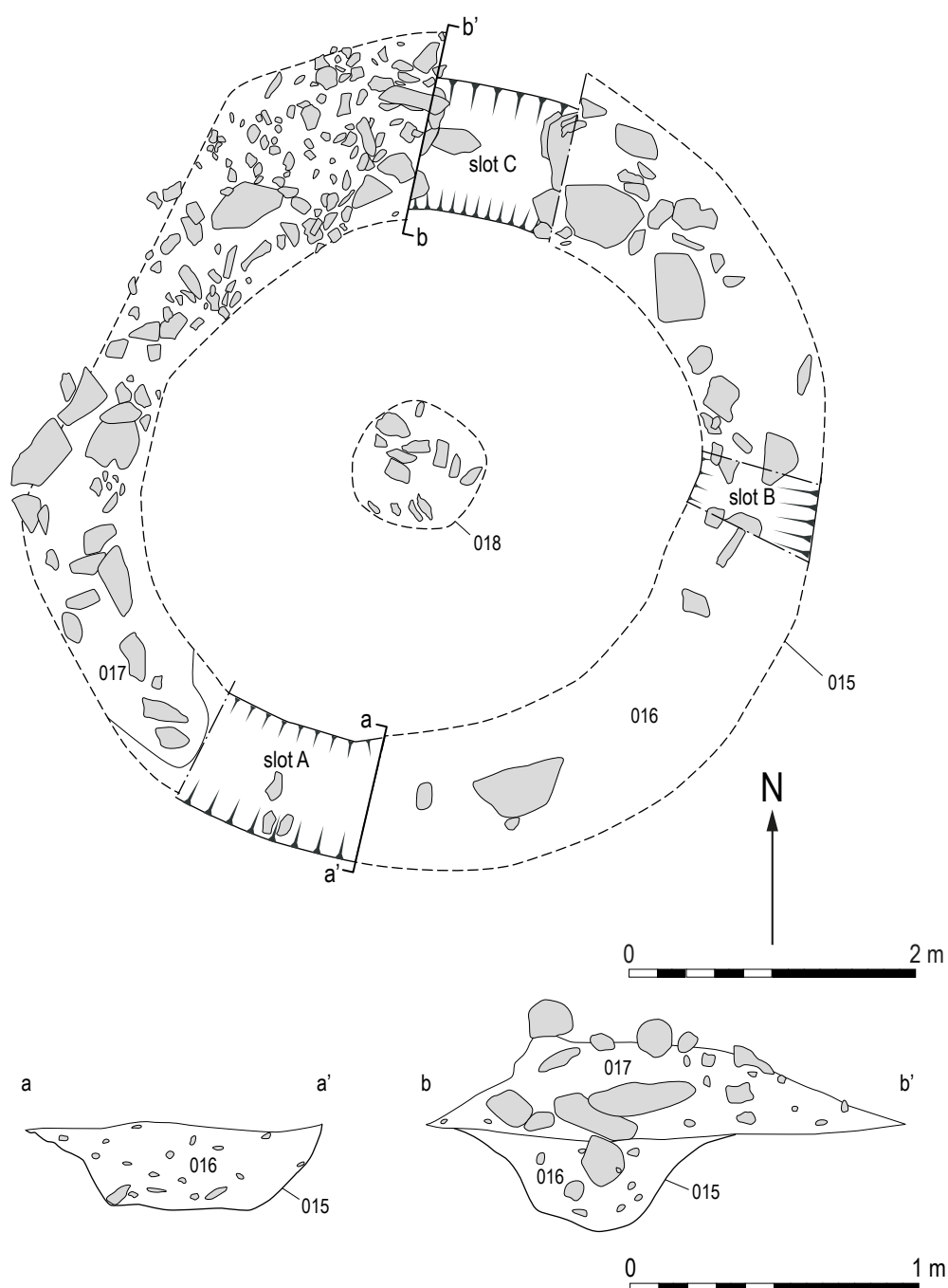


Figure 3: Plan of the barrow and sections through it.

and a fairly flat base (Figure 6). Its fill consisted of friable, grey-brown silty sand (019) with frequent medium and large stones throughout. A mixed charcoal assemblage of alder, birch and hazel charcoal with a small amount of hazel nutshell

was recovered from the fill of the burial pit and the urns within it. The burial pit (018) contained 879 pottery sherds representing at least five individual vessels (Figure 7).

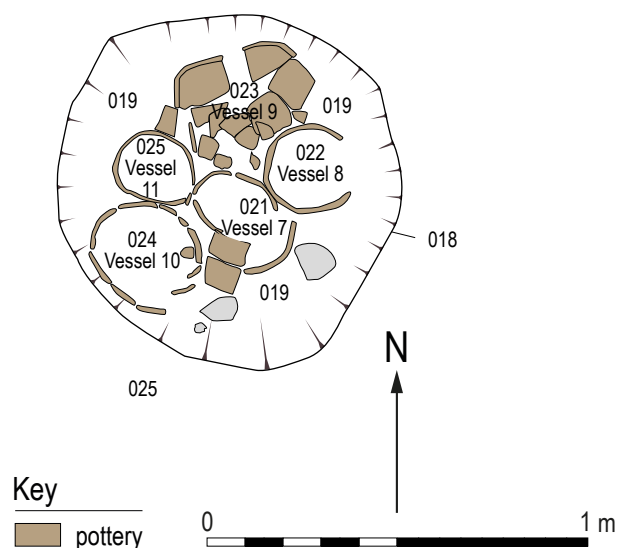


Figure 4: The partly excavated barrow, looking east.



Figure 5: Pit 018 before excavation.



Figure 6: Pit 018 during excavation.



Figure 7: Plan of pottery vessels in the burial pit (018).

Each vessel contained fills comprising of compact, dark grey silty clay with burnt bone throughout. Vessel 7 survived as 54 sherds (SF 22), with cremated bone of at least one adult and some unidentified animal remains. Vessel 8 survived as 245 sherds (SF 23), with cremated bone of an adolescent and an adult. Vessel 9 survived as 200 sherds (SF 24), and charcoal from its fill, (023) contained additional hazel nutshell. It contained the cremated remains of a juvenile and an adult. Vessel 10 survived as 350 sherds (SF 25), and charcoal from its fill, (024), also contained single grains of emmer wheat and barley. It contained the cremated remains of an adult. Thirty sherds were also recovered from a fifth vessel (SF 26), though these survived in very poor condition. Fill (025) from this urn contained the cremated remains of an adult and a juvenile, while the charcoal also contained willow and a single grain of barley. An additional 274.16 g of cremated bone was recovered from fill (019), representing at least one adult, though this may well have come from any of the urns spilling into the pit.

Surrounding the burial pit (018) was a ring ditch (015). The overall diameter of which was 5.8 m by 5.25 m. The ditch was between 0.70 m and 0.75 m in width and 0.30 m in depth. Its basal fill (016) was light grey-brown silty sand with frequent small stones throughout (Figure 8). This produced a mixed charcoal assemblage of alder, birch and hazel with traces of hazel nutshell, as well as two flint chips (CAT 122-123). Overlying this was (017) consisting of firm, brown-grey sandy silt with moderate sized stones that may represent the remains of a cairn over the burial pit (Figure 9). This deposit was traced around the northern side of the ditch for at least 10.6 m. It was c. 0.34 m thick and covered an area 1.66 in width. It contained trace amounts of birch, hazel, oak and willow charcoal, with a single fragment of hazel nutshell. The charcoal from the ditch fills was very similar to those of the burial pit (018). The ditch surrounding the burial pit was clearly demarcated after the excavation of the feature (Figure 10).

Twentyshilling pit group

In an area to the south of the barrow, three sub-circular pits were located in Borrow Pit 1. Pit (006) lay 0.10 m to the east of pit (004), and pit (008) lay 2 m to the south east (Figure 11).

The first (004) of the three pits measured 1.3 m by 0.8 m by 0.18 m (Figures 11 and 12). Its single fill (005) consisted of dark-mid brown silty sand with the very occasional small stones and charcoal. It contained 26 pieces of lithic debitage comprising 23 chips (CATs 91-113), one flake (CAT 115), one indeterminate piece (CAT 114), and one large bipolar core (CAT 1). Eight pottery sherds and crumbs of Vessel 1 (SF 1-6), and four sherds of Vessel 3 (SF 8, 9 and 10) were also recovered from this feature. Charcoal from the fill was identified as alder, birch, hazel, oak and willow but in addition there were numerous fragments of hazel nutshell, indicating hearth waste.

The eastern pit (006) measured 0.7 m in diameter, and was 0.14 m deep. Its only fill (007) consisted of brown silty sand with 5% small stones and charcoal. It contained 88 pieces of lithic debitage comprising 78 chips (CATs 3-80), eight flakes (CATs 81-88) and two blades (CATs 89-90), but no pottery. As with pit (004), charcoal containing alder, birch, hazel, oak, and willow, as well as hazel nutshells was recovered, indicating hearth waste.

The south-eastern pit (008) was 0.85 m by 0.80 m in plan and 0.28 m deep, (Figure 11). Its basal fill (010) measured 0.13 m thick and comprised loose grey medium-sized stones (Figure 13). Above this lay a 0.15 m thick layer of dark-middle brown silty sand (009) with small stones and coal inclusions. It contained five pieces of lithic debitage comprising two flakes (CAT 116-117), one chip (CAT 120), one microblade (CAT 118), and one indeterminate piece (CAT 119), as well as one small combined scraper/knife (CAT 2). It also contained 11 sherds of pottery from five different vessels, including five sherds from Vessel 2 (SF 12, 14, 15 and 17), three sherds from Vessel 3 (SF 12, 18 and 19), one sherd from Vessel 4 (SF 13), one sherd from Vessel 5 (SF 16) and one sherd from Vessel 6 (SF 20). These were recovered from the upper layer (009). As with pits (004 and 006), charcoal containing alder, birch, hazel, oak, willow, and hazel nutshells was recovered, with additional traces of cherry type and elm charcoal.



Figure 8: Excavated section through the ring ditch (015).



Figure 9: Ring ditch (015) with possible cairn material (017).



Figure 10: The barrow after excavation.

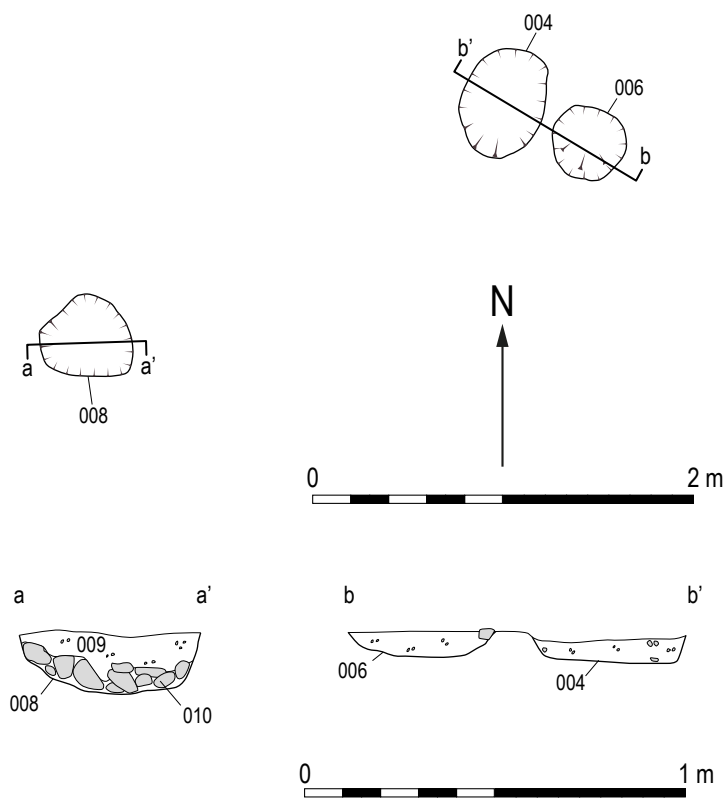


Figure 11: Plan and sections of pits (004), (006) and (008).



Figure 12: Pits (004) and (006) partly excavated.



Figure 13: Pit 008 after excavation.

Drove road

Further to the south, three north/south oriented linear features were recorded (Figures 1 and 14); two features (026 and 029) located at CH4415 1.8 m apart, and one other (032) located at CH4405 9.5 m to the east, are all possibly remnants of, or related to a drove road (Rennie 2019).

The first of the two linear features (026) at CH4415, measured c. 14 m in length, 2.85 m in width, and was 0.11 m deep, with very gently sloping sides and a flat base (Figure 15). Its lower fill (027), which was 0.07 m thick, comprised compact yellow-brown sandy clay, with occasional small stones. Its upper fill (028) was 0.07 m thick and consisted of black-grey sandy silt with small stones. A tiny fragment of hazel charcoal was recovered from the upper fill but it could simply be a residual find from a nearby earlier period of occupation.

The second linear feature (029) at CH4415 had similar dimensions to the previous linear feature (026), measuring c.14 m in length, 3.15 m in width, and 0.11 m in depth, with very gently sloping sides and a flat base (Figure 16). Its basal fill (030) comprised pale yellow-brown sandy clay, with occasional small stones, and was 0.08 m thick. Its upper fill (031), 0.06 m in thickness, consisted of black-grey sandy silt with some small stones. No carbonised remains were recovered from this feature.

The last of the linear features (032), situated at CH44055, measured c.9 m in length, 5.80 m in width and was 0.08 m deep, with a flat base. Its basal deposits (033) consisted pale-yellow brown sandy clay with occasional stones, and was 0.06 m thick. Its upper fill (034) which was black-grey sandy silt, was 0.12 m in thickness and contained only traces of indeterminate charcoal, although two flint chips (CAT 125-126) and a flint flake (CAT 124) were also recovered.

Other sites encountered

A single standing stone (045) (NGR: NS 75094 05656 MQS) associated with local folklore was identified along the Whiteford Track, 4 m to the south-east of the Southern Upland Way. The stone was set in a socket, which was not excavated, but it had a triangular horizontal cross section and measured 0.18 m - 0.24 m in width, and was 0.53 m high. The route of the road was moved to the south-east to allow this stone to be left in situ.

The course of the linear earthwork, the Deil's Dyke, reportedly extended through the monitored area but was not encountered during the archaeological watching brief; a silty build-up (011) just to the north-west of the pit group was initially recorded as the potential remains of this feature, but later reinterpreted as a natural build-up of silt.

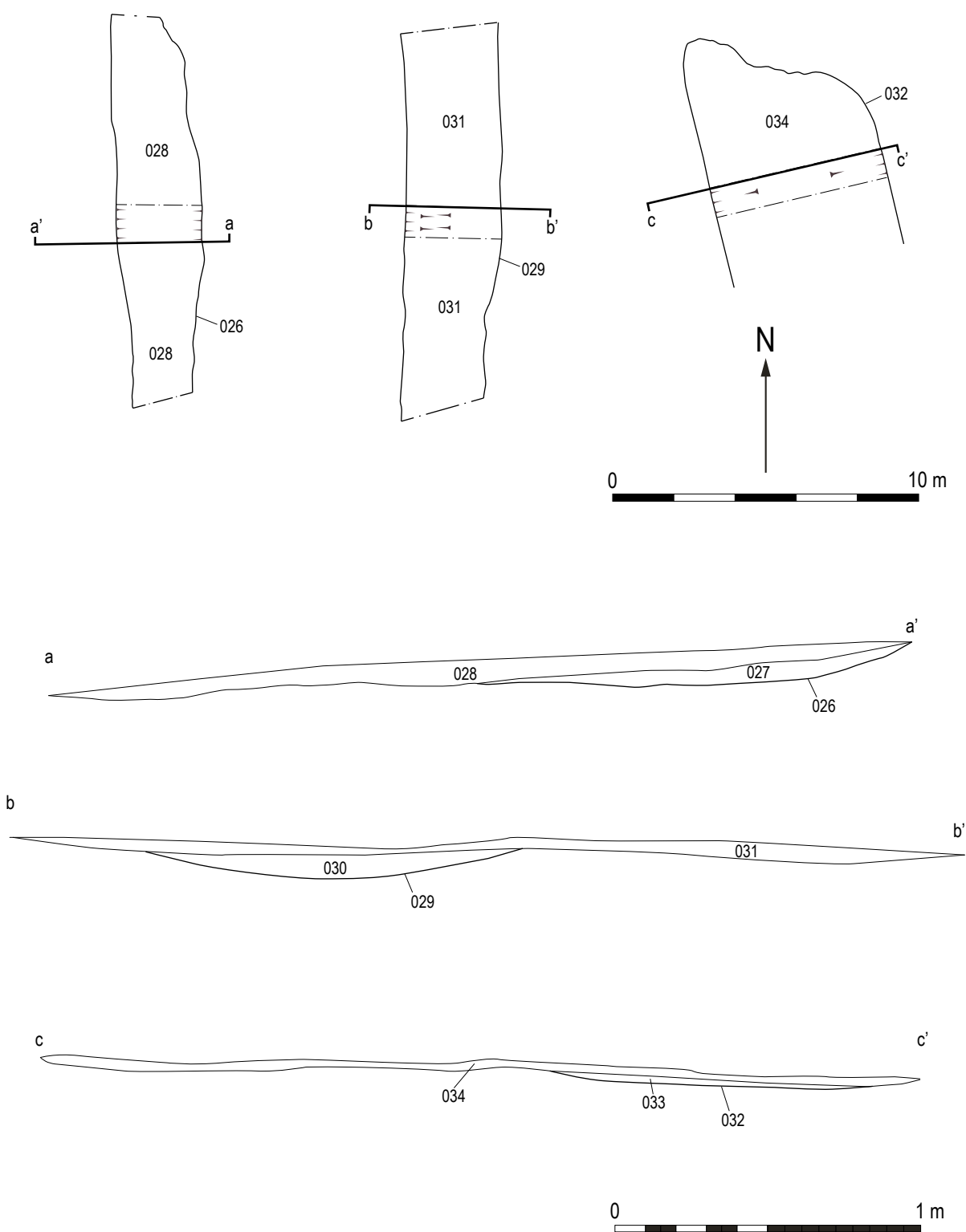


Figure 14: Plans and sections of the drove road.



Figure 15: Drove road, looking north.

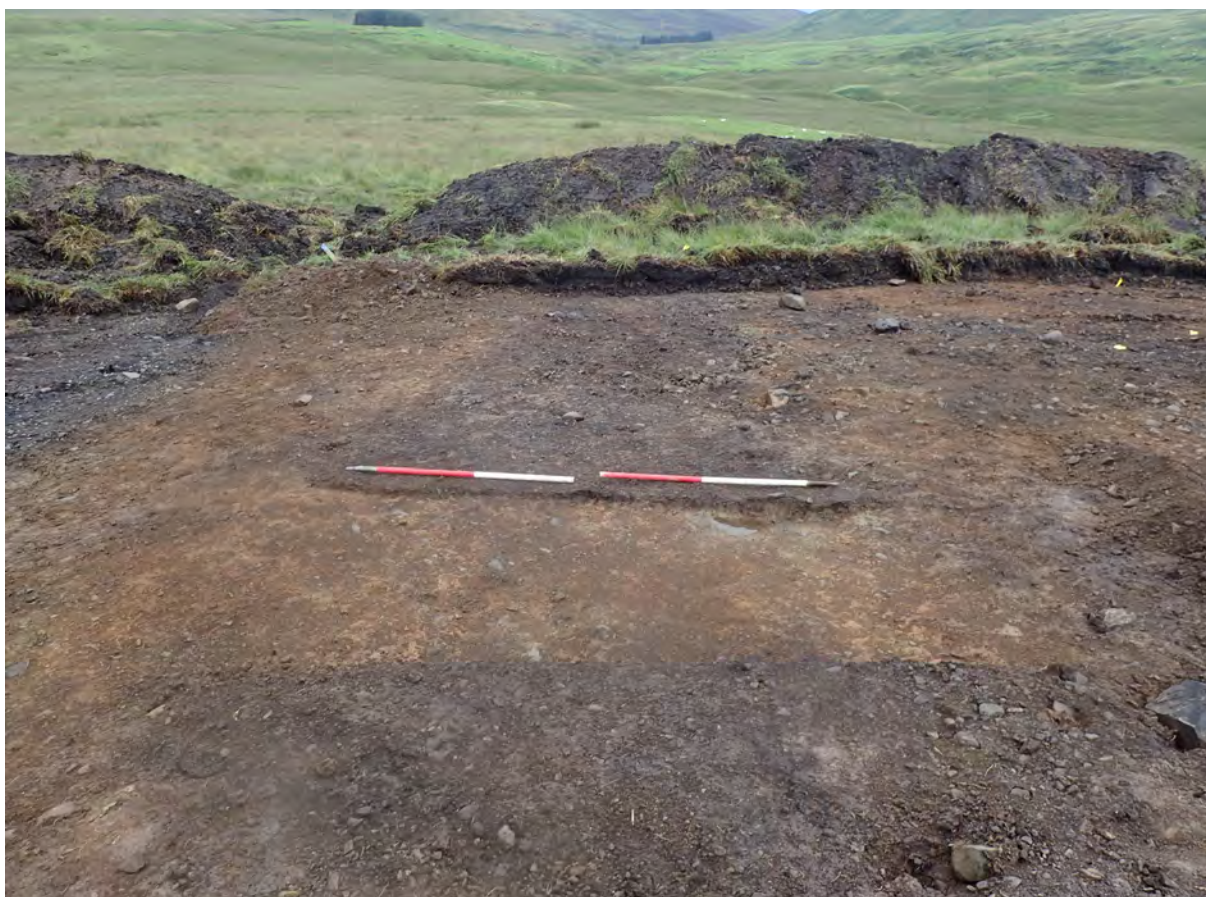


Figure 16: Slot trench through drove road, looking south.

Radiocarbon Dating

Suitable samples of charcoal were selected from the fills of each of the three pits (005), (007), and (009), for radiocarbon dating. Each provided consistent radiocarbon dates suggesting burning within the immediate area around the twenty ninth to twenty sixth centuries BC. Within the barrow, charcoal samples from fill (022) of urn 23, and fill (023) of urn 24 provided consistent dates of fifteenth to thirteenth centuries BC for the cremations (Table 1).

Specialist results

Archaeobotanical Results

By Susan Ramsay

A programme of bulk sampling was undertaken in order to examine the carbonised archaeobotanical remains from the Twentyshilling excavations. In total, 20 bulk soil samples were analysed for the presence of botanical remains. They were processed by flotation, using standard methods and sieves of mesh diameter 1 mm and 500 µm for flots and 2 mm and 4 mm for retents from flotation.

Macrofossil Analysis

Dried flots and sorted retents were examined using a binocular microscope at variable magnifications of x4 - x45. For each sample, estimation of the total volume of carbonised

material >4 mm was made and all charcoal >4 mm was identified unless this proved to be too large an amount, in which case a known percentage of the total volume of charcoal was identified. All carbonised cereals and seeds were also identified and any other macrofossil remains were noted.

The internal anatomical features of problematic charcoal fragments were further identified at x200 magnification using the reflected light of a metallurgical microscope. Reference was made to Schweingruber (1990) and Gale and Cutler (2000) to aid identifications and vascular plant nomenclature follows Stace (1997).

Results

The results are discussed by area and the full results are given in Tables 2 and 3.

The fill (019) of the burial pit (018) within the barrow produced a mixed charcoal assemblage of alder, birch and hazel charcoal, with small amounts of hazel nutshell. The fills (021, 022, 023, 024 and 025) of the cremation urns contained similar carbonised assemblages, with some or all of alder, birch and hazel charcoal present in each, with willow also recorded from fill (025). Hazel nutshell was also present in fill (023) and traces of cereal grain were identified from fills (024) and (025). Fill (024) produced single grains of emmer wheat and cf barley, while fill (025) produced only a single grain of barley. These results suggest that the cremation pyres were fuelled with a mixture of wood types and that there may have been food offerings in the form of hazelnuts and cereal grains placed on the pyres.

UB No	Sample No.	Context	Material	Radiocarbon Age BP	Calibrated 1-sigma (68.3% probability)	Calibrated 2-sigma (95.4% probability)	Period
UBA-56224	002	005	Salix sp	4121 ± 26	2851 – 2809 cal BC 2747 – 2726 cal BC 2697 – 2625 cal BC	2866 – 2803 cal BC 2866 – 2803 cal BC 2707 – 2578 cal BC	LN
UBA-56225	001	007	Alnus cf glutinosa	4106 ± 28	2845 – 2812 cal BC 2742 – 2731 cal BC 2674 – 2618 cal BC 2611 – 2580 cal BC	2865 – 2803 cal BC 2762 – 2717 cal BC 2706 – 2573 cal BC 2512 – 2504 cal BC	LN
UBA-56226	003	009	Salix sp	4124 ± 27	2853 – 2808 cal BC 2758 – 2725 cal BC 2699 – 2626 cal BC	2867 – 2802 cal BC 2774 – 2714 cal BC 2708 – 2580 cal BC	LN
UBA-56227	SF 023	Fill of urn	Human cortical	3110 ± 27	1422 – 1383 cal BC 1341 – 1312 cal BC	1439 – 1365 cal BC 1361 – 1292 cal BC	MBA
UBA-56228	SF 024	Fill of urn	Human cortical	3106 ± 28	1420 – 1381 cal BC 1342 – 1309 cal BC	1436 – 1287 cal BC	MBA

Table 1: Radiocarbon dates.



	Context	016	016	016	017	019	019	019	021	022	023	024	025
	Sample	006	010	020	009	007	008	016	011	012	013	014	015
	Description	Fill of ring ditch (015)	Fill of ring ditch (015)	Fill of ring ditch (015)	Stony deposit above (016) in ring ditch (015)	Fill of pit (018)	Fill of pit (018)	Fill of pit (018)	Cremation deposit in pot SF022	Cremation deposit in pot SF023	Cremation deposit in pot SF024	Cremation deposit in pot SF025	Cremation deposit in pot SF026
Vol of charcoal >4 mm		10ml	5ml	2ml	2ml	25ml	5ml	2ml	2ml	2ml	5ml	1ml	1ml
Charcoal													
Alnus cf glutinosa	alder	15 (0.58g)	-	-	-	9 (1.59g)	-	1 (0.02g)	1 (0.04g)	2 (0.21g)	-	-	-
Betula spp	birch	7 (0.48g)	5 (0.18g)	6 (0.16g)	2 (0.07g)	19 (0.83g)	7 (0.28g)	3 (0.08g)	7 (0.26g)	5 (0.19g)	7 (0.22g)	2 (0.07g)	1 (0.04g)
Corylus cf avellana	hazel	12 (0.41g)	18 (0.61g)	5 (0.21g)	5 (0.15g)	26 (1.37g)	18 (0.55g)	4 (0.09g)	9 (0.11g)	-	9 (0.22g)	4 (0.07g)	5 (0.16g)
Quercus spp	oak	-	-	-	1 (0.01g)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Salix spp	willow	4 (0.16g)	-	-	1 (0.02g)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 (0.05g)
Indeterminate	indeterminate	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 (0.14g)	-	-	-	-	-
Cereals													
Hordeum vulgare sp	barley	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
cf Hordeum vulgare sl	cf barley	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Triticum dicoccum	emmer wheat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Seeds													
Corylus avellana nutshell	hazel nutshell	5 (0.13g)	2 (0.03g)	10 (0.16g)	1 (<0.01g)	3 (0.06g)	-	4 (0.02g)	-	-	1 (0.02g)	-	-
Misc													
Bone	bone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5 (0.12g)	-

Table 2: Botanical remains from pit (018) and ditch (016).



Surrounding the grave pit (018) was a ring ditch (015) with basal fill (016) and a secondary fill (017). The basal fill (016) produced a mixed charcoal assemblage of alder, birch, hazel and alder, together with traces of hazel nutshell. The secondary fill was only present on the north side of the ditch and was stony in nature, possibly suggesting the remains of a cairn that had once overlain the pit. Trace amounts of birch, hazel, oak and willow charcoal were identified from (017) along with a single fragment of hazel nutshell. These assemblages are very similar to that recorded from pit (018) and from the fills of the cremation urns, suggesting that they may all have contained the remains of cremation deposits.

Three sub-circular pits, (004, 006 and 008), were located in the pit group. Pit (004) contained a single lithic and several sherds of pottery. Its fill (005) produced significant amounts of charcoal, with alder, birch, hazel, oak and willow all

represented, together with numerous fragments of hazel nutshell. This assemblage could be consistent with hearth waste. Willow charcoal from (005) produced a late Neolithic AMS date of cal BC 2866 – 2578 (UBA-56224). The second pit (006), whose fill (007) produced an almost identical carbonised assemblage to that from pit (004), but with a greater quantity of oak charcoal present. Alder charcoal from this fill also produced a late Neolithic AMS date of cal BC 2865 – 2504 (UBA-56225). The third pit (008) contained a number of pottery sherds and a piece of worked flint. Its fill (009) again produced a very diverse charcoal assemblage, with the same types as were present in pits (004) and (006) but with the addition of traces of cherry type and elm. The presence of elm in this context would be consistent with a Neolithic date for this feature, and a fragment of willow charcoal from (009) produced a late Neolithic date of cal BC 2867 – 2580 (UBA-56226).

	Area	Borrow Pit 1			CH4415		CH4405	CH4320	
	Context	005	007	009	028	031	034	013	014
	Sample	002	001	003	017	018	019	004	005
	Description	Fill of possible storage pit (004)	Fill of possible storage pit (006)	Secondary fill of possible storage pit (008)	Upper main fill of drove road (026)	Upper main fill of drove road (029)	Upper main fill of drove road (032)	Lower fill of linear (012)	Secondary fill of linear (012)
Vol of charcoal >4 mm		80ml (50% ID)	40ml	15ml	<1ml	-	<1ml	-	-
Charcoal									
<i>Alnus cf glutinosa</i>	alder	27 (1.07g)	46 (2.85g)	16 (1.07g)	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Betula spp</i>	birch	29 (2.33g)	14 (0.57g)	2 (0.17g)	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Corylus cf avellana</i>	hazel	37 (2.79g)	32 (1.33g)	15 (0.54g)	1 (0.01g)	-	-	-	-
<i>Prunoideae</i>	cherry type	-	-	3 (0.09g)	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Quercus spp</i>	oak	16 (0.78g)	50 (2.90g)	12 (0.66g)	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Salix spp</i>	willow	4 (0.67g)	1 (0.03g)	4 (0.42g)	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Ulmus spp</i>	elm	-	-	1 (0.03g)	-	-	-	-	-
Indeterminate	indeterminate	-	-	-	-	-	3 (0.02g)	-	-
Seeds									
<i>Corylus avellana nutshell</i>	hazel nutshell	44 (1.04g)	21 (0.30g)	16 (0.22g)	-	-	-	-	-

Table 3: Botanical remains from pits and linear features.

Three linear features were identified running north-south, with (026) and (029) located in area CH4415 and (032) in area CH4405. It is thought that these may relate to a possible drove road. Linear feature (026) had both a lower (027) and an upper fill (028). The upper fill (028) produced only a single tiny fragment of hazel charcoal, which could be residual from an earlier period of occupation. Linear feature (029) also had two fills (030) and (031) but only the upper fill (031) was analysed, although it did not produce any carbonised remains. The third linear feature (032) again contained two fills (033) and (034). Only the upper fill (034) was analysed but it produced only traces of indeterminate charcoal.

A further linear feature (012) was initially thought to be either the remains of another drove road or perhaps just a natural watercourse. There were no carbonised remains recorded from either of its fills (013) or (014).

Discussion

The carbonised remains from the prehistoric burial pit (018) and its surrounding ditch (015) do not suggest any particular selection of wood types in relation to pyre fuel for the cremations contained within the pit. The almost total absence of oak charcoal from these assemblages is consistent with the middle Bronze Age AMS dates since oak is usually the wood of choice for cremation pyres, if it was readily available. Oak trees may have already become scarce in the area in the middle Bronze Age as a result of woodland clearance and so whatever wood types were readily available were used as fuel. Evidence for hazel nutshell and traces of emmer wheat and barley cereal grain might suggest food offerings were placed on the pyres.

The group of sub-circular pits contained very mixed charcoal assemblages, with oak charcoal commonly found in the fills of these features. There pit fills all dated to the late Neolithic and are consistent with domestic hearth waste.

Cremated Bone

By Alun Woodward

The focus of this report concerns the cremated remains found within the burial pit within the barrow. The pit contained the remains of four or five probable middle Bronze Age flat-rimmed cremation urn burials (SF 022 – 026; Vessels 7-11). As well as the cremated remains from the urns, additional human remains were discovered during the post-excavation sieving of soil from the fill (019) of the burial pit (018).

Methodology

Bone was passed through three stacked sieves with meshes measuring 10 mm, 5 mm and 2 mm. All the bone over 10 mm and 5 mm was sorted into either specific or main skeletal elements where preservation allowed, catalogued and weighed. The bone material less than 5 mm was visually inspected for any diagnostic skeletal elements and catalogued and weighed. The bone fragments were then weighted, and the largest and smallest bone fragments were measured to identify the range of fragment size. Some fragments were recorded as unidentified - those that could not be identified as specific or main skeletal elements. The bone from the < 2 mm fraction was scanned and any diagnostic fragments recorded.

The bone was recorded in accordance with the British Association of Biological Anthropologists and Osteoarchaeologists/Chartered Institute for Archaeologists standards from human bone analysis (Brickley and McKinley 2004) and Historic Environment Scotland's framework for the treatment of human remains in Archaeology (Historic Scotland 2006).

Preservation

The process of cremation is one of dehydration and oxidation of the organic component of the body. As it combusts the bone mineral re-crystallises resulting in the bone to shrink, distort and fracture (Holden et al. 1995). As a result, cremated bone is more friable and susceptible to mechanical damage than un-burnt bone.

All of the bone within the present assemblage was assessed for preservation based on two criteria, its overall surface appearance and the percentage fraction size of each deposit. Factors influencing preservation include original cremation ritual, collection, and burial of the deposit. Post-depositional processes including weathering such as freeze/thaw and/or water percolation can result in surface changes and fragmentation to the bone. Other factors influencing bone preservation include the archaeologist's skill during excavation and subsequent handling of the bones following removal from the soil. All these factors can result in further bone deterioration and fragmentation.

Determination of species

The distinction between human and animal bone is more difficult when the bones have been cremated. This is due to the cremation process shrinking, warping, fragmenting and changing the colour of the bone. It therefore changes the main characteristics in which the identification is based such as the size, morphology, density, surface texture and colour of the bone (Gejvall 1963; McKinley 1989). Animal bone does, however, have a greater ratio of cortical to trabecular bone and the trabecular bone structure itself is finer thus allowing a determination of species. Possible animal bone was identified together with human remains within Vessel 7 and Vessel 8.

Minimum number of individuals

The minimum number of individuals (MNI) was calculated by identifying any repeated skeletal element from the same side (left/right) or different age categories. A minimum number of two individuals, one adult and one sub-adult of indeterminate sex were noted in three of the urns, Vessels 8, 9 and 11. The rest of the cremated bone recovered represented at least one adult individual of indeterminate sex.

Age at death

The methods employed in the determination of age at death in cremated remains are the same as those used on inhumation: dental eruption and epiphyseal fusion in sub-adult remains and degenerative changes in auricular surface, pubic

symphysis and sternal rib ends and cranial suture closure in adult remains (Bass 2005; Brooks and Suchey 1990; Buisktra and Ubelaker 1994; Lovejoy et al. 1985; Meindl and Lovejoy 1989; Scheuer and Black 2004).

Very few of these methods were applicable to the cremated bones discussed below, due to the lack of preservation and conservation of the skeletal elements. Consequently, the different age categories identified in these cremated remains were based largely in observations of the size and thickness of fragments of skull and of cortical bone, as well as epiphyseal fusion and dental development. Even though these observations can be quite problematic, since the bone elements can shrink up to 15% during the cremation process different age categories were identified on the cremated remains recovered from several contexts. The main age category was either adult or sub-adult, although when preservation allowed further age categories were used. Adult refers to individuals older than 18 years of age while sub-adult refers to any individual less than 18 years of age (see Table 4). This differentiation was based on the cranial size and thickness and cortical bone thickness. However, when preservation allowed dental development and epiphyseal fusion as well as degenerative changes on the auricular surface were also used to determine the age at death of the remains.

Categories	Age
Foetus	< birth
Infant	b – 3 years
Child	3 – 12 years
Adolescent (AO)	12 – 20 years
Young Adult (Yad)	20-35 years
Middle Adult (Mad)	35-50 years
Old Adults	50 years +
Sub-adult	Refers to any individual less than 18 years of age
Adult	Individuals of adult size and development where no more precise indicators of age are present

Table 4: Age Categories (based on Buisktra and Ubelaker 1994).

Biological sex determination

The sex determination of human remains is based on pelvic and cranial morphology, and post cranial metric data. There were no biological markers identified on any of the cremated human remains.

Non-metric traits

The non-metric traits, as their name indicates are not measurable traits which are simply recorded as present or absent. Some of them are related to genetic causes while others are thought to be linked with the environment, occupation and lifestyle. Consequently, they are generally used to identify and compare different genetic groups. There were no non-metric traits recorded in the cremated bone assemblage.

Pathology

Evidence of disease or trauma can be identified on cremated bone although differential diagnosis is made more difficult due to the very fragmented nature of the remains. Surface erosion and none or partial survival of the appropriate skeletal element can also hinder diagnosis of any pathological condition. Studies have shown that certain disease groups have been recorded from cremated bone. These include trauma, degenerative joint disease, dental disease and infections including periostitis and osteomyelitis. All the bone within the assemblage was observed for evidence of pathology.

Two instances of pathology were noted within the assemblage of Twentyshilling Wind Farm with both being observed within Vessel 7. Periostosis, which is an abnormal bone growth on the surface of existing bone was recorded on a vertebral body (Figure 17). Periostosis has a wide range of aetiologies including chronic infections, prolonged mechanical stress/trauma and inflammation. In addition, a Schmorl's Node was also observed in a vertebral body of a possible adult. Schmorl's nodes are a type of spinal abnormality that occur when the cartilage protrudes into the cancellous bone of the vertebral body and are most commonly observed in the lumbar and thoracic vertebrae. Common causes include trauma and axial loading, often from weight bearing activities, degenerative

changes associated with aging and osteoporosis or other biological integrity compromising conditions.

Cremation process and mortuary practice

The colour of the bone was recorded as this can give some indication of the temperature in which the bones were burnt. The colour range varies from brown/orange (unburnt), to black (charred; c. 300°C), blue and grey (up to c. 600°C) to the fully oxidised white (>c. 600°C) (Shipman et al. 1984). In the Twentyshilling assemblage the bones were mostly white, although a significant proportion of light grey/blue coloured bones were observed. This range indicates that the pyre achieved a focal temperature between 645 - <940°C. Much of the grey/blue colours recorded were visible either in the trabecular or interior of the bone, although some were also recorded in the outer surfaces of some bones. The bones most affected were from the lower limbs, skull and dentition, which could indicate their distance from the centre of the pyre or the heating process not being closely managed, resulting in insufficient oxidation throughout. It should also be noted that the differing densities of bone mass can affect the time needed for complete oxidation. There were rare occurrences of orange and black bones within Vessels 7, 8 and 10 again suggestive of an inconsistent spread of heat throughout the pyre. Vessels 7, 8 and 9 all contained a small amount of bone with a green tinge which can indicate bone that has been cremated in contact with copper alloys although soil chemistry can also be responsible for the discoloration of bone after burial (Kreuger 2022).



Figure 17: Showing signs of bone growth associated with possible periostitis.

Surface cracking was observed in the vast majority of the cremated bones, with transverse and U-shaped cracks noted along long bone shafts. Some warping was also noted on the upper and lower limbs in Vessel 8. These cracks indicate that when the bone was cremated it was still “green” or covered with flesh (Buiscktra and Ubelaker 1994). Evidence of de-fleshed bones or dry bone within the assemblage, indicated by the distinctive irregular vertical splitting bones was also noted in all of the urns, with the greatest concentration recorded from Vessel 8. This was represented again predominantly in the bones of the lower limbs (ibid).

As explored by McKinley (1993), the average weight of a modern complete cremated skeleton is 1615.7 g for a female and 2283.5 g for a male. The weight of the cremated material from Twentyshilling ranged from 847.9 g within Vessel 11 to 2349.6 g in Vessel 8 with Vessels 7, 9 and 10 weighing 862.8 g, 1617.6 g and 1124.5 g respectively while the cremated material from the fill (019) of pit (018) measured 271.46 g. Some of the weight recorded for Vessels 8, 9 and 10, the heaviest examples, did however include gravel from within the fill of the cremations, thus inflating the results. When the average weight of a cremated adult is considered against the weight of the material recovered within the urns, it is clear that none of the urns contained a complete cremation. Furthermore, taphonomic factors such as plough damage and animal bioturbation, noted during the excavation, would have also played a part in the preservation of cremated remains and the quantity of bone recovered.

In reality, the burial ritual witnessed suggests that these cremations were partly curated and that the collection and storage of all the cremated bones following a cremation of an individual in a vessel was not an important factor. Recent studies at the late Bronze Age site at Must Farm have revealed possible curation of non-cremated human bone. Isotope study on bone recovered have produced a different diet from those that inhabited the site, suggesting that bones, either representing ancestors, allies or ‘others’ were important (Lightfoot et al. 2024). Comparative use of human remains as relics is present in the medieval Christian tradition as well as ethnographic evidence from nineteenth century Aborigines where cremated bone was given to mourners as keepsakes (McKinley 1997).

Animal bone was recovered from Vessels 7 and 8. This occurrence has been noted at other Bronze Age sites such as Sawmill Field in Helensburgh where animal bone including a worked bone spatula was interred in a cist burial (Arabaolaza 2023). Cloburn Quarry Bronze Age ring cairn at Cairngryffe Hill also noted animal bone cremated at the same temperature and therefore as part of the same mortuary ritual as the human remains (Lelong and Pollard 1998).

Results of the Analysis

Five urns (Vessels 7-11) found within the burial pit (018) encircled by a ring ditch (015), all contained cremated human remains, as did the fill of the pit (019).

Vessel 7 (SF 22) contained 862.8 g of cremated material, and based on lack of repeated skeletal elements represented at least one adult individual, although no specific age could be determined. No sexually dimorphic bones were present thus the sex of the individual could not be ascertained. Pathology was noted in two bone fragments; periostosis was observed in a vertebral body (Figure 17) while a Schmorl’s node was noted on a probable adult vertebral body. Most of the bone was white in colour although some grey/blue fragments predominantly from the cranium and dentition were present. U-shaped, longitudinal and horizontal cracks were recorded indicating that the bones were fleshed at the time of cremation, although a small proportion displayed vertical cracks suggestive of de-fleshed or dry bones. Examples of cremated animal bone were recorded within the urn, although species were not identified.

Vessel 8 (SF 23) contained the greatest weight of cremated bone at 2349.6 g. However, this weight was inflated as gravel from the 2 mm sieve size was not removed from the fill. A radiocarbon date obtained from a sample of cortical bone from this assemblage provided a middle Bronze Age date between 1439 – 1292 BC (UBA-56227). The MNI analysis indicated that the material represents at least two individuals, an adolescent and an adult. A youthful billowy fragment of pubic symphysis (Figure 18) was identified as belonging to a young adult with a number of fragments including an unfused ishium, an unfused femoral head and an unfused proximal end of a phalange were observed to belonging to an adolescent juvenile.

Other bone fragments were identified as being from an adult. They included cortical fragments and joint surfaces from lower limbs. Most of the bone was white although a number of grey/blue fragments were observed mostly from lower limbs and dentition.

Three skull fragments were noted as having a distinct colouration: one had green staining, another orange/green staining and another orangey staining. The orange-stained fragment could be from being exposed to a heat of less than 300° C, while the orange/green and the green staining could be from contact with a metal alloy. There is also the possibility that some discolouration could be a consequence of soil chemistry, however we would expect more of the bones to be affected. U-shaped, longitudinal and horizontal cracks and warping indicate that the majority of bones contained flesh at the time of cremation although a number of vertical cracks were observed particularly in the lower limbs and dentition. As in Vessel 7, animal bone was observed within the assemblage.

Vessel 9 (SF 24) contained 1617.6 g of cremated human remains, however, as in Vessel 8, some gravel was mixed with the bone. The assembly contained at least two individuals, an adult and a juvenile. The juvenile was identified based on a mandibular condyle and an unfused femoral head. No sexually dimorphic traits were present, so a biological sex for the adult could not be determined. Most of the bone was white bone, although a small sample of grey/blue bone was present on cranium, dentition, axial and lower limb fragments. Although vertical cracking was

noted, the bones generally showed U-shaped, horizontal and longitudinal cracks indicate that cadavers had flesh at time of cremation. Most of the recovered material was cortical bone from the lower limbs and skull fragments. Radiocarbon dating obtained from a fragment of cortical bone provided a middle Bronze Age date, similar to Vessel 8 of between 1436 – 1287 cal BC (UBA-56228).

The weight of the human remains of Vessel 10 (SF 25) was 1,097.3 g, although part of the weight (304.6 g) included gravel mixed with bone. The cremation indicated one possible adult of indeterminate sex. The majority of the bone was white although some grey/blue bone was also noted. Black bone was observed in the 2 mm fragment size that was mixed with gravel. Green colouring was noted in unidentified trabecular bone suggesting the possibility of copper alloys being present within the pyre. U-shaped, horizontal and longitudinal cracks indicated that the body was fleshed at time of cremation although a small amount of vertical cracks were observed and are suggestive of dry bones at time of the cremation.

Vessel 11 (SF 26) contained 847.9 g of cremated human remains with a MNI of two individuals, a juvenile and an adult. The juvenile was identified by an unfused phalange epiphysis and an unfused growth plate from a possible proximal tibia while the adult was identified by a medial clavicle and glenoid. Most of the bones were white with some grey/blue bones also represented. U-shaped, horizontal and longitudinal cracks were noted as well as some warping, indicating that the bodies



Figure 18: Pubic symphysis fragments from Vessel 8. Note the size difference indicating different age categories.

were fleshed, although a small proportion had vertical cracks. The juvenile possible proximal tibia displayed a weathered condition suggestive of post depositional effects.

Finally, the samples collected from the fill 019 of burial pit 018 contained 274.16 g of cremated remains with at least one possible indeterminate adult represented. The bone colour was predominantly white with some instances of grey/blue. All of the cracks were U-shaped, horizontal or longitudinal indicating fleshed bodies within the pyre.

Discussion

The treatment of the cremated dead buried within flat rimmed urns at Twentyshilling fits well within our understanding of funerary practices in the middle Bronze Age. Similarities with other sites such as Dunragit (Arabaolaza 2021a) and Thirlestane (Ballin Smith 2024) indicate a tradition within which Twentyshilling sits comfortably (see *Prehistoric Pottery*, below).

Most of the bone within the assemblage was fully oxidised to a white colour indicating temperatures over 600° C. Those bones within the collection with a grey/blue colouring were often represented by lower limbs or skull fragments suggesting a position on the periphery of the pyre. Green tinged bones were also present. These are often related to copper alloys being in contact with bones within the cremation (Buisktra and Ubelaker 1994) and are seen within other Bronze Age assemblages such as Crantit (Roberts 2014) and Sannox Quarry, Isle of Arran (Arabaolaza 2014). Most of the bone exhibited cracking consistent with cremation taking place while the deceased was still fleshed. There are however, a number of bones with vertical cracks suggestive of being cremated whilst dry and at least partly de-fleshed. This coupled with the inclusion of more than one individual in three of the five urns raises the question if the remains represent not just multiple familiar cremations but if some of the remains were part of curated assemblages. This idea of bone as *pars pro toto* is an interesting concept, with sites such as Cladh Hallan in South Uist exhibiting a curated approach to reburied interments and cremated assemblages representing only a fraction of the weight expected from a cremated body (Parker

Pearson 2023). The average weight of a Bronze Age cremation deposit is 800 g which is far short of the 1626 g noted in the cremated remains from a modern crematorium (McKinley 1997).

Twentyshilling displays a tradition of curated cremated burials. Fleshed human remains are transformed from unanimated corpses into cleansed white calcined remains, a metamorphosis from the known individual into the collective communal, with the addition of cremated ancestors, animal bones and other organic materials which do not survive the cremation process. This treatment is noted from other sites in Scotland in the middle of the Bronze Age with Dunragit in Dumfries and Galloway presenting flat rimmed urns with co-mingled cremated remains with at least two individuals, an adult, a sub-adult and animal bones centred in two of the three ring ditches found on the site (Arabaolaza 2021b, 334). Plain middle Bronze Age cremation urns were recovered from Thirlestane Round Barrow in Tweeddale containing cremated remains of multiple individuals and one containing animal bone. Although this site had key differences with the human remains being at least partially de-fleshed before cremation (Gilmore 2024, 79).

There is a tradition of fluidity within Bronze Age burials in Scotland. Medina-Pettersson (2013) notes reuse of henges, cairns and stone circles in the Bronze Age for bucket urn cremations. The cremations at Twentyshilling tell a different story, however, with the urns being tightly arranged giving the impression of being buried collectively and then remaining undisturbed except for modern plough damage. As noted in the *Prehistoric Pottery* (below) the vessels are possibly made by the same person and as no pyre material was recovered it seems they were cremated elsewhere and brought to the site – a site that held some significance. We cannot know, as DNA is not preserved in calcined bone, but perhaps the cremations represent a kin group with the urns being made by relatives and transported with the human remains to a resting place with an intrinsic sense of the sacred. What is certain is that the disposal of the various cremation urns was a single event, as suggested by the overlapping radiocarbon dates of two of the five urns placed in the pit and the similarities of the urns containing the remains.



Lithic Assemblage

By Torben Bjarke Ballin

This analysis sought to characterize the lithic artefacts in detail, with special reference to raw-materials and typo-technological attributes. From this characterization, the aim was to date and discuss the finds. The evaluation of the lithic material is based upon a detailed catalogue of the artefacts, and in the report the lithics are referred to by their CAT(alogue) number.

The assemblage

From the excavation at Twentyshilling Wind Farm, 126 lithic artefacts were recovered from the Pit Group, the Barrow, and the drove road. They are listed in Table 5. In total, 98% of this small assemblage is debitage, whereas 1% is cores (one piece) and 1% tools (one piece). Lithic artefacts are classified according to Ballin (2021).

Raw materials – types, sources and condition

The vast majority (95%) of the lithics are in flint, supplemented by seven pieces of chert. Practically all flint is mottled-grey and opaque, suggesting that this material is Antrim flint. In the early Neolithic period, some Antrim flint was imported from Northern Ireland (see for example Bryce 1903; Saville 1999; Cowie 1996), but the same kind of flint could be collected from the shores of south-west Scotland (Smith 1880). It is not possible to determine whether the Antrim flint from this site was procured

from Scottish sources or Northern Ireland. The combined scraper/knife is in a more vitrious type of mottled-grey flint, usually associated with importation from sources in north-east England during the middle/late Neolithic period (Ballin 2011).

The chert is fine-grained material, either grey, buff or black, and it is characterised by criss-crossing fault-planes which made it very difficult to control the reduction process. This material was available throughout southern and central Scotland.

Debitage

The debitage includes numerous minuscule chips (86% of the debitage), supplemented by 13 flakes (11%), two blades, one microblade and two indeterminate pieces. Most of the chips derive from the two adjacent pits (004) and (006), and these pieces are generally exceptionally thin (a few tenths of a millimetre thick). It is thought that they are waste from the production of one or more bifacial or invasively retouched tools (arrowheads, scale-flaked/plano-convex knives, discoidal knives, etc.; see Ballin 2021), and that they ended up in the pits when a knapping floor was penetrated by later pit diggers.

The blades differ somewhat in appearance, with CATs 89 and 90 from pit (006) being fragments of relatively small and delicate blades (W = 8.6 mm and 9.4 mm), whereas the blank for scraper-knife CAT 2 is a larger and more robust blade (52 by 15 by 8 mm). These blades may represent

	Pit (004)	Pit (006)	Pit (008)	Linear feature (012)	Ring ditch (015)	Drove Road (032)	Total
Debitage							
Chips	23	78	1		2	2	106
Flakes	1	8	2	1			13
Blades		2					2
Microblades			1				1
Indeterminate pieces	1		1				1
Total debitage	25	88	5	1	2	3	124
Cores and tools							
Bipolar cores	1						1
Cobined scaper/knives			1				1
Total cores and tools	1		1				2
Total	26	88	6	1	2	3	126

Table 5: Lithic artefact list.

different industries dating to different periods, with the delicate ones deriving from pit (006) and the robust blade-based scraper/knife deriving from pit (008). The flakes are roughly equally distributed across hard-hammer and bipolar pieces.

Cores and tools

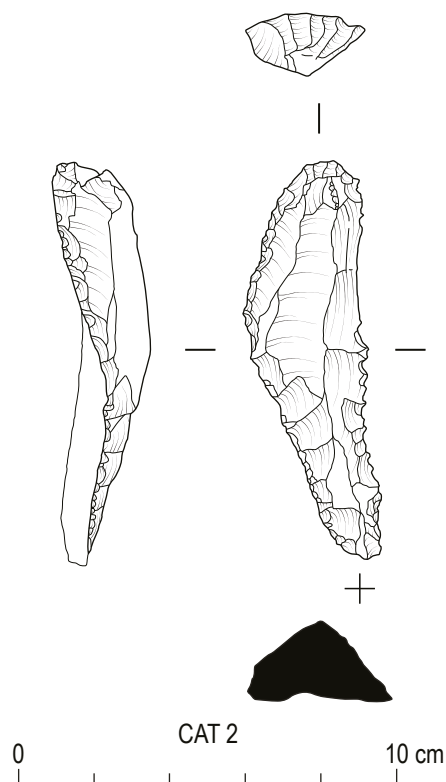


Figure 19: Blade/scraper CAT 2.

The assemblage also includes one bipolar core (CAT 1) and one combined scraper/knife (CAT 2). CAT 1 is the fragment of a relatively large bipolar core (18 by 26 by 11 mm). This piece has lost one terminal, and it is a bifacial specimen with two reduction axes (i.e., two sets of opposed terminals), showing that it was re-orientated during the reduction process. CAT 2 is a combined blade-scraper/scale-flaked knife, and it measures 52 by 15 by 8 mm. The blade is of good quality, and the implement is generally well-executed. Due to the small size of the platform remnant it is impossible to say whether the piece is a hard- or soft-hammer blade, but it is definitely a platform-blade. The blank is crested, and it has a 25 mm-

long proximal tang, showing that the tool would have been hafted for use. It has invasive retouch along the left lateral side, defining it as a scale-flaked knife, and in addition it has a convex, steep scraper-edge at the distal end (Figure 19). The raw material is probably mottled-grey Yorkshire flint.

Discussion

The interesting elements of this assemblage were all recovered from three pits (004, 006 and 008) within the pit group. Pits (004) and (006) were located immediately next to each other, and pit (008) was discovered 2 m south-west of the other two pits. Two scenarios for pits (004/006) and pit (008) can be suggested.

Pits (004) and (006) are both characterised by the presence of large numbers of minuscule chips (101 pieces), and all these chips are defined by being exceptionally thin (many between 0.1-0.2 mm thick), indicating that they may be waste from the production of one or more bifacial or scale-flaked implements. In the archaeological literature, pits with this sort of lithic content are frequently referred to as 'rubbish pits' (cf. Brophy and Noble 2012) but it is highly unlikely that such tiny chips would have been hand-picked for dumping in middens or pits. It is much more likely that there was a two-stage process, where a knapping floor was dug through at a later time when the same or other people re-visited the sited and penetrated the knapping floor when they dug pits for one or the other reason: that is, the small-sized debris simply ended up in the pits with the back-fill.

The fact that pit (008) contained sherds from several pottery vessels as well as a flint object, which must be described as well-executed and 'special', suggests that this pit is likely to represent deliberate deposition, and that it is either funereal or sacrificial in nature. The suggested date of the assemblage of the middle/late Neolithic period is supported by three radiocarbon dates (UBA-56224-6) from contexts (005, 007, and 009). The samples from these contexts returned dates of between 2867-2504 cal BC (2 sigma) during the late Neolithic period.

Prehistoric Pottery

By Beverley Ballin Smith

The pottery came from two areas; two of the three pits in the pit group yielded Beaker pottery, a plain urn and other plain vessels; while the central burial pit within the barrow yielded four definite and one possible very fragmented middle Bronze Age urns closely packed in a pit less than 1 m in diameter.

Methodology, analysis and description of the pieces

The assemblage is a collection of prehistoric pottery totalling 902 sherds weighing 13450.3 g. All the sherds were gently brushed before analysis and were examined using a x6 hand lens. Their attributes and statistics compiled in an archivable table devised using Microsoft Excel. The assemblage was analysed according to the revised guidelines for the study of prehistoric pottery of the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (2010) and its Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology (2016), as well as the ClfA's Standards and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (2014, revised 2020).

The pit group produced 24 sherds from six different vessels found in the fills of two pits (004) and (008). The pottery was retrieved by hand with soil samples taken for the recovery of additional small sherds or fragments.

The remains of four, possibly five, vessels (879 sherds) were found in a burial pit (018) associated with a cairn or barrow (015). They were positioned close together in the pit and covered over with soil and stones. After exposure three of the urns were lifted as a block and excavated under laboratory conditions with any remaining sherds retrieved by hand. Table 6 provides a list of sherds and sherd types for each vessel.

There is a clear difference in sherds from the pit group from those of the barrow. The former are from fine vessels with thinner walls while those from the burial pit are consistently thicker-walled (c.16 mm), and larger vessels (Table 7). The average sherd weights reveal another picture. Although few sherds from Vessels 1-5 survive, they are generally medium to large in size. Table 7 demonstrates that the four urns were placed in the pit whole due to their high total weights, but apart from Vessel 7, which had larger sherds surviving, the other vessels are heavily fragmented, hence their low sherd weights. A fifth vessel has not survived apart from as a few small sherds (Vessel 11).

Area	Vessel No.	Rims	Bases	Bodies	Crumbs	Total
Borrow Pit 1	1	2		6	*	8
	2	4		1		5
	3			7		7
	4	1				1
	5			1		1
	6			1		1
Burial pit				1		1
	7	9	6	39	*	54
	8	9	3	233	*	245
	9	12	8	180	*	200
	10	2	5	343	*	350
	11			30	*	30
		39	22	842		903

Table 6: Sherd form and numbers.

Area	Vessel No.	No. sherds	Average sherd thickness (mm)	Total weight of sherds (g)	Average sherd weight (g)
Borrow Pit 1	1	8	8.6	117.3	14.7
	2	5	10.1	243.2	48.6
	3	7	11.3	142.5	20.3
	4	1	6.9	6.9	6.9
	5	1	9.5	36.1	36.1
	6	1	12	14.8	14.8
Burial pit		1	6.5	4	4
	7	54	16.1	3958.7	73.3
	8	245	16.9	2354.5	9.6
	9	200	16.3	3989	19.9
	10	350	16.9	2423.7	6.9
	11	30	n/m	159.6	5.3
				13450.3	

Table 7: Sherd thickness and weight.

Firing and post-depositional changes

Most of the pottery was Munsell colour 7/6 reddish yellow, but colour changes were due to the use of vessels and their depositional environment. Although Vessels 1-6 were well-fired and the pottery was generally hard, the same is not true for the urns. In Vessels 7-10 the mineral temper and clay were not well fused indicating that the vessels were not fired at a high enough temperature to enable this to occur. During the excavation of the urns, the majority of the pottery disintegrated into clay, dust and loose stone because of its poor fusion. The exterior finishing of some sherds, mainly rims and bases, created a somewhat firmer surface that was slightly more resistant to disintegration. Other better-preserved sherds, however, showed signs of lamination and cracking.

The urns are very similar in their manufacture and firing, and this suggests they were made either together or roughly at the same time. There is evidence that the base of Vessel 9 came into contact with sufficient heat that it turned the clay pink in colour but not enough to cause fusion of the clay and mineral temper. The apparent lack of sooting on the exterior surfaces of the vessels lessens the possibility of them being fired in or beside the funeral pyre(s) to be later placed in the burial pit along with their contents of cremated bone. Although there is no direct evidence, there is the possibility that the pit could have been used for the firing of the pots in-situ. The vessels were positioned so close together that they were not only touching each other but also the sides of the pit.

Their arrangement indicates this was a multiple burial that was unlikely to have been reopened for additional insertion of urns. Once backfilled with earth and sizable stones, the weight of the material put considerable pressure on the pots and they cracked and became distorted in spite of their contents. Although securely buried, the external conditions of ploughing and animal trample did little to assist their preservation.

Manufacture of the pottery

Natural clay would have been available as a resource for pottery-making close to the locations of the buried pottery such as along

the banks of the River Nith or along many of the tributary burns flowing in to it from the west and south-west. Burns may also have been the source of quartz, gravel, grit and small stones of greywacke - waterworn and degraded - added to the clay along with organic temper. Raw clay was prepared for use by the addition of organic material, such as chopped up dried grasses, which made it more pliable. Mineral temper was added to give strength and stability to the vessel and help it withstand thermal shock when fired. Whilst gravel and quartz was noted in the vessels from the pit group, medium to very coarse rounded and angular fragments of greywacke dominated the temper in the burial urns, with pieces measuring up to 11 by 11 mm.

All the pots would have been hand-made using the thumb-pot method of opening up a ball of clay with the thumb and working it into the desired shape and diameter with the fingers until the addition of coils of clay was needed to give height to the pot. The final coil would be the one from which the rim was formed.

Pit group

Vessels 1 and some sherds of Vessel 3 were found in one pit (004) while Vessel 2 and Vessels 4 to 6 with parts of Vessel 3 were found in another pit (008). Vessels 1 to 3 contain noticeable quartz mineral temper along with other minerals and gravel.

Vessel 1

Vessel 1 was a fairly straight-sided to slightly tapering vessel with a c. 300 mm rim diameter of which only 3% survived (Figure 20). The rim was flat-topped, narrow and slightly inturned. Approximately 3.5 m below the rim top the vessel was pierced by a 5 mm diameter perforation pushed through the fabric from the outside. The inside surface around the perforation was slightly chipped. Another small rim sherd was slightly distorted possibly because it was burnt. Another sherd of this vessel has carbon deposits internally, and some sherds had broken at the coil joins – moulding lines or coil joins are noted in the sections of some sherds. The external surfaces of the vessel were only roughly smoothed and slight finger moulding marks are noticeable.

Vessel 2

This vessel is slightly smaller than Vessel 1 with a 240 mm diameter (Figure 20). It also has a flat and very slightly inturned rim with a marked horizontal indentation at the bottom of the neck 50 mm below the rim top, producing a collared effect to the pot. Other non-joining rim sherds indicate that c. 19% of the rim is present. The vessel was well-made and smoothed after forming, but mineral temper shows through its surface. Carbon deposits are particularly noticeable on the external surfaces of the vessel. It was possibly a small urn.

Vessel 3

This vessel comprises body sherds only. The largest appears to be broken at the vessel neck, where there is a horizontal finger runnel but the rim is missing. The sherds are very gritty but have lost their surface finish. All are burnt, pink in colour and have internal carbon deposits.

Vessel 4

This is a single rim sherd representing a vessel c. 100 mm in diameter with 5% of the rim present. The sherd is slightly flattened but everted and is part of a Beaker pot with a horizontal line of

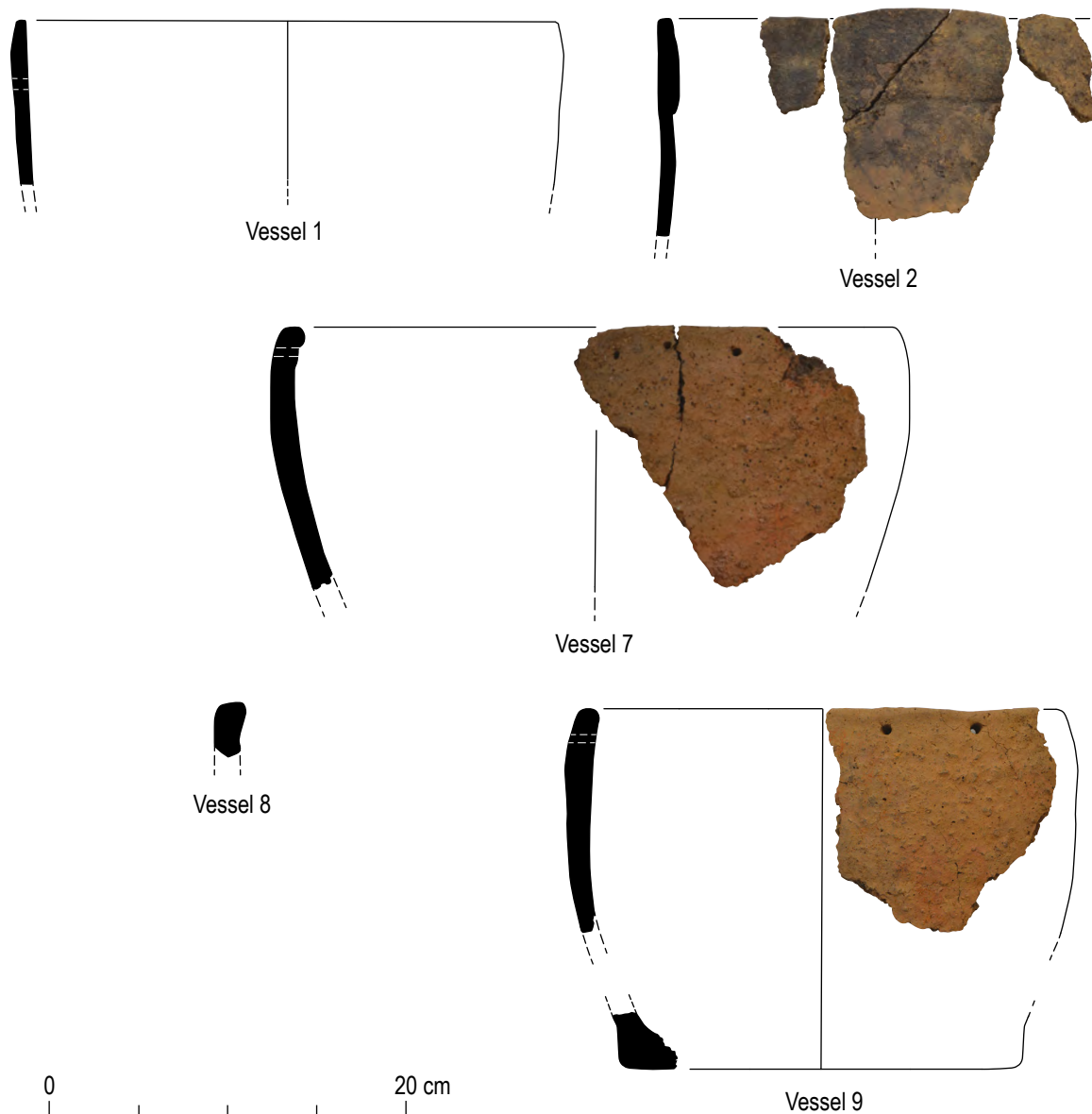


Figure 20: Pottery Vessel 1, possible urn Vessel 2, urns Vessels 7, 8 and 9

impressed cord just below the rim and linked to it is a decoration of a single oblique line of the same. The sherd is heavily abraded internally but its exterior is smooth. The vessel may have been fired in reduced conditions as it is pale grey in colour externally. There are also negative impressions of fragments of grasses used in the organic tempering of the clay.

Vessel 5

V5 is a single decorated body sherd of a heavily abraded and fragile vessel. It has fine, parallel oblique lines from two directions joining to form broad arrows across the belly of the vessel.

Vessel 6

This is a coarser, heavier body sherd than Vessel 5 that is also decorated. It has two 2 mm wide horizontal lines bordering two oblique lines and the sherd is burnt.

Burial pit 018

Vessel 7

This plain vessel is the one of the better-preserved urns as it produced information on its rim and base construction (Figure 20). The rim was c. 330 mm in diameter, and its sherds indicate that c. 57% of it survives. The rim was slightly inturned and the walls of the vessel tapered down to its c. 140-150 mm diameter base, of which c. 52.5% is present. The base has a slightly pinched edge, with finger moulding above it at the coil join. The rim is flat topped and slightly curved to the exterior due to finger moulding joining the rim coil to the vessel body. The moulding has also caused an intermittent concavity beneath the rim on the interior. It is roughly along this coil join that the vessel was perforated c. 15 mm below the rim top by small 3-4 mm diameter holes pushed through the fabric from the exterior before firing. The perforations were spaced roughly 25-32 mm apart and 20 have survived. Their function was to receive a thread or twine from sewing a covering, possibly of skin or hide stretched over the rim of the vessel to keep its contents intact.

This vessel has large angular fragments of greywacke along with small pebbles and grit, with

visible vesicles from burnt out organic temper. The size of the mineral temper probably caused cracking of the pot surface. Its finishing consisted of smoothing the exterior of the vessel.

Vessel 8

The majority of this vessel is fragmented and laminating body sherds. Like Vessel 7, the rim was flat-topped, c. 16 mm wide, irregularly moulded but it was not possible to measure its diameter (Figure 20). Although base fragments are present they are too small to measure. Perforations below the rim were not found.

Vessel 9

Rim and base sherds survived as large pieces. The rim was c. 260 mm in diameter and c. 76% of it is present. The base was made using the thumb pot method and was c. 180-200 mm in diameter, and c. 60% of its edge survives, indicating this was the best preserved of the urns (Figure 20). The base edge is uneven and rounded due to the amount of grit in the fabric and because of finger moulding. A prominent finger runnel between the wall and the base internally was to ensure their adhesion during manufacture. The rim has a rounded exterior edge to a flat and slightly bevelled rim but it is generally poorly moulded. Like Vessel 7 it is also perforated c. 7-10 mm below the rim. There are a total of 19 perforations c. 6 mm in diameter pushed through the fabric from the exterior to the interior, with a spacing of between 32 and 46 mm.

In this vessel the fabric of the rim is better integrated by firing than that of the base, but mineral temper fragments are large, up to 13 by 13 mm. Small pebbles and grit are also present, giving the fabric a gritty feel. The smoothed exterior is also much cracked, with vesicles from burnt out organic temper, and there is evidence of reddening from burning. Carbonised deposits are noticeable on the interior surface below the rim from its reception of hot cremated remains.

Vessel 10

There are fewer diagnostic sherds of rims and bases from this fragmentary and poorly moulded vessel than those described above. Although

there are two conjoining rim sherds indicating a flat-topped rim 15 mm wide, its diameter could not be measured. The base sherds include a badly formed base edge that also could not produce an accurate diameter. Like Vessel 9 it too had a finger runnel between the wall and the base internally. A vesicle produced from the burning out of organic temper when the pot was fired is probably from a cereal grain.

Vessel 11

This comprised compacted soil and tiny fragments of pottery. It is possible that this material derived from one or more of the other vessels.

Discussion

Pit group

The sherds from the two pits in the pit group are a mixture of fragments of six different vessels. This is unusual, and the larger pit (008) contained fragments of five different vessels as well a 'special' flint object (see *Lithic Assemblage*). The collection of rims, decorated sherds, a rim with decoration, and part of a plain vessel, suggests this was a purposeful assemblage of pieces and a deliberate deposition. It also included CAT 2 that is described as a blade-scraper/scale-flaked knife in Yorkshire flint dated to the middle to late Neolithic. Vessel 1 could be later Neolithic in date, while the remainder of the vessels are likely to date to the early Bronze Age. This collection gives credence to the suggestion by Ballin (see *Lithic Assemblage*) that this collection could be related to a funeral or even a sacrificial placement of objects.

The three radiocarbon dates for contexts (005), (007) and (009) produced late Neolithic date ranges (UBA-56224-6), which overlap between 2867 and 2505 cal BC. These dates prove problematic for the pottery as there is clearly Vessel 4 (a Beaker sherd) and Vessels 5 and 6 both with incised marks (possibly both Beakers), and Vessel 2, which is clearly a plain urn. It is possible, but doubtful that the Beaker sherds are early and Vessel 2 is clearly later than the radiocarbon dates. The radiocarbon dates agree with the time frame of the lithics objects, but it cannot be ruled out that the pottery is a later insertion.

A comparable example is the number and range of sherds from the early Neolithic, the late Neolithic (Grooved Ware) and the early Bronze Age (Beaker vessels), located in the two fills of a pit at Laigh Newton, East Ayrshire, with one or more lithic artefacts (Ballin Smith 2011, 22). The complexity of this pit presupposes that the location was important, and that some objects could have been curated, but also deposited there on more than one occasion. These two depositions indicate that separate from formal burials with human remains, other ritual activities took place in areas that might have been related to funerals, or to other events. The location and the timing of the deposition may have had importance for those that took part in the event.

Barrow

The urns in the burial pit within the barrow are all flat-rimmed and plain bucket urns from the middle of the Bronze Age. The radiocarbon date ranges for the urns places them between c.1439 and 1287 cal BC, comfortably within the accepted date range of c 1550 and 1150 BC for the currency of these vessels. At Dunragit, in Dumfries, two sites at Boreland Cottage Upper produced similar flat rimmed bucket urns. One was almost complete and stood c. 300 mm high, with a diameter of 270-300 mm and was also perforated. Another nearby Site 23-ext had a fragment of a bucket urn also with perforations. Both these sites and their vessels were dated to the middle of the Bronze Age c.1430 – 1260 cal BC (Arabaolaza 2021a, 236).

Flat rimmed ware can also be found without perforations below the rim suggesting pots were inverted or a stone was placed as a lid. At Curragh, Girvan, three separate urns, without perforations, were similarly built and used as at Twentyshilling Hill, but were dated slightly earlier, to the end of the early Bronze Age c. 1750 – 1550 BC (Ballin Smith 2025, 38).

Further examples have been found at Inverurie, Aberdeenshire where four plain urns but slightly smaller vessels (McGalliard and Wilson 2021, 20-21), similar to domestic wares of the period, were located in an inverted position. Two perforations were found on Vessel 4 only and the suggested

dating of these pots was 1400 – 1220 cal BC. These burials may have been isolated events or could have been covered by a cairn.

The remains of three flat-rimmed ware urns very similar in size and construction to the Twentyshilling Hill vessels but without perforations were found in a barrow at Thirlestane in the Scottish Borders along with sherds of an early Bronze Age Food Vessel. The vessels were in poor condition but although they were not perforated below their rims, they were dated to the second half of the middle Bronze Age c. 1396 – 1221 cal BC (Ballin Smith 2024).

The Twentyshilling urns are unusual in that they were packed tightly into a single pit with their contents and they might also be a very rare find of five middle Bronze Age bucket-shaped urns together in a single pit. It has already been remarked that all the pots could have been made by one potter and fired together in the pit in which they were buried. The composition and construction of the urns at Thirlestane was very similar and suggested that a single potter made them (Ballin Smith 2024). The pit with its four or five burial urns suggests the location was important, and implies that the cremated remains could be family or friends who died together at Twentyshilling Hill two and a half millennia ago.

Discussion

The landscape around Twentyshilling Windfarm today is relatively barren with a generally rough topography with large areas of peat bog. Due to this the area is largely undeveloped, and very little is known about the archaeology of the area. There are no confirmed prehistoric or medieval archaeological sites nearby, except for the earthwork known as the Deil's Dyke extending through the area (Barber 1982, 30), which is possibly medieval in date (Tabraham 1982). The discovery of pockets of prehistoric archaeology during the Twentyshilling works therefore sheds valuable light on what was happening in this area during the third and second millennia BC.

In terms of the environmental history of Twentyshilling, although we have only a limited data set, the charcoal analysis suggests a decline of woodland in the area between the early-mid third millennium BC and the mid-late second millennium BC. The late Neolithic hearth deposits recovered from the pit group showed an abundant use of oak but the archaeobotanical assemblage from the Bronze Age Barrow showed very little oak had been used in the cremation pyre, likely indicating a scarcity of the trees in the area. Oak, hazel and elm dominated the environment of Southern Scotland during the third and second millennia BC, with birch being generally more prevalent along the coast (Ashmore 2001) so this is a typical woodland fuel assemblage from a group utilising local resources. Woodland clearances are often linked to the rise in agriculture in the Neolithic period, and is often visible in the environment by the mid to late Bronze Age and this is backed up by the small assemblages of charcoal from Twentyshilling, possibly indicating a much greater presence of prehistoric activity and settlement in the area than we currently know about. The charcoal also showed a small amount of cereal grain and hazel nutshell, showing that emmer wheat and barley were grown in the area.

The two main areas of archaeology uncovered during the Twentyshilling Wind Farm fieldwork represent scattered use of the area during the late Neolithic and Bronze Age periods. A third area to the east of Borrow pit 2 contained three

linear features relating to a drove road but other than some residual flint debitage and charcoal, there was nothing to indicate the date of these features.

The analysis of finds from the Twentyshilling pit group indicates use of the area sometime between 2867 – 2504 BC, during the late Neolithic period, although the inclusion of early Bronze Age Beaker pottery and later flat urn pottery hints at something more complex going on later, with people returning and using the same area during the early Bronze Age. In contrast, the analysis of the cremated human bones, their associated urns and archaeobotanical evidence recovered from the barrow represents a more precise snapshot in time between 1439 – 1287 BC, during the middle of the Bronze Age.

Overall, the artefactual assemblage collected from the Twentyshilling excavations was relatively small, comprising pottery from multiple vessels and a scattering of flint debitage with a flint core and a small flint tool. In total, eleven vessels of pottery were identified from the two main areas. Vessels 1 to 6 were recovered from two of the three pits in the pit group and represent only fragments of vessels, rather than complete examples. The collection of various rim sherds, decorated sherds and part of a plain vessel representing five different vessels recovered from the largest pit is very unusual and may suggest a deliberate curation of specific types of sherds (see *Prehistoric Pottery*), particularly as they were placed within a pit containing earlier charcoal. Similar pottery collections been noted on other sites throughout southern Scotland, including Eweford West in East Lothian (Lelong and MacGregor 2008, 83-4) and Soutra Hill in the Scottish Borders (Ballin Smith and Spence 2013, 20), where pottery sherds had been deliberately deposited in seemingly ceremonial contexts from the late third millennium BC (Figure 21).

While tempting to attribute the pits solely to ritual activity, they may have served a more prosaic function. Neolithic pits within small pit groups such as at Laigh Newton in Ayrshire contained similar hearth charcoal to that found at Twentyshilling. There, a group of postholes found around a pit indicated a possible structure (Structure D), with the hearth roughly near

the centre (Toolis 2011, 41). No surrounding postholes were identified at Twentyshilling, and the general slope of the area where the three pits were found makes this an unlikely place to construct a permanent dwelling. A cluster of pits discovered nearby structure D at Laigh Newton was also attributed to the same or similar late Neolithic date, and it was suggested that the presence of multiple fills in the relatively shallow pits may indicate their use as waste pits or latrines (Toolis 2011, 42). This may also account for the differing dates of the pottery discovered, as it was regularly filled by soil found around the area. This is one possible interpretation of the Twentyshilling pits, the bases of a cluster of latrine pits for an as-yet undiscovered dwelling nearby. However, they are perhaps more likely to represent short lived domestic camps, as seen at Carnoustie in Angus. There, as the large timber halls went out of use during the early Neolithic period, small groups of pits nearby indicated that smaller groups of people still returned to the site in the later Neolithic period possibly to maintain some connection to their past (Ballin Smith et al. 2025, 290). The returning to, and re-use of areas is not uncommon. At Guardbridge in Fife, Bronze Age buildings were constructed on top of earlier Neolithic pit clusters (Barbour 2025, 199). As with Twentyshilling, at both Guardbridge and Carnoustie pottery sherds from multiple periods were found mixed in the same pits, including fragments of the same vessels in separate pits, and while this could have had a ritual function, it may actually indicate re-digging of earlier pits and re-use of materials. At Carnoustie, it was suggested that the burying of pots may have been part of a tidying process before leaving a site (Ballin Smith et al. 291).

While the Beaker pottery at Twentyshilling could be a very early Bronze Age deposit, bringing the deposition closer in line with the radiocarbon dates from the charcoal, Vessel 2 is certainly later, indicating that the collection as a whole was likely to have been a later insertion sometime after 2200 BC. Beaker pottery was used throughout Western and Central Europe as well as Britain during the early Bronze Age so its discovery here brings the people of Twentyshilling into the complex transition between the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods.



Figure 21: Map of sites mentioned in discussion.

The five vessels recovered from the burial pit within the Twentyshilling barrow tell a different story however. These flat rimmed plain bucket urns date firmly to the middle of the Bronze Age and are much later than the pottery from the pit group. These were all similar in nature and as they were all deposited at the same time, likely date to a relatively short period of time sometime during the fifteenth to thirteenth centuries BC. Similar types of vessels have been discovered throughout the region, such as Lintshie Gutter Bronze Age unenclosed platform settlement at Crawford to the north (Smith 1995, 402).

The lithics collected from the Twentyshilling pit group comprised almost entirely of tiny debitage pieces, and as Ballin states (see *Lithic Assemblage*), these are unlikely to have been deliberately deposited as waste material, and more likely indicate a knapping floor was cut through when the pits were dug and the small debris ended up in the backfill. The Antrim flint used in the vast majority of pieces comes from either Northern Irish sources or collected from south-west Scottish shores. Other than seven pieces of chert (available throughout Scotland), it seems that local material was largely unused, possibly indicating a small nomadic group of people passing through. This is further hinted at by the Yorkshire flint used for the scraper-knife tool. Yorkshire flint is often found throughout Scotland, including Soutra (Ballin 2013, 23) and Dunragit (Bailie 2021, 360) so was evidently a sought-after material and regularly traded.

Unfortunately, the two areas of prehistoric activity cannot really be said to show any real continuity and therefore the two sites do not overlap in time, with a potential gap of around 1000 years between the flint knappers and the barrow builders. While the evidence recovered from the Twentyshilling pit group represents bare traces of what may have been fairly transient occupation of the area during the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age, the construction of the middle Bronze Age barrow indicates a more settled community in the area with possibly family members or members of the same group being buried together.

The burial pit and enclosing ditch represent the truncated remains of a 5.8 m diameter round barrow encircled by a 0.3 m deep ditch, and

is very much in keeping with similar barrows found throughout Scotland. The barrow that once encapsulated the burial pit has long been lost to ploughing, but the remains of some of the stone covering could still be seen on top of the ditch along the northern side. The centre of the barrow contained five tightly packed flat rimmed, plain bucket urns, each buried with their own cremation deposits. As with the rest of the barrow, preservation had been impacted by ploughing activity so the remains were very fragmented.

Multiple barrows are often discovered in close proximity, often along with other forms of burial such as cists and small cremation pits. Recent excavations at Dunragit in Galloway (Bailie 2021), Orchardfield in East Lothian (Kirby 2018), Sawmill Field in Argyll and Bute (Arabaolaza 2023) and Thirlestane in the Scottish Borders (Toolis et al. 2024), each demonstrate Bronze Age cemetery landscapes. However, at Twentyshilling in contrast, only one barrow was evident. While this may indicate there are more remains to be unearthed nearby, outwith the Twentyshilling Wind Farm access route, discrete single Bronze Age barrows and burial cairns also occur, such as Soutra Hill overlooking the Lothian Plain (Will 2013).

The Twentyshilling urns are similar to urns found throughout southern Scotland during the Bronze Age, with similar examples coming from Thirlestane and Meldoun Bridge in the Scottish Borders (Ballin Smith 2024; Speak and Burgess 1999, 80) but the inclusion of five tightly packed urns in the same pit is uncommon. At Thirlestane, multiple cremation burials were placed within the same round barrow, but likely not all at once, as displayed by the intercutting pits used for the deposition of the vessels (Gilmore and Toolis 2024, 116). In general, most pottery vessels used for burial in Bronze Age Scotland tended to be single vessels in pits, so the Twentyshilling urns are exceptional in this aspect.

The five urns in the Twentyshilling Barrow contained at least eight individuals as well as a possible ninth from the pit fill itself, although this seems likely to represent a spill from within the badly damaged urns. The urns were deposited at the same time as they were packed tightly within the pit and adhered to the same fifteenth to

thirteenth century BC date range. This indicates that this was a single mass burial, possibly of the same family or group. This may suggest a time of particular stress as observed in burials elsewhere in Dumfries and Galloway during the early Bronze Age, such as at Blairbuy in the Machars (Bailie 2013).

The recently excavated Thirlestane Round Barrow in Peeblesshire, part of a barrow cemetery some 45 km to the north-east of Twentyshilling, offers a useful comparison. While the 5.8 m diameter of the Twentyshilling barrow was more substantial than the 3.8 m diameter Thirlestane Barrow, the Thirlestane Barrow also contained multiple burials, with six individuals identified in the three excavated urns with a fourth grave pit left unexcavated. However, unlike at Twentyshilling, they seem to have been interred at slightly different times, as there was evidence of at least three phases of burial there (Gilmore and Toolis 2024, 115). The urns at Thirlestane were very similar however to each other, and were likely made by the same potter (Ballin Smith 2024, 94), so the period of use was still likely to be very narrow and, in that sense, comparable to Twentyshilling.

Three of the five Twentyshilling urns contained the remains of an adult and a juvenile while the other two contained an adult each. The burial of an adult and juvenile together was quite common in the Bronze Age. The three urns recovered from the Thirlestane Round Barrow each contained an adult and a juvenile (Gilmore 2024, 78), as did one of the Bronze Age cremation burials at Horsburgh Castle Farm in Peeblesshire and at Soutra Hill too (Peterson et al. 1975, 46-47; Arabaolaza 2013, 21). At Sawmill Field in Argyll and Bute, adults were interred with juveniles in a majority of the funerary contexts.

The human remains at Twentyshilling were a mixture of fleshed and possibly unfleshed at the time of cremation, indicating that the deceased bodies had been left out for a period of time for them to partially decay. This may support the view that they were interred at once, rather than over a longer period of time. At Thirlestane the bones had all been unfleshed at the time of cremation (Gilmore 2024, 79) indicating an extended period of time between death and interment. Perhaps the Twentyshilling community had less time to

perform the burial rituals. The early Bronze Age remains from Soutra were cremated while still fleshed (Arabaolaza 2013, 22), so there seems to be no standard method and they may simply reflect local variations in cremation methods. Some of the bones displayed colouring indicative of contact with metal at the time of cremation, similar to human remains from Dunragit (Bailie 2021, 335), and may indicate similarities in cremation methods or potentially hint at certain metal decorations on parts of the body.

There was no evidence for associated Neolithic or Bronze Age settlement structures at Twentyshilling. The discovery of at least eight individuals within a single barrow, and the people that buried them there, indicates that a sizeable population lived somewhere nearby. Evidence is mixed on the distribution pattern of barrows in relation to settlements across Scotland. At sites such as Milltimber in Aberdeenshire (Dingwall et al. 2019) and closer by at Dunragit in Dumfries and Galloway (Bailie 2021), cemetery and settlement structures were found in close proximity. At Dunragit, a Bronze Age structure was found near a cremation cemetery complex as well as groups of domestic related features nearby indicating a settlement (Arabaolaza 2021a, 336). The distribution of known Bronze Age sites in Eastern Dumfriesshire, Renfrewshire, the Clyde Valley and Upper Tweeddale paint a picture of more expansive landscapes with barrows and settlements spread separately with some potential pairings of settlements with burials, and other settlements and funerary sites isolated from each other (RCAHMS 1997, 99 and 103; Alexander 1996, 12; Toolis 2005, 498; Gilmore and Toolis 2024, 118).

This could infer that the buried remains of a middle Bronze Age settlement may lie somewhere under the peat immediately to the east or west of the Twentyshilling barrow. Alternatively, associated settlement may have been some distance away. The distribution of unenclosed hut-circles, the likeliest form of contemporary settlement to the Twentyshilling Barrow, in Dumfries and Galloway adheres closely to areas that have been subjected to intensive survey (Cowley 2000, 167-8). Only intensive surveys of the wider area around Twentyshilling may reveal further traces of the community who constructed the barrow.

Conclusion

The discovery of a Bronze Age Barrow and an earlier Neolithic pit group was a relative surprise as there was very little evidence of prehistoric activity in the immediate area prior to the Twentyshilling Hill fieldwork. This new archaeological evidence provides a unique glimpse into the prehistoric landscape south of Sanquhar, a landscape lightly peppered with unexplored and undated cairns and earthworks but until now, very little tying any specific part of the landscape to any particular period of time. The work at Twentyshilling has shown that the area was sparsely inhabited by Neolithic people with a certain amount of ancestral knowledge bringing people back to the same spot for reasons long lost to us today. Elsewhere, the discovery of the barrow suggests a more settled occupation of the area during the Bronze Age with ties to the landscape as well as shared cultural links with much of Scotland demonstrated in their customs of burying their dead. The discovery of five urns tightly packed together at the same time in one mass burial event is very rare and distinguishes the Twentyshilling Barrow from other barrows in Scotland. Crucially, the work at Twentyshilling has shed valuable light on prehistoric activity within a lightly surveyed area of Scotland, and will provide an invaluable anchor for future studies of this area and its wider context.

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