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The excavation of seven ring ditches and other prehistoric features at Earl’s Farm Down and New Barn Down, Amesbury, Wiltshire

John Valentin

with contributions from
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INTRODUCTION

Prior to the construction of a new business park (‘Solstice Park’) and new A303 road junction on
former farmland on the NE side of Amesbury (centred on SU 173418), AC archaeology carried
out the archaeological excavation of seven Bronze Age ring ditches, associated burial pits and
linear and other subsoil features. The work was undertaken during the summers of 2002 and
2004 on behalf of the site owners, Amesbury Property Company Limited. The location of the site
is shown on Fig 1.

The ring ditches are part of the New Barn Down and Earl’s Farm Down barrow groups (Fig 2).
Many of these funerary monuments are extant, while others have been ploughed down or
previously excavated. (Thomas 1958, Christie 1964, Christie 1967, Ashbee 1985). Including the
present group, the number of barrows and ring ditches excavated in this small area east of the
River Avon now totals seventeen. Barrows that have already been investigated are shown
numbered on Fig 1. These numbers follow the Amesbury barrow list as prepared by Goddard
then Grinsell and as described in Ashbee (1985).

Other evidence for archaeological activity in the vicinity has been transcribed from aerial
photographs (Borthwick 1992, map 7) which show the surrounding landscape containing
evidence for early agricultural activity in the form of cropmarks and soilmarks which denote
former field systems. The 'Amesbury Road', which forms the eastern boundary to the site, may
represent the alignment of a Roman Road from Mildenhall to Old Sarum.

The site lies between 80m and 110mOD and is positioned on chalk downland which is
characterised by low, rounded spurs and dry coombes.

METHODOLOGY

The excavations were the final stage in what has been a long process of both intrusive and non
intrusive assessment and evaluation. Previous work has included a detailed desk-based appraisal,
surface artefact collection, geophysical survey and trench evaluation. Following completion of
the main excavations, a watching brief during landscaping works was undertaken.

The four open-area excavations (Fig 3) were as follows:

Site A - Excavation of Ring Ditch 1 adjacent to the A303 trunk road.
Site B - Recording of undated linear ditches identified during trench evaluation.
Site C - Excavation of five ring ditches (Ring Ditches 2 - 6).
Site D - Excavation of Ring Ditch 7.

Within each of the four excavation sites ploughsoil was removed by a mechanical excavator onto the top of the underlying natural chalk and archaeological features. All sites were then cleaned by hand as appropriate, followed by hand-excavation to a level agreed with the Archaeology Service, Wiltshire County Council prior to commencement on site.

SITE DESCRIPTIONS
(S. Robinson and John Valentin)

Introduction
The features described below were mainly recorded in the open-area excavations. Exceptions to this are some of the linear features which were only investigated during the trench evaluation. In addition, an isolated prehistoric pit in the western area of the site (F402 on Fig 3) and also recorded during the evaluation is described as part of this report. Summary results from each ring ditch are set out in Table 1. None of the ring ditches contained in situ evidence for former mound material or an intact former land surface.

Ring Ditch 1
This ring ditch was 24m in diameter (Fig 4 & 5) and located on a prominent ridge which slopes moderately down to the south. It is part of the New Barn Down barrow group.

Excavation established a width varying between 1.7m and 2m, and depth between 1.1m and 1.2m. The original construction profile consisted of steep-sloping to almost vertical sides onto a narrow flat base. The fills were consistent throughout, with the most substantial being a deep chalk rubble primary fill, up to 600mm thick (Fig 6a). This deposit is probably material derived from the former barrow mound. A series of overlying fills was also evident, comprising up to four tertiary fills in any one segment, and an upper ploughsoil fill composed of dark brown clay silt.

Finds recovered from the ditch comprised late prehistoric worked flint from all levels in the ditch and a small quantity of Romano-British pottery from the upper tertiary and ploughsoil fills.

The cremation grave pits
Two cremation grave pits were present within the interior of the ring ditch (features F5 and F81). Grave pit F5 (Fig 5) was circular in plan, with a diameter of 300mm and had a steep, almost vertical profile onto a flat base at a depth of 250mm. It is likely that this feature may have been partly truncated by recent ploughing, as it contained only the lower half of a collared urn (Vessel 1). This vessel was placed in an upright position and contained only 2g of cremated bone (cremated burial 8), which is the remains of a child aged under 14 at death.

Grave pit F81 (Figs 5 & 6) was circular in plan, with an exposed diameter of approximately 700mm. The pit had a steep sloping profile, tapering down to a depth at 750mm, onto a concave base with a much smaller diameter of 120mm, just wide enough to accommodate the lower of two vessels (Fig 7). Both vessels were collared urns, one of which was on its side (Vessel 2), the other inverted (Vessel 3). Vessel 3 also contained a cu alloy awl (Object 98). Within Vessel 2 were the remains of a probable young female adult (cremated burial 125), while Vessel 3 contained the remains of a young adult (cremated burial 155).
Post holes
Two other features investigated within the interior of the ring ditch were post holes (features F41 and F61 on Fig 5). Both of these features differed in composition and construction. Feature F41 was circular in plan with a diameter of 400mm. Its profile was near vertical and it had a flat base at a depth of 200mm. A single fill with a high charcoal content was present. Feature F61 was circular in plan with a diameter of 600mm. Its profile was vertical onto a flat base at a depth of 300mm. It had a single fill containing large flint nodules as post packing.

Natural features
At the centre of the ring ditch was a large feature (feature F13 on Fig 5), approximately 2m in diameter, with a moderately sloping profile onto an irregular base at a depth of 650mm. The feature is likely to have been naturally formed (probably a tree throw), although a small quantity (3g) of undiagnostic charred bone was present in the upper levels of its fill.

All of the remaining features investigated within and immediately outside the ring ditch are likely to be natural in origin. These included both periglacial features and tree throws. Many of the tree throws showed evidence for burning within the fills. It was established that at least one of these features (F87) pre-dated the construction of the ring ditch.

Ring Ditch 2
This ring ditch was 40m in diameter (Fig 8) and was situated in the north-east corner of Site B. It is part of the Earl’s Farm Down barrow group. Excavation established a ditch width varying between 2.6m and 3.2m, and depth between 1m and 1.2m. The original construction profile (Fig 6b) consisted of steep sloping then almost vertical sides onto a broad flat base. The fills contained minor variations, but the principal layers were largely consistent. The most substantial was a deep primary fill, up to 700mm thick and composed of silty chalk rubble sometimes with lenses of loamy clay silts. A series of overlying fills was also present, comprising up to five tertiary fills in any one segment and an upper ploughsoil fill composed of dark brown clay silt.

Finds recovered from the ditch include large quantities of late prehistoric worked flint from all levels within the ditch and a small quantity of prehistoric and Romano-British pottery from the uppermost fills.

The cremation grave pits
Two cremation grave pits were present within the interior of this ring ditch (features F1237 and F969 on Fig 8). Grave pit F969 was circular in plan with a diameter of 300mm. It had a steep, almost vertical profile, onto a flat base at a depth of 150mm. This feature had been probably truncated by later ploughing, as only rim sherds from an inverted urn (Vessel 10) were present (Fig 9). This perhaps suggests that this was a secondary interment incorporated into the mound. A small quantity of cremated human bone (cremated burial 970) was recovered from the fill of this feature and is the remains of a child aged around 7-10 years at death.

F1237 (Fig 10) was located towards the centre of the ring ditch, was circular in plan and had a maximum diameter of 800mm. The profile was steep-sloping to almost vertical onto a flat base at a depth of 550mm. Two vessels were present, one of which was a large inverted Trevisker style urn (Vessel 11) accompanied by a miniature pot (Vessel 12) next to its handle (Figs 10 & 11). These each contained cremated human bone (cremated burials 1303 and 1344). A single copper awl (Object 54) was also present within the fill of Vessel 12 and many amber, jet, faience
and shale beads within Vessel 11 (Objects 55-81). Cremated burial 1303 is that of an adult aged 40+ at death and cremated burial 1344 contained no diagnostic bone fragments.

**Natural features**
All of the remaining features investigated, including those present immediately outside the ring ditch, are likely to be natural in origin. These included both periglacial features and tree throws.

**Ring Ditch 3**
This ring ditch was 15m in diameter (Fig 12) and was part of a group of four ring ditches situated towards the south-west limits of Site B. It is part of the Earl’s Farm Down barrow group.

Excavation of this ring ditch established a width varying between 550mm and 1.2m and depth between 400mm and 600mm. The construction profile (Fig 6c) varied throughout and consisted of either steep or moderately sloping irregular sides, onto either a flat or concave base. The fills also varied, with the most substantial being an upper tertiary fill up to 400mm thick and composed of a calcareous clay silt with moderate amounts of flint nodules. Primary fills were generally composed of calcareous silts.

Finds recovered from the ditch included small quantities of prehistoric worked flint and prehistoric pottery. Part of a red deer antler ‘rake’ (Object 4) was also recovered from one of the segments.

**Other features**
There were no human burials associated with this ring ditch. All features that were investigated both internally and immediately outside are likely to be natural in origin or were formed as a result of deep ploughing. These included both periglacial features and tree throws.

**Ring Ditch 4**
This ring ditch was 14m in diameter (Figs 13 & 14) and was the furthest east of a group of four ring ditches situated towards the south-west limits of Site B. It is part of the Earl’s Farm Down barrow group.

Hand excavation of the ditch established a width varying between 1.5m and 2m, and depth between 350mm and 500mm. The original construction profile (Fig 6d) consisted of steep-sloping to almost vertical sides onto a broad flat base. The fills were generally consistent throughout, and composed of a silty chalk rubble primary fill, and a series of overlying fills comprising up to four tertiary fills in any one segment, and an upper ploughsoil fill composed of dark brown clay silt.

Finds recovered from the ditch included significant quantities of prehistoric worked flint from the upper tertiary fills, and a small quantity of Romano-British pottery from the uppermost ploughsoil fill.

**Other features**
No associated features were present within this ring ditch. All features that were investigated both internally and immediately outside are likely to be natural in origin. These included tree throws, one of which (feature F654) comprised a large tree throw situated towards the centre of the ring ditch which contained a small quantity of unidentifiable charred bone present near the surface (cremated burial 710). This was within a redeposited natural chalk fill, with no evidence for a cut containing this deposit evident.
**Ring Ditch 5**
This ring ditch was 17m in diameter (Figs 15 & 16) and was part of a group of four ring ditches situated towards the south-west limits of Site B. It is part of the Earl’s Farm Down barrow group.

Excavation of the ditch established a width varying between 2m and 2.5m and depth between 450mm and 650mm. The original construction profile (Fig 6e) consisted of initially either gentle or steep-sloping, then near vertical sides onto a broad flat base. The fills were generally consistent throughout, these composed of a silty chalk rubble primary fill and a series of overlying layers, comprising up to four tertiary fills in any one segment and an upper ploughsoil fill composed of dark brown clay silt.

Finds recovered from the ditch include large quantities of prehistoric worked flint from the upper tertiary fills, and a small amount of Romano-British pottery from the ploughsoil fill.

*The inhumation grave pits*
Two large intercutting pits (features F711 and F788), both containing skeletal remains, were present towards the centre of the ring ditch (Fig 17). The earlier of the two intercutting pits (F788) was sub-circular in plan with dimensions of approximately 1.25m x 1.6m. Excavation of this feature revealed a vertical profile and flat base at a depth of 1m (Fig 17). Two burials were present in the pit, the most recent that of an infant (inhumation INH/fill 789), which had been disturbed by animal burrowing. The earliest burial (inhumation INH824) was situated at the base of the pit (Fig 18) and was a well-preserved skeleton of a child. This skeleton had been laid out in a crouched position within a charred rectangular container (layer 837). This appeared as a well-defined charcoal stain, 1.55m in length, 450mm wide and with a depth of 360mm.

Feature F711 was sub-oval in plan with dimensions of 2.4m x 1.6m. Excavation of this feature revealed an almost vertical profile and flat base at a depth of 900mm. Two phases of burials were present within this pit, the first comprising a disarticulated skeleton, identified as an adult female (inhumation INH713), which had been deliberately positioned or piled up against the pit edge. The second inhumation (INH736), was situated in the centre of the pit, approximately 200mm deeper than INH713, and comprised the poorly-preserved skeleton of a child laid out in a crouched position. The backfill of this feature was composed of a silty chalk rubble with a further shallow horizon of dark brown loamy silt, possibly representing a buried turf and partly overlying INH736.

No grave goods were present with any of these burials.

*The cremation grave pits*
Feature F697 is likely to be a natural feature (a tree throw) and was situated immediately to the west of grave pit F711. This feature was slightly irregular in plan and profile with dimensions of 2.15m x 800mm and a maximum depth of 400mm. A quantity of charred human bone (cremated burial/fill 716) was recovered from the northern portion of this feature and is the remains of an adult. Because of extensive animal burrowing it was unclear whether the bone would have originally been in a cremation grave pit or had been deliberately deposited within the tree throw.

*Other features*
Feature F693 was a shallow pit which was sub-circular in plan with a maximum diameter of 500mm. It consisted of a steep-sloping profile onto a flat base at a maximum depth of 100mm. This feature had been truncated by ploughing and contained a quantity of Early Bronze Age pottery sherds from the same vessel (Vessel 5).
All of the remaining features that were investigated both internally and immediately outside the ring ditch are likely to be natural in origin. These included both periglacial features and tree throws.

**Ring Ditch 6**
This ring ditch was 22m in diameter (Figs 16 & 19) and was part of a group of four ring ditches situated towards the south-west limits of Site B. It is part of the Earl’s Farm Down barrow group.

Excavation of the ditch established a width varying between 2m and 3m and depth between 700mm and 800mm. The original construction profile (Fig 6f) consisted of gentle or steep-sloping to almost vertical sides onto a broad flat base. The fills were generally consistent throughout, and were composed of a silty chalk rubble primary fill and a series of overlying soils, comprising up to four tertiary fills in any one segment and an upper ploughsoil fill composed of dark brown clay silt.

Finds recovered from the ditch included quantities of prehistoric worked flint, a cu alloy razor (Object 6) from the upper tertiary fill and a small quantity of Romano-British pottery from the uppermost ploughsoil fill.

*The cremation grave pits*
A single cremation grave pit (feature F826) was present towards the centre of the ring ditch. The feature was sub-circular in plan with a maximum diameter of 800mm, and it had steep-sloping sides onto a flat base at a depth of 300mm. One pottery vessel was present (Fig 20) comprising a large inverted collared urn (Vessel 8), which contained cremated human bone (cremated burial 863) from that of a mature adult.

Also within the ring ditch, c. 2m from its SE edge, was an irregular pit (feature F868) that had been disturbed by animal burrowing, but which also contained a small quantity of charred human bone (cremated burial 867).

**Other features**
All of the remaining features investigated, including those present immediately outside the ring ditch are likely to be natural in origin. These include a large tree throw towards the centre of the ditch (feature F884).

**Ring Ditch 7**
This ring ditch was 14m in diameter (Figs 21 & 22) and was the most southerly of all the ring ditches. It is part of the Earl’s Farm Down barrow group and was excavated in 2004 as Site D.

Excavation established a width varying between 900mm and 1.2m, and depth between 350mm and 450mm. The construction profile (Fig 6g) consisted of moderate or steep-sloping sides, onto either a flat or concave base. A single fill only was present throughout the circumference of the ditch, comprising dark orange-brown silty clay with occasional flint nodules fragments. This deposit appeared to represent possible rapid infilling, as no evidence for any primary fills were present.

Finds recovered from the ditch comprised mostly prehistoric worked flint and a single sherd of Bronze Age pottery recovered from the exposed surface.
Inhumation grave pit
A single shallow pit (feature F12), sub-oval in plan with dimensions of 700mm x 1.2m and containing a poorly preserved inhumation, was present centrally within the interior of the ring ditch (Fig 23). Excavation of this feature revealed a gentle sloping profile and uneven base at a maximum depth of 150mm. The inhumation (INH 11), was partly disarticulated, probably as a result of ploughing and generally poorly preserved, although what skeletal remains that were present, suggests it was lying in a crouched position and was that of a possible adult male. The backfill of the grave was composed of a light brown chalky clay.

Other features
The remaining features investigated, including those present immediately outside the ring ditch are likely to be natural in origin. These included both periglacial features and tree throws, most of which varied in dimensions and profile. One of these tree throws (feature F56) was situated adjacent to the grave pit and close to the centre of the ring ditch. Another natural feature located just outside the ditch (F50), contained several small sherds of late Bronze Age pottery.

The linear ditches
The site contained a number of linear ditches of varying size, profile and preservation. These were identified and recorded during all stages of the archaeological work and are likely to relate to a network of ancient field systems recorded to the east of the site. The location of all these features is shown on Fig 3 and includes two substantial boundary ditches (F1902 and F46) which are part of a network of similar features and associated field systems located throughout the surrounding landscape (Bradley et al 1994). F1902 was up to 5m wide at its surface and had a depth up to 1.75m. It contained multiple fills (Fig 24a), with the upper levels containing medieval pottery and lower fills early Iron Age material. F46 was 2.2m wide and 800mm deep. This ditch contained four fills (Fig 24b) and Romano-British pottery was recovered from its upper levels.

Other ditches shown on Fig 3 were far less substantial, and in some instances were only present as soilmarks within the topsoil horizon.

Pit F402
During the trench evaluation stage of archaeological work a substantial pit (F402) was excavated in the field to the west of the ring ditches (Fig 3). This feature was slightly irregular and sub-circular in plan (Fig 24c) with a maximum diameter of 3.50m. It had a steep and irregular profile and base (Fig 24d) at a maximum depth of 800mm. Seven fills were present, most of which appeared to represent deliberate infilling. This feature contained an articulated skeleton of a calf (context 418, within layer 408) and a large quantity of pottery of early Bronze Age date. A flint transverse arrowhead and thumb scraper were also recovered.

Natural features
A total of 288 features likely to be of natural origin were recorded across all sites, of which 62 were investigated. All the features were irregular in plan with dimensions ranging from c. 500mm to 3.5m diameter. Fills were generally composed of redeposited chalk and mid-brown clay silts with flint pieces. Of those excavated, profiles were generally steep-sloping, sometimes irregular, and depths varied between 300mm and 700mm. Pottery was recovered from four features, although others contained quantities of prehistoric worked flint.
RADIOCARBON DATES

Bone from cremated burial 1303, Vessel 11, Ring Ditch 2
A sample of cremated bone was AMS dated by Dr Jan Lanting at the Institute of Archaeology, University of Groningen (ref. GrA - 22371). The radiocarbon dates of the cremated bone are as follows:

3240 +/- 40 years BP, 1600 - 1580 (4.3%), 1530 -1430 (63.9%) cal BC at 1 sigma and 1620 - 1410 cal BC at 2 sigma, using OxCal v.3.8.

Inhumation burial INH736, Pit F711, Ring Ditch 5
The radiocarbon dates for this skeleton were obtained from the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (ref. SUERC-3534, GU-12057) and are as follows:

3645 +/- 50 years BP, 2130 - 2080 (18.2%), 2050 - 1930 (50%) cal BC at one sigma and 2150 - 1880 (95.4%) cal BC at 2 sigma, using OxCal v.3.8.

Inhumation burial INH824, Pit F788, Ring Ditch 5
A radiocarbon date was obtained for this skeleton was obtained from the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (ref. SUERC-3534, GU-12058). The dates are as follows:

3830 +/- 50 years BP, 2400 - 2380 (6.4%), 2350 - 2190 (61.8%) cal BC at one sigma and 2460 - 2140 (95.4%) cal BC, at 2 sigma, using OxCal v.3.8.

HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS
(Kate Brayne)

Introduction
Excavations recovered five inhumation burials and ten cremated burials. The information that was possible to be obtained is described below. Where the colour of the cremated bone is described this follows Mays (1998). Cremated bone turns the following colour at these temperatures:

- Red/orange: 185 °C
- Dark brown/black: 285 °C
- Black: 360 °C
- Dark greyish brown: 440 °C
- Light greyish brown: 525 °C
- White: 645-1200 °C

Ring Ditch 1
Cremated burial 8, Vessel 1, Pit F5
Only a small quantity of charred human bone was recovered and it comprises mainly small unidentifiable fragments, although it was possible to identify the epiphysis of a possible metacarpal (from the hand) and the shafts of two long bones, which might also be metacarpals. Nearly all of the bone fragments were buff white in colour. The unfused metacarpal epiphysis
indicates that this individual must have been under the age of 14 at death; the projected diameter of the shafts of the long bone fragments perhaps suggest a younger child.

**Cremated burial 125, Vessel 2, Pit F81**
This comprises a total of 1254g of charred bone, of which c. 90% was buff white in colour. The morphology of the fragments of frontal and temporal bones suggests that this individual may have been female. The fused long bone epiphyses indicates that this individual was an adult and, as the cranial sutures were not fused, it may have been a younger adult aged under 40 at death. However, evidence for osteoarthritis on the right knee joint and elbow joint, which is usually associated with the ageing process, may suggest that this individual was older than 40 and that the fusion of her cranial sutures was unusually delayed. One of the vertebral bodies (probably a lower thoracic vertebra) displays osteophytes around the margins, which is indicative of degenerative disc disease. Large fragments of the maxillae indicate that the 1st and 2nd right molars, and the left premolars and molars had been lost antemortem, long enough before death for the jaw to have remodelled so that the sockets were closed up. This tooth loss may have been due to caries, or to periodontal disease. This pattern of extensive bone remodelling following tooth loss tends to be associated with older individuals.

**Cremated burial 155, Vessel 3, Pit F81**
This comprises a total of 947g of charred bone, of which most is buff white in colour. It was not possible to assess the sex of this individual. The fused epiphyses of the phalanges indicates that this individual was an adult and the lack of fusion of the cranial sutures suggests that this may have been a young adult (below the age of 40). In addition, a 3rd molar crown was recovered which had no evidence of wear and may indicate that it was un-erupted or newly erupted, which would suggest an individual younger than 22-25 at death.

**Ring Ditch 2**

**Cremated burial 970, Vessel 10, Pit F969**
This comprised a total of 171g of bone. No very large pieces of bone had survived, but the majority of fragments were identifiable to skeletal element. About 90% of the bone was buff white in colour and the 10% of the bone which was dark grey/black or dark orange may either represent body parts which were positioned on the periphery of the pyre. The presence of both deciduous (milk) teeth and two newly erupted incisor teeth, coupled with an unfused metacarpal epiphysis, indicates a child aged around 7-10 years at death. This was supported by the thickness of the skull vault fragments, and the diameter of the long bone shaft fragments. There was a preponderance of limb bones represented for this individual.

**Cremated burial 1303, Vessel 11, Pit F1237**
This comprised a total of 906g of bone. Most of the bone is identifiable to skeletal element and is mostly greysish black in colour, with only occasional buff white fragments. In addition to the poor levels of oxidation achieved, the context consists of numerous fragments of warped long bone shaft which is only the periosteal (outer) surface of the lamellar bone. The partially fused cranial sutures suggest a mature adult, probably at least 45 years old at death. There are three articular facets from the transverse process of lower thoracic or lumbar vertebrae which display lesions indicative of degenerative joint disease. Two of the facets show *eburnation*, which is diagnostic of osteoarthritis. In addition, a further articular facet displays pronounced porous lesions, which may also be a symptom of osteoarthritis. The bone from this cremation has been dated by radiocarbon methods to 1620 to 1410 cal BC (at 2 sigma).
Cremated burial 1344, Vessel 12, Pit F1237
This comprises only 1g of bone consisting of several small fragments, including a metacarpal and a distal phalange. Nearly all of the bone fragments are buff white in colour. It was not possible to determine the sex or age at death of this individual. It appears that several of the bone fragments may derive from the hand.

Ring Ditch 4

Cremated burial 710, Pit F654
This was recovered from a probable tree throw and consists of 7g of bone fragments. There were two identifiable long bone shaft fragments, and several small, unidentifiable pieces. The interior "cancellous" bone was greyish black, indicating that the bone was not fully oxidized during the cremation process.

Ring Ditch 5

Inhumation burial INH713, Pit F711
This skeleton appeared to have been "stacked" against the pit edge. Approximately 85% of the skeleton is present, although the left femur is missing. This may have been deliberately removed when the bones were arranged in the pit. From morphological features of the skull and pelvis, the sex of this skeleton was determined as female. An examination of dental attrition and the morphology of the pubic symphseses, indicates that this woman was aged between 26 and 45, although it is considered likely that she was in her thirties when she died. It was estimated that this woman was 5'4" (1.63m) tall. She was identified as having Schmorl's nodes on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd lumbar vertebral bodies. These may be associated with the early stages of degenerative disc disease.

There are a number of possible cut marks evident on the bone. There appears to be an oblique cut through odontoid process of the axis (the 2nd cervical vertebra in the neck), and the right transverse articular facet is missing. In addition, the right transverse articular facet of the atlas (the 1st cervical vertebra, which supports the skull) is also missing. The oblique cut across the odontoid process of the axis, in particular, did not appear to represent random post-mortem breakage of the bone. As the bone appears to have been deliberately stacked, there is no reason to suppose that this decapitation was not post-mortem.

There were several other lesions on the bones which may represent tool marks. In particular, these consist of:

- a circular depression (19mm x 17mm) on the anterior distal shaft of the left humerus
- a semi circle of small depressions (each approximately 5mm x 2mm) on the medial anterior shaft of the right humerus
- a moderate (20mm long by 8mm wide) oval depression on the medial anterior shaft of right tibia.

Each of these lesions was characterized by removal of the outer layer of cortical bone, to a depth of about 1mm.
Inhumation burial INH736, Pit F711
This skeleton is very poorly preserved and only 20% of the bone survives. The degree of epiphyseal fusion of the long bones indicates an individual under the age of 14. The dental development suggested an age at death of between 10 and 12 years. Because of the age of this individual it is not possible to identify the sex or stature. The radiocarbon date for this skeleton is 2150 - 1880 (95.4%) cal BC at 2 sigma.

Inhumation burial INH789, Pit F788
This skeleton was recovered from the upper fill of the grave pit. The general size of the bones present suggests that this is the skeleton of an infant, probably less than one year old. It was not possible to estimate its sex.

Inhumation burial INH824, Pit F788
This skeleton is moderately well preserved, with approximately 90% of the bones present. The lack of epiphyseal fusion of the long bones indicated an individual under the age of 12, with the dental development suggesting that this individual was aged between approximately 8 and 10 years at death. It was not possible to assign a sex or stature to this skeleton. There was a thin plaque of greyish, woven periosteal bone on the anterior aspect of both tibia shafts. This is a common non-specific pathological lesion, known as "periostitis". It may be associated with a systemic infection. The radiocarbon date for this bone is 2460 - 2140 (95.4%) cal BC (at 2 sigma).

Cremated burial 716, Pit F697
This comprises 175g of charred bone, with nearly all buff white in colour. From the size of the shaft diameter of the long bones it was possible to identify that this individual was adult. It was not possible to establish the sex of this individual.

Ring Ditch 6

Cremated burial 863, Pit F826
This comprises a total of 1667g of bone, of which 48.2% was identifiable to skeletal element. Nearly all of the bone fragments are buff white in colour, although a few fragments of bone are greyish black, indicating body parts which were positioned on the periphery of the pyre. The degraded articular surfaces of the vertebral bodies, and the lack of visible cranial sutures suggests that this individual was a mature adult, probably more than 45 years old. It was not possible to assess the sex of this individual.

Cremated burial 867, Pit F868
This comprises 26g of bone. Nearly all of the bone fragments are buff white in colour. The diameter of the long bone shaft fragments suggested that this individual was a juvenile. It is not possible to assign a sex to juveniles.

Ring Ditch 7

Inhumation burial INH11, Pit F12
This skeleton is in poor condition and only about 30% of the skeleton survives. The arms and legs are present, but the skull, ribs, spine and pelvis are missing. However, it was possible to establish that the skeleton was inhumed in a crouched position, orientated north/south with the head to the north. The presence of strong muscle attachments on the long bones, in particular the “rider’s crest” along the posterior of the femur (so-called because it is often associated with
significant amounts of time spent in the saddle), suggests that this individual may have been male. The long bones are fully fused, which indicated that this was an adult. It is not possible to assess the stature of this individual.

**AWLS**

*(Jane Bircher)*

Three awls were recovered from the site, two from cremations in collared urns and one in a miniature accessory vessel associated with a large Trevisker style cremation urn.

All three awls are of a similar type; single pointed with a round section and flattened tang (Longworth 1984, Type 3). The tangs were formed by hammering to a splayed, sometimes curved and sometimes straight edge. Awls of this type are assumed to have originally had handles and to have been used for piercing organic materials (wood, leather, bone, etc.). They are well-known if not frequent finds in Wessex assemblages with collared urns. Similar awls were recovered from the nearby Amesbury Barrows 61a and 72 (Ashbee 1985, fig. 39, no. 12 and fig. 43, no. 1) and from various barrows in Wiltshire (Annable and Simpson 1964, 58 and 113, nos 420 (with a wooden handle), 421, 423, 428 and 430).

**Catalogue of awls (Fig 25)**

1. Object 13, Ring Ditch 2, Vessel 10, Pit F969. The metal shows some signs of corrosion and slightly paler bands are visible along its length which may suggest that something may have been twisted around the awl. Length 28 mm, maximum diameter 2mm.

2. Object 98, Ring Ditch 1, Vessel 3, Pit F81. The metal shows some signs of corrosion, more particularly towards the tang (now slightly damaged) which may suggest that it was hafted when deposited. Length 31.5 mm, maximum diameter 2.5mm.

3. Object 54, Ring Ditch 2, Vessel 12, Pit F1237. This a very finely made piece with good patination. Length 27 mm, maximum diameter 2mm.

**THE RAZOR FROM RING DITCH 6**

*(Brendan O’Connor)*

This object (Object 6, Fig 26) recovered from the tertiary fill of Ring Ditch 6, segment [818] layer 825 is complete, though the blade is very worn; original surface is preserved with green patina. Straight-sided tang tapers to rounded terminal which has a circular perforation slightly off centre. On one face the perforation in the tang is slightly sunk, on the other face the area around the perforation is worn compared with the rest of the surface. The body of the tang has flat faces and sides giving a rectangular section; the tang becomes thinner towards its terminal, which is bent slightly out of alignment. The tang expands at its junction with the blade and slight hollows in the angles show the blade has been formed by hammering. Bevels run from just below the junction of tang and blade and converge to form a broad, flat midrib along the blade; the midrib tapers gently and ends just below the tip of the blade. The wings of the blade are slightly hollow in section; the edges are ragged and have recent damage. The blade is slightly convex in outline and tapers gently to a broad rounded tip. Both tang and blade bear hammer marks - on tang and midrib these are across the long axis, on the blade they are along that axis. There are no other marks of sharpening on the blade.
XRF analysis by English Heritage of the corroded surface of the object showed that the alloy was a low lead bronze with principal impurities of arsenic and nickel.

Length 105mm, maximum width 24mm, maximum thickness 3mm. Weight 28.4g.

**Comment**

Despite recent damage to the edges, the blade seems to be close to its final form when it was placed in the ground. However, the outline at the junction of tang and blade suggests the blade was originally broader and has been reduced by wear. Without prejudice to other possible uses than shaving, this object can be classified among what are conventionally described as razors: more specifically the double-edged razors with perforated tang (Jockenhövel 1980, 34-7 nos 19-45, Taf. 1-2; Eogan 1997, 29, fig 2b). Even accounting for worn blades, this is a heterogeneous group; many examples have short, broad tangs, but others have narrower tangs like Object 6 (Jockenhövel 1980, nos 22, 24, 40 & 45) and the broad midrib can also be matched (ibid., nos 24, 29 & 45; also no 18). The end of the midrib appears to be original, indicating that this razor was not much longer than its present length of 105mm. While that is longer than most of the razors with perforated tangs – about 70-90mm, others match Object 6 in length if not exactly in form (ibid, nos 23, 26-8). Some of these razors have also been classified as tanged knife-daggers (Gerloff 1975, nos 332-4, 339-40 & 342).

Razors with perforated tangs are distributed widely in Britain and Ireland (Jockenhövel 1980, 49-50, Taf. 44), but Jockenhövel lists two other examples from Wiltshire. One is from a secondary burial in Amesbury barrow 71 (see Fig 3) and the other probably from Shrewton barrow G4 or 5, some 8km to the north-west near Robin Hood’s Ball (ibid., nos 29 & 36; Grinsell 1957, 151, 190).

Of the twenty-seven razors with perforated tang listed by Jockenhövel, at least fifteen are from cremations and their use may have been important in the sequence of events accompanying death and burial (Barrett 1994, 123). Object 6 is thus unusual in being well documented as not from a burial, but from the tertiary fill of the ring ditch. This raises the question of whether it might have been excavated in a secondary context and originally deposited in a burial within the ring ditch – like other so-called single finds (Needham 1988, 229-30).

We do not appear to have absolute dates for any of the burials with perforated-tanged razors. Recent radiocarbon dates for Irish razors and razor-knives, mostly with cordoned urns, fall between 1650 and 1500 cal BC (Brindley 2001, 149-50), though a later range of 1500-1300 BC for most Irish razor-knives has been proposed by Grogan (2004, 69). A Scottish blade with narrow midrib and notched tang, classified as a razor by Jockenhövel (1980, no 23) and associated with a collared urn, from Gilchorn in Angus has been dated to 1880-1510 cal BC at 2σ (3370±60 BP, GrA-18693; Sheridan 2003a, 220). A date at the end of the Early Bronze Age around 1700-1500 BC seems likely, but currency earlier in the second millennium cannot on present evidence be ruled out.
THE ORNAMENTS FROM INSIDE VESSEL 11, RING DITCH 2
(Alison Sheridan)

Introduction
At least 104 small ornamental artefacts, made from a variety of materials, were found with the cremated remains inside the urn. Most, if not all, are likely to have been components in a composite necklace, although in a few cases (notably the three V-perforated amber objects), the exact manner of their deployment is uncertain. A date range of 1620 -1410 cal BC at 2 sigma for the ornaments is provided by the radiocarbon dates from the associated cremated human bone.

The catalogue

Jet

Object 58 (Fig 27.1) Bulbous, slightly asymmetrical fusiform bead with discontinuous ridge around its mid-point, squared-off ends and circular, off-centre longitudinal perforation. Extensive longitudinal cracking, with some lifting of surface and consequent deformation. Blackish brown; polished to a medium sheen. Length 20.5mm, maximum diameter 15.5mm, diameter of perforation 3mm.

Object 59 (Fig 27.2). Plump fusiform bead with broad, circular, central longitudinal perforation. Extensive longitudinal and criss-cross cracking, with some lifting of the surface and one detached crumb. Black, polished to a high sheen. Length 22.5mm, maximum diameter 12.1mm, perforation diameter 4.6mm.

Object 60 (Fig 27.3) Fusiform bead with squared-off, slightly angled ends and circular, slightly eccentric, longitudinal perforation, with minor string wear hollow worn into one end. Black, polished to a low sheen. Length 21.4mm, maximum diameter 10.3mm, perforation diameter 4.1mm.

Object 61 (Fig 27.4). Slender, very slightly asymmetrical fusiform bead with some incompletely-smoothed faceting along one half, gently squared-off ends, and circular, roughly central longitudinal perforation. Black, polished to a low sheen. Length 22.9mm, maximum diameter 8.5mm, perforation diameter 2.9mm.

Object 62.1 (Fig 27.5) Small fusiform bead with gentle, discontinuous mid-point ridge, gently squared-off ends, one of which is angled, and circular, roughly central longitudinal perforation. Cracking and some minor lifting of surface. Black, polished to a high sheen. Length 10.8mm, maximum diameter 6.7mm, perforation diameter 2.5mm.

Object 76 (Fig 27.6). Squat biconical bead with slightly uneven mid-point ridge, some slight faceting, squared-off ends and broad, slightly triangular, central, longitudinal perforation. Some minor cracking. Blackish brown, polished to a low sheen. Length 5.4mm; maximum diameter 7.5mm, perforation diameter 2.8mm.

Black, coal-like material

Object 79. Completely disintegrated small bead, possibly originally of thick disc shape with small central perforation; excavation record notes diameter as 7mm and thickness of 3mm; no
clear perforation visible. Black, with slightly rough outer surface and almost vesicular interior structure. Not illustrated.

**Black cannel coal or (more probably) shale**

Object 63 (Fig 27.7). Just over half of a ring with flat upper and lower surfaces, rounded outer edge and faceted inner edge. Black, polished to a low sheen. Much of one side has spalled off along natural cleavage plane. D 25.5mm, perforation D 17.1mm, width of hoop 4–5.3 mm, thickness of hoop 2.9mm.

Object 64 (Fig 27.8). Ring with flattish oval hoop section and traces of former faceting on its inner edge; uneven thickness (but see below). Small nick on its outer edge possibly due to thread wear. Black, with low sheen (but partly relating to use of consolidant). Much of the surface is slightly uneven, perhaps through laminar spalling in antiquity. Diameter 24.9mm, perforation diameter c.15.3mm, width of hoop 4.5–5.5mmm, thickness of hoop 2.2–4.4mm.

Object 65. (Fig 27.9). Ring, complete when found but subsequently disintegrated into five fragments, with four small transverse holes equally spaced around middle of hoop. Oval section, with slight faceting of inner edge. Black, polished to low sheen; slightly laminar, with spalling along natural cleavage plane. Diameter 27.9mm, central perforation diameter 17.7mm, diameter transverse perforations c. 1.5mm, width of hoop 4.4–5.4mm, maximum thickness of hoop 3.9mm.

**Dark grey-brown shale**

Objects 71 & 75. Seven and nine fragments respectively, plus specks, all probably from one ring that has completely disintegrated. No complete section is present, but assuming a symmetrical shape the hoop is flat, with faceted sides. Fairly smooth, matt; very laminar, having broken along natural cleavage planes. Diameter c. 25.7mm, central perforation diameter c. 17.5mm, width of hoop 3.6–4.9mm, hoop thickness c. 4mm. Not illustrated.

Objects 57 & 77.1–12 (Fig 27.10, Object 57 illustrated). Six complete disc beads, and three fragments from at least two additional disc beads, making the overall minimum number of beads present 58. Thin, with central circular perpendicular perforation. Smooth, matt outer surface. Diameter range 5.0–6.0mm, perforation diameter range 1.8–2.5mm, thickness range c. 0.5-1.25mm.

**Pale grey stone (with black coating)**

Object 62.2 (Fig 28.1). Small fusiform bead with gently squared-off ends and circular, roughly central longitudinal perforation. Possible thread-pull wear (short, shallow groove) at one end. Surface is black but sub-surface, visible at ends and inside perforation, is a pale grey; it appears that the surface colour is due to a thin coating of black material. Fairly smooth surface but with small pocked area; low sheen may be partly due to coating of consolidant. Length 10.6mm, maximum diameter 6.6mm, perforation diameter 2.7mm.

Object 62.3 (Fig 28.2). Small fusiform bead with squared-off, slightly angled ends and circular, roughly central longitudinal perforation. Appearance as no. 70, but with more grey showing, especially at ends. Smooth surface; comment on sheen as per no. 70. Length 12.6mm, max diameter 6.6mm, perforation diameter 2.3mm.
Object 77.13 (Fig 28.3). Disc bead, similar to nos. 12–69 but a little thicker and differing in main colour from them. Patches of black colour on external edge may possibly relate to a similar attempt to coat this bead. Diameter 4.4mm; perforation diameter 2.0mm, thickness 1.6mm.

Creamy coloured stone (?calcite)

Object 80. Disintegrated small bead in three fragments plus crumbs, originally disc-shaped and with diameter recorded by conservator as 4mm. Black specks on exterior but these are more likely to relate to contamination from charcoal specks in the urn rather than to a deliberate attempt at a coating. Not illustrated.

Faience

Object 81 (Fig 28.4). Approximately spherical bead with narrow circular perforation. Pale blue with whitish speckles, matt. Diameter 5.2mm (6.5mm along perforation), perforation diameter 2.3mm

Objects 73.1 -73.5 & 74.1 -74.5. Ten large fragments and numerous small fragments and crumbs representing eight segmented beads. Not illustrated.

Amber

Object 56 (Fig 28.5). Large, bulbous fusiform bead.

Object 78. Fusiform bead. Not illustrated.


Object 70 (Fig 28.6). Bun-shaped bead with small central perforation.

Objects 66 & 67. Thirteen complete disc beads, plus six fragments, representing an overall minimum number of 15 beads. Not illustrated.


Object 69 (Fig 28.7). Oval-based, domed, V-perforated bead/stud/toggle/fastener. Not illustrated.

Object 72 (Fig 28.8). Cylindrical V-perforated bead/stud/toggle/fastener with narrow slot close to V-perforation.

Comments
None of the components seem to have been old when buried. The black items are by and large not obviously worn (except perhaps the bulbous fusiform bead (Object 58), with its possible traces of slight string wear at one end). The fusiform and biconical beads have squared-off ends.

The mode of attachment of the rings is uncertain. If strung through their large central hole, they would have fallen flat against the chest. However, the presence of four small holes in Object 65 suggests that they may have been deployed as flat strand-dividers, with one strand being threaded through each hole. With the unperforated rings, the strands could simply have been looped.
around them at various points on their surface. It is, unfortunately, impossible to tell whether they were actually used like this, with no other clues available.

The small amber and black disc beads could have acted as intermediaries between the larger beads of various materials.

From the condition of these items, and indeed from the fact that the amber has survived at all, it is clear that they had not been on the pyre with the deceased. Instead, they seem to have been kept safe, and only deposited after the bones had cooled and been deposited in the urn.

Composite jewellery, featuring a variety of materials, is relatively frequently found in high-status cremation burials in Wessex, with over ten examples known and a few examples occurring elsewhere (Table 2), for example at Cossington, Leicestershire and Tara, County Meath (Ó Riordáin 1955). A combination of faience with amber and black materials appears relatively common, and other materials include fossil crinoids (which resemble segmented faience beads), wood and (in one case) a stalagmite. It would appear that the choice of materials had been quite deliberate, and had probably been informed by beliefs about their special magical properties. Amber, being electrostatic, has long been ascribed special powers; and although cannel coal and shale are not electrostatic (unlike jet), nevertheless they may have been chosen for their resemblance to this ‘magical’ material. As for faience, its pyrotechnic manufacture and the skill required to manufacture it are likely to have been held in high regard, and possibly regarded as ‘magic’.

Needless to say, the old ‘Egyptian traders’ idea for the appearance of faience in Britain and Ireland can safely be dismissed, in favour of a model featuring the entrepreneurial activities of people in Wessex, in controlling the tin trade from south-west England in exchange for the technological know-how to be able to manufacture faience. The raw materials would have been readily available in this area (Sheridan and Shortland 2004).

THE PREHISTORIC POTTERY
(Frances Raymond)

Introduction
The pottery assemblage includes eight early Bronze Age funerary vessels with a total weight of 23.169 kilograms. The only other early Bronze Age pottery, the fragmented and partial remains of a cup, came from a pit in the interior of Ring Ditch 5 and a pit (feature F402) recorded during the earlier trench evaluation. The assemblage additionally includes 238 sherds, weighing 1013 grams, representing at least 27 vessels produced between the late Neolithic and the late Iron Age. Most of this pottery, which is very fragmented, is from the ring ditch fills and is demonstrably residual. A large Trevisker style urn was conserved by the Wiltshire County Council Conservation Centre prior to analysis, while sherds from one of the handles were submitted to Dr Roger T. Taylor for petrology analysis.

The detailed descriptions of fabric types can be found in the archive and cross-reference directly with the codes used in the following text.
The early Bronze Age funerary vessels

Ring Ditch 1 – Vessels 1 to 3 (Fig 29, P1 to P3)
Three collared urns were recovered from two cremation grave pits within Ring Ditch 1 (F5 and F81). One of these features (F5) contained a single vessel (Vessel 1, Fig 29, P1) which is a collared urn that had been placed in an upright position and contained the remains of a child (cremated burial 8). It is complete as far as the shoulder it is likely that the neck and collar were removed by cultivation. The shoulder is decorated with an irregular zigzag motif, composed of a series of short linear impressions. The lower part of the profile echoes the shapes of the two urns from the nearby cremation grave pit (Vessels 2 and 3, Fig 29, P2 and 3). Vessel 1 is predominantly reddish brown in colour, while the fabric (Fabric G/2) is soft and contains abundant coarse grog (0.5 to 7.0mm) and rare pieces of flint (up to 4.0 mm). This is indistinguishable from the ware used for the collared urn from Ring Ditch 6 (Vessel 8, Fig 32, P8).

Vessel 2 (Fig 29, P2) was the larger of the two collared urns from grave pit F81. It had been placed on its side with the rim facing north and contained the remains of a female adult (cremated burial 125). The decoration is confined to the collar and consists of a twisted cord hurdle pattern. The vessel is complete and the outer surface is predominantly reddish brown in colour. It is made from a soft fabric (Fabric GS/4) tempered with common amounts of coarse grog (0.5 to 6.0mm). Sparse rounded quartz sand (0.2 to 0.5mm) and rare flint (up to 7.0mm) and mica (<0.06mm) are also present.

The accompanying urn had been inverted (Vessel 3, Fig 29, P3) and held an adult cremation (cremated burial 155) along with a single copper awl (Object 98, Fig 25, 1). The profile echoes that of Vessel 2, although the bevelled rim form is slightly different. A more startling contrast is created by the fingernail impressed herringbone motif, which is repeated on both the collar and the shoulder. The vessel is complete apart from seven fragments recovered from the sieve fractions. The outer surface is dark reddish brown and the fabric although equally soft is finer than the ware used for Vessel 2 (Fabric FG/1), being tempered with a moderate frequency of medium sized grog (0.5 to 3.0mm). Sparse pieces of flint are also scattered throughout the clay matrix (1.0 to 7.0mm).

Ring Ditch 2 – Vessels 10 to 12 (Fig 30, P4 to P6)
Vessel 10 (Fig 30, P4) is a collared urn that was associated with the cremated remains of a child (cremated burial 970, pit F969) accompanied by a copper awl (Object 13, Fig 25, 1). The vessel is very fragmented, with pieces recovered derived from only the rim and collar. The poor condition of the urn is attributed to plough damage and it is possible that it had been placed in a pit cutting the mound, while the survival of the upper part of the vessel suggests that it had been inverted. The impressed decoration on the collar consists of a split herringbone motif bordered above by three horizontal lines. The surface colour is predominantly reddish brown with dark grey patches and the fabric is soft and fairly fine (Fabric GS/3). It contains very common grog (0.2 to 2.0mm) and common sub-angular quartz sand (0.1 to 0.25mm), with the occasional rare piece of flint (up to 2.0mm).

Vessel 11 (Fig 30, P5) is a Trevisker style urn that was inverted within grave pit F1237. The cremated human bone within the vessel (cremated burial 1303) has been dated by radiocarbon methods to 1620 to 1410 cal BC (at 2 sigma). This was accompanied by what is thought to have been part of a single composite necklace. The urn is in exceptionally good condition being
complete, apart from a few small fragments and one of the handles which is missing. It weighs 12.619 kilograms and most closely resembles the biconical Style 1 vessels of the Trevisker series (Parker Pearson 1990). The urn has four ribbon handles below the shoulder and is decorated with a lattice pattern above the shoulder, bordered above and below by paired horizontal lines. A double row of horizontal chevrons ring the vessel below the shoulder. This motif is repeated on the handles while the internal rim bevel carries vertical chevrons. All of the decoration on the exterior is composed of twisted cord, while the motifs on the rim bevel are distinguished by deep linear impressions. Vessel 11 is made from a soft ware (Fabric G/3) tempered with common coarse grog (0.5 to 6.0mm), which thin-sectioning has confirmed as a local product.

Vessel 12 (Fig 30, P6) had been placed adjacent to Vessel 11 immediately below one of its handles (Fig 11) and was also inverted. It too contained cremated human remains (cremated burial 1344) together with a copper awl (Object 54, Fig 25, 2). The vessel is complete and has two handles which are slightly offset rather than being directly opposite one another. It is undecorated, although there are a few random fingernail impressions below one of the handles which might be a fortuitous result of the forming process. This cup is similar to the undecorated Style 6 vessels of the Trevisker series (Parker Pearson 1990). The vessel is reddish brown in colour and is made from a soft fabric (Fabric feGSV/1) containing moderate black iron minerals (<0.06 to 0.2mm) and similar quantities of fine grog (0.5 to 1.0mm). Common amounts of rounded quartz sand (0.2 to 0.5mm), sparse rounded voids (0.3 to 2.0mm) which may represent calcareous inclusions, and rare pieces of flint (up to 1.5mm) are also present. All of the non-plastics identified within this ware would have been available in the vicinity, and it seems probable that this too is a local copy of a south-western form.

**Ring Ditch 5 – Vessel 5, the pottery vessel from pit F693 (Fig 31, P7)**

Vessel 5 (Fig 31, P7) comprises the fragmented remains of a single undecorated cup. The fresh condition of the cup, however, suggests that it may have accompanied one of the adjacent inhumations and was disturbed by subsequent episodes of burial. The vessel is represented by 85 sherds, weighing 220 grams, which include 50% of the rim and 75% of the base. This has very uneven walls and surfaces which vary from brown to very dark grey. The soft, coarse fabric (Fabric GS/2) is tempered with common quantities of grog (0.5 to 7.0mm) and also contains moderate amounts of sub-angular quartz sand (0.1 to 0.5mm).

**Ring Ditch 6 – Vessel 8 (Fig 32, P8)**

Vessel 8 (Fig 32, P8) is a single collared urn that had been inverted in grave pit F826 and contained the cremated remains of an adult (cremated burial 863). The vessel had been buried intact, but had subsequently collapsed and is now in 324 pieces, weighing 4756 grams. This fracturing was evidently part of a long term process of post-depositional deterioration, since an additional 772 sherds, weighing 682 grams, came from the sieve fractions. Vessel 8 is markedly biconical, providing a contrast with the profiles of the collared urns from Ring Ditch 1. The collar is decorated with a twisted cord triple zigzag motif, bordered above and below by a double twisted cord row. The zone between the two lowest bordering lines has been filled with an irregular line of fingernail impressions confined to one small area. The surface colour varies from weak red to red and the fabric is the same coarse grog tempered ware (Fabric G/2) used for Vessel 1 from Ring Ditch 1 (Fig 29, P1).
The fragmentary pottery from within the ring ditches and associated deposits

*The Neolithic and early Bronze Age sherds (Fig 33, P9 to P11)*

Nine sherds of late Neolithic Peterborough Ware, weighing 37 grams, were found alongside Roman pottery in one of the sections through Ring Ditch 2 (segment [932], layer 975). All are likely to be part of a single vessel decorated with a split herringbone motif composed of whipped cord maggots (Fig 33, P9 and P10). The sherds vary in colour from black to dark grey and are made from a soft fabric (Fabric FS/9). This contains moderate quantities of evenly distributed burnt flint (0.5 to 8.0mm) and rounded to sub-angular quartz sand (0.1 to 0.7mm).

One other undecorated body sherd, weighing five grams, is made from a similar fabric (Fabric FS/1). This is derived from the tertiary silts of Ring Ditch 1 and could have been produced during either the early or late Neolithic. The ware is characterised by common amounts of evenly distributed burnt flint (0.5 to 7.0mm) and sub-rounded quartz sand (0.1 to 0.25mm).

Two joining fragments from the base and lower body of a beaker (Fig 33, P11), weighing six grams, came from the tertiary silts of Ring Ditch 5 (segment [700], layer 724) which also produced Roman pottery. This is decorated with very abraded rectangular toothed comb impressions and the exterior is reddish brown (5YR5/4). The fabric is fine (Fabric GS/1) and contains sparse amounts of grog (up to 1.5mm) and rounded quartz sand (<0.06 to 0.2mm).

A single unstratified early Bronze Age sherd was recovered during the excavation of Ring Ditch 7. This is entirely featureless, but the relatively coarse fabric (Fabric feGS/1) is consistent with the wares used for various styles of early Bronze Age pottery including food vessels, enlarged food vessel urns and collared urns. It is tempered with very common grog (up to 4.0mm) and also contains moderate quantities of rounded iron minerals (0.1-0.5mm), sparse rounded quartz and quartzite (0.3 to 0.5mm) and rare flint (up to 4.0mm).

*Early Bronze Age pottery from pit F402 (Fig 33, P12 - P20)*

A small group of 96 sherds, weighing 688 grams, came from a pit to the west of the ring ditches. Most of this pottery (88 sherds, weighing 670 grams) is derived from five different vessels, each represented by featured sherds. The emphasis on decorated fragments and on rims suggests that these were selected and placed deliberately within the feature. This material was accompanied by tiny and scattered fragments from six additional vessels.

The more complete material includes part of a ‘South Lodge style’ barrel urn (Central Wessex Regional Assemblage Type 2, Ellison 1975). This has an expanded flat-topped rim and a pinched-out horizontal cordon, abutted by traces of a vertical cordon (Fig 33, P12). The outer lip of the rim and the horizontal cordon are each decorated with a fingertip row, while the inner lip of the rim carries a line of fingernail impressions. A series of short shallow-tooled lines run between these motifs across the top of the rim. The vessel is made from a hard fine fabric tempered with very common shell (up to 2.0mm) and sparse burnt flint (up to 2.5mm). It has smoothed surfaces and varies in colour from very dark grey through brown to dark brown.

The urn is represented by a single rim fragment (weighing 98 grams) from layer 404, comprising 10% of the circumference, which is in fresh condition with crisp fractures. Four other sherds from layers 406 and 407 in the same fabric (weighing 77 grams) could also be derived from this vessel. They include two vertical cordons decorated with fingertip rows (Fig 33, P13) and one undecorated horizontal cordon (Fig 33, P14).
A large rim sherd (weighing 174 grams) from a second barrel urn came from layer 408. This also has an expanded horizontal rim with fingertip rows on the outer and inner lips (Fig 33, P15). The horizontal cordon is applied and decorated with a line of fingernail impressions. The surfaces are weak red and smoothed, while the fabric which is tempered with abundant burnt flint (up to 2.0mm) is both fine and hard. Once again the rim represents approximately 10% of the circumference and is fresh with crisp fractures. It was found alongside a single body sherd from just below the cordon (weighing 38 grams) made from the same fabric and in identical condition. A third wall fragment (weighing three grams) from layer 406 may also be from this urn. The shape of the rim, the location of the decoration on both the inner and outer lips and the fabric are all traits typical of the early ‘South Lodge style’ vessels. It is probable that the sherds are from an urn of this type, but rather too little survives for certain attribution.

Three other smaller tub-shaped vessels are each represented by a few sherds. The first is thin-walled and has a simple rim decorated with a row of fingertip impressions (Fig 33, P16). The vessel is very dark grey with no apparent surface treatment. The two rim sherds from layer 405 (weighing 22 grams) are in fresh condition and represent 10% of the circumference. One has a hole drilled after firing which might signify a repair. The fabric is hard and contains moderate amounts of medium grade burnt flint (up to 4.0mm), sparse angular quartz sand (0.2 to 0.3mm) and rare glauconite (0.3mm). Layers 405 and 403 each contained a wall sherd (with a total weight of 9 grams) made from the same ware which could be part of this vessel.

The second smaller urn has an expanded and flattened rim (Fig 33, P17). The twenty-four sherds from this vessel (weighing 90 grams) are moderately abraded and include five rim fragments forming 18% of its circumference. There is no evidence of the original surface treatment, while the sherds vary in colour from very dark grey to brown and strong brown. The fabric is soft and contains very common fine shell (up to 2.0mm) and moderate quantities of rounded quartz sand (0.2 to 0.5mm). The rims came from layers 406 and 407, while the remaining sherds were scattered throughout layers 403 to 407.

The third of these vessels has a simple rim and is similarly undecorated (Fig 33, P18) with smoothed yellowish red surfaces. In contrast to the other urns it is only represented by one rim sherd (weighing nine grams) and by 50 body sherds (weighing 148 grams) all from layer 404. A single wall fragment (weighing three grams) from layer 405 is derived from the same vessel. The sherds exhibit signs of light to moderate abrasion, while the soft, coarse fabric originally contained common shell (now marked by voids of up to 5.0mm), sparse rounded quartz sand (0.2 to 0.7mm) and rare glauconite (0.2 to 0.3mm).

Layers 403 to 406 also incorporated eight small fragments of pottery (weighing 18 grams), derived from at least six additional vessels. Two are represented by thin-walled rim sherds in good condition (weighing one gram each). The first from layer 405 has an internal bevel (Fig 33, P19) and is in the same fabric as the repaired urn (Fig 33, P16). The second from Layer 404 has a simple flat top (Fig 33, P20) and is made from a ware containing very common rounded quartz sand (0.1 to 0.8mm) and sparse burnt flint (up to 3.0mm).

The other four vessels have been identified from featureless fragments in unique fabrics. Sherds in fresh condition from layers 404 to 406 are either made from a ware tempered with very common burnt flint (up to 3.0mm), or are in a fabric containing sparse burnt flint (up to 1.0mm) and moderate shell (up to 1.5mm). Two abraded sherds from layers 403 and 404 are made from wares characterised by very common to abundant, rounded quartz sand (0.1 to 0.5mm), one of which additionally incorporates sparse burnt flint (up to 1.0mm).
The middle Bronze Age sherds
Seven sherds of middle Bronze Age pottery, weighing 68 grams, were found in the tertiary silts of two of the sections through Ring Ditch 6 (segments [785] and [812]). These include two fragments from a very slight pinched-out cordon decorated with a fingertip row (not illustrated). There is no evidence for the vessel style, although the sherds are thick-walled (11 to 13mm), and are most likely to be derived from a relatively large bucket or barrel urn. The fabric (Fabric F/3) is tempered with very common coarse burnt flint (0.2 to 6.0mm).

Ten potential sherds of this date (weighing 60 grams) came from the secondary silts of Ring Ditch 2. These are made from two coarse flint tempered fabrics (Fabrics FS/10 and FS/12). The first contains common burnt flint (0.2 to 9.0mm) and sparse rounded quartz (0.3 to 0.5mm); while the second is filled with moderate amounts of burnt flint (0.2 to 5.0mm.) and very common rounded quartz (0.2 to 1.0mm).

The late Bronze Age sherds (Fig 33, P21 and P22)
The late Bronze Age assemblage is largely composed of sherds from a single carinated bowl (Fig 33, P21) from a tree throw c. 20m to the south of Ring Ditch 5 (feature F514). This is very fragmented (127 sherds, weighing 477 grams), although the individual pieces are in fresh condition suggesting that it entered the ditch from a nearby sealed context. The exterior is burnished and varies from very dark grey to brown and reddish brown. The vessel is made from a medium grade, hard fabric (Fabric FS/13) containing common amounts of burnt flint (0.2 to 3.0mm) and sub-rounded quartz (0.2 to 0.5mm).

Sherds in this same fabric (21 sherds, weighing 45 grams) were found in a tree throw in the vicinity of Ring Ditch 7 (feature F50). The exterior surfaces of these fragments are similarly burnished, but there is no evidence for vessel form.

Two joining sherds (weighing 16 grams) from a second late Bronze Age carinated vessel (Fig 33, P22) came from the tertiary silts of Ring Ditch 2 (segment [932], layer 975). The surface is dark reddish grey and burnished, while the sandy fabric is fine and hard (MS/1). It contains abundant sub-angular quartz (<0.06 to 1.5mm) and sparse mica (<0.06 to 0.3mm).

The Iron Age sherds
Scattered Iron Age sherds (22 sherds, weighing 123 grams), were found alongside Roman pottery in the upper fills of Ring Ditches 1, 2, 5 and 6. The majority can only be assigned broadly to the Iron Age (15 sherds, weighing 45 grams) and are made from a coarse sandy fabric (Fabric S/1), containing abundant sub-angular quartz (<0.06 to 1.0mm). The better preserved fragments have burnished surfaces and are dark grey. A single sherd (weighing six grams) in a finer glauconitic sandy ware (glS/1) is also represented, and again cannot be dated closely. This has a burnished dark reddish brown exterior and contains abundant rounded quartz (0.1 to 0.5mm) and sparse grains of well-rounded glauconite (0.06 to 0.1mm).

The only other identifiably Iron Age pottery is made from hard grog tempered wares with very dark grey surfaces. Two of the sherds (weighing 59 grams, Fabric G/1) are filled with common amounts of grog (0.5 to 6.0mm); and five (weighing 13 grams, Fabric FGS/1) contain moderate grog (0.5 to 1.0mm) together with sparse burnt flint (0.2 to 4.0mm) and sub-rounded quartz (0.2 to 0.5mm). Fabrics of this type emerged during the late Iron Age and continued to be produced in the early years following the Roman conquest.
Prehistoric pottery of indeterminate phasing

A small group of 35 residual sherds, weighing 107 grams, are made from flint or shell tempered fabrics which could have been produced during more than one phase of prehistory. Three of these fragments (weighing one gram) are too small for fabric identification, but the rest fall into one of four broad ware groups.

The first includes four fabrics (Fabrics F/1, FS/3, FS/8 and FS/11) characterised by common to very common burnt flint (up to 1.0mm or up to 3.0mm) and rare to sparse rounded to sub-rounded quartz (0.2 to 0.8mm). The finest wares (Fabrics FS/3 and FS/8) are most likely to be of middle to late Iron Age origin, although a middle to late Bronze Age date is also possible. These are represented by four sherds, weighing 35 grams, found in the tertiary silts of Ring Ditches 4, 5 and 6. The coarser fabrics (Fabrics F/1 and FS/11) could have been produced at any time between the middle Bronze Age and the late Iron Age. The few fragments made from these wares (three sherds, weighing nine grams) are from the upper fills of Ring Ditches 1 and 2.

A similar late prehistoric date range is applicable to four sherds (weighing five grams) from the tertiary silts of Ring Ditch 3. These are made from a single fabric (F/2) tempered with moderate quantities of burnt flint (0.2 to 4.0mm).

The third ware group includes five fabrics (FS/2, FS/4, FS/5, FS/6 and FS/7) which contain various grades of common to very common sand and sparse burnt flint. Wares of this type emerged during the late Bronze Age and continued in production into the Iron Age. They are represented by 11 sherds, weighing 70 grams, from Ring Ditches 3 and 5 and Linear feature F512.

The final ware group incorporates a range of four shell tempered fabrics (FV/1, Ssh/1, Ssh/2 and SV/1). Three also contain various grades of very common sub-rounded quartz (Ssh/1, Ssh/2 and SV/1), while the shell in the fourth is accompanied by sparse flint (FV/1). The ten sherds (weighing 50 grams) made from these fabrics are most probably of late Bronze Age or Iron Age date and were found in the upper fills of Ring Ditches 1, 3, 5 and 6.

Comments

The sequence and its significance

The few Neolithic sherds indicate activity in the vicinity of Ring Ditch 2 and it is possible that this also encompassed Ring Ditch 1. The radiocarbon dates for Peterborough Ware suggest that the pottery would have been in use between approximately 3400 and 2500 cal BC (Gibson and Kinnes 1997), well before the collared urns were deposited.

The recovery of late Neolithic sherds on Earls Farm Down is not particularly surprising. The first phase of Amesbury 71, marked by a stake circle, may well date to this period (Christie 1967; Kinnes 1979, 21), while a small pit circle on Butterfield Down also produced Peterborough Ware (Rawlings and Fitzpatrick 1996). These sites are approximately one kilometre to the east and south-west of Ring Ditch 2.

Residual Peterborough Ware has also been recovered from barrows on New Barn Down (Ashbee 1985) in closer proximity to the Solstice Park group. Ebbsfleet and Mortlake Ware came from Amesbury 61a, just 200 metres to the north-east of Ring Ditch 1, where it was associated with Grooved Ware (ibid.). Peterborough Ware was also found in the loam core of Amesbury G61
some 400 metres to the north-east, while Amesbury 58 just 150 metres to the north-west
produced a few fragments of Grooved Ware (ibid.).

Peterborough Ware has similar associations with five other round barrows further to the west on
the King Barrow Ridge at Amesbury G27, G30, G31, G32 (Cleal and Allen 1994) and G39
(Ashbee 1981; Cleal and Allen 1994). It was additionally recovered from three of the Wilsford
Down barrows (G51, G52 and G54 – Smith 1991) and seven of the Lake Group (Grimes 1964).
Much of this material was either residual or derived from pre-barrow contexts, and on the King
Barrow Ridge and Wilsford Down appears to have been part of a more extensive distribution
(Cleal with Raymond 1990, 235).

These recurring associations are sufficiently frequent to suggest that they are the consequence of
a deliberate choice. The Solstice Park barrows clearly developed in a familiar setting which had
already been altered and used by local communities. While this landscape may have provided a
backdrop resonant with the past, it also included places which had been the specific scenes of
earlier social and ritual practices, including burial at Amesbury 71 (Christie 1967; Kinnes 1979,
21). Subsequent funerary monuments could well have been positioned nearby with general
reference to foundation burials of this type, but they also occupied particular locations which in
turn may have been imbued with a special significance by the memory of earlier events.

A low level of later activity, bracketed broadly to between 2600 and 1800 cal BC (after Kinnes et
al 1991) is indicated by the isolated beaker sherds from Ring Ditch 5. Beaker fragments were
also recovered from the loam cores of Amesbury G58 and G61 on New Barn Down (Ashbee
1985), and from Amesbury 70 (Christie 1964) and 71 (Christie 1967) on Earls Farm Down,
although none were directly associated with burials.

The cup from Ring Ditch 5 (Fig 31, P7) is likely to be the earliest of the Solstice Park funerary
vessels. This cannot be resolved typologically since the vessel can only be assigned broadly to
the early Bronze Age, although its fragmentary condition is consistent with it having been
disturbed and reburied.

The radiocarbon dates obtained provide a time span for the collared urn series which focuses on
the years between approximately 2000 and 1450 cal BC. All of the vessels from Solstice Park are
characteristic of Longworth’s secondary series (Longworth 1984) and of Burgess’s middle to late
styles, which are thought to have emerged towards the end of the currency of Beaker pottery
around 1800 cal BC (Burgess 1986).

The relative chronology of the various collared urns from Solstice Park is uncertain. Although in
very general terms it is possible to identify middle and late forms, the dividing line between these
is blurred, and the distinctions rely on the recovery of complete or near complete vessels
(Burgess 1986). Essentially it is suggested that the middle style collared urns should have a
mixture of early and late characteristics, retaining two to three early traits; while late style urns
should have no more than one early trait and at least three late traits (ibid.).

According to this scheme, the two vessels from the same grave pit at Ring Ditch 1 (feature F81)
belong to the middle series and are potentially the earliest collared urns from Solstice Park. The
smaller of the two has three early traits, comprising a narrow collar, an internal moulding and
short line motifs repeated on the collar and neck (Fig 29, P3). It has only one late trait, namely a
maximum diameter which is equal to the vessel height. The larger of the two vessels (Fig 29, P2)
has an internal moulding which is an early characteristic and displays two traits diagnostic of late
style vessels, including a maximum diameter equal to its height and a lack of decoration below the collar. An approximate date range between 1800 and 1650 cal BC is most probable for this deposit (after Burgess 1986).

The third collared urn from the adjacent grave pit at Ring Ditch 1 (feature F5) may be broadly contemporary although this is far from certain. It is too incomplete for stylistic classification (Fig 29, P1), but the occurrence of short line motifs on the shoulder is reminiscent of the smaller of the two middle style vessels from feature F81 (Fig 29, P3).

The collared urn from Ring Ditch 6 (Fig 32, P8) displays characteristics typical of the late series. It has no early features and six late traits including: a deep hat-like collar; a peaked collar base; an angular straight-line profile; a bipartite form; a maximum diameter greater than the vessel height; and a lack of decoration below the collar. Burgess suggests a date focussed on the years between 1650 and 1450 cal BC for the late style vessels (Burgess 1986).

This same broad period probably witnessed the deposition of the collared urn at Ring Ditch 2 (Fig 30, P4). This is too fragmented for detailed classification, but if it was a secondary interment its association with the Trevisker vessel would provide a time bracket between 1620 and 1450 cal BC.

The radiocarbon dates associated with the Trevisker urn and accompanying miniature vessel at Ring Ditch 2 (Fig 30, P5 and P6) indicate that these were deposited between 1620 and 1410 cal BC. This is consistent with the evidence from the south-west which suggests that the biconical Style 1 urns belong to an early phase within the Trevisker series (Apsimon and Greenfield 1972). A number of these vessels have been recovered from funerary contexts where they have high status Wessex II associations (Parker Pearson 1990), overlapping with the currency of late style collared urns.

The occurrence of at least one and probably two ‘South Lodge style’ barrel urns within the pit to the west of the ring ditches (feature F402) indicates a date during the later early Bronze Age (Ellison 1975; Dacre and Ellison 1981, 191-2). The currency of these vessels is thought to overlap with the Wessex biconical urn series (ibid.). The likely date of this deposit places it within the same time frame as the Trevisker urns from Ring Ditch 2, while its proximity to the barrows would suggest that it was connected with a funerary rite.

The rituals at the Solstice Park barrows were taking place at roughly the same time as similar events in other barrows on Earls Farm Down. At Amesbury 71 an unfolding sequence of burial and cremation was associated with ridged food vessels (Smith 1967, Figure 6, 3-5) and a primary series collared urn (Smith 1967, Figure 6, 6; Longworth 1984, 1627). These ceramics date to the late third and early second millennium cal BC, and could have been deposited over the same period as the cup from Ring Ditch 5 (Fig 31, P7). Amesbury 70 produced four undecorated collared urn sherds (Christie 1964; Longworth 1984, 1624-1626), while part of the rim and collar of a similar vessel came from Amesbury G72 (Ashbee 1985, Figure 41; Longworth 1984, 1629), some 500 metres to the south-east of Ring Ditch 2. Although none of these vessels is sufficiently complete for detailed classification, they do point to funerary activity at various stages between approximately 2000 and 1450 cal BC.

The evidence from the Solstice Park barrows indicates that the latest funerary rites involving cremation burial focussed on Ring Ditches 2 and 6. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that the only middle Bronze Age pottery also came from these barrows.
Vessel traits and affinities

With the obvious exception of the Trevisker style urn, the pottery from Solstice Park was clearly being produced within an established framework of local ceramic traditions. Flint tempering was used widely for Peterborough Ware in the Stonehenge area (Cleal with Raymond 1990, 234), where this appears to be a reflection of a regional preference in Wessex (Cleal 1995). Fabrics which additionally contain sand are less common and were being used mainly for Mortlake and Fengate Ware (ibid.), although Ebbsfleet vessels made from similar wares are also recorded (eg. Smith 1991, 35). Whipped cord decoration is most frequently found on the Ebbsfleet and Mortlake sub-styles (Smith 1956). The use of this technique to produce the split herringbone motif found on the sherds from Ring Ditch 2 (Fig 33, P9 and P10) is not unusual. It occurs locally on Ebbsfleet Ware from Wilsford Cum Lake (Smith 1991, Figure 14, P15, P25 and P26) and on Peterborough sherds from Wilsford Down (Raymond 1990, Figure 119, P96 and P99).

The probably earliest of the funerary vessels from the pit below Ring Ditch 5 (Fig 31, P7) has few precise parallels. The closest is an undecorated cup of very similar character from a ring ditch at Norton Bavant to the west of the River Wylye (Butterworth 1992, Figure 5, 6). This was one of a number of grave goods which accompanied a central adult male inhumation (Butterworth 1992). However, the Solstice Park miniature does fit into a very widespread early Bronze Age tradition of placing accessory vessels with the dead. Local finds of this type include miniature vessels of contrasting styles from two of the barrows on New Barn Down and Earls Farm Down. The more complete was found with a cremation at Amesbury 61a (Ashbee 1985, Figure 39.1), while a sherd from a decorated cup was recovered from the old land surface below Amesbury 70 (Christie 1964, Figure 6, 4).

The short-line herringbone motif on the Peterborough Ware recurs on two of the Solstice Park collared urns from Ring Ditch 1 (Fig 29, P3) and Ring Ditch 2 (Fig 30, P4). Although these were made considerably later, they may represent the preferential use of a traditional motif by a particular lineage. It is certainly the case that these same barrows were the only ones to produce Neolithic pottery, and while this link may be somewhat tenuous it is nevertheless intriguing.

One of the most striking features of the collared urns is the way in which the decorative motifs are combined to create unique and contrasting designs. These vessels obviously share a range of traits which allow for their recognition as part of an identifiable group, but there is also a clear emphasis on singularity. This echoes contemporary funerary practices where established rituals involving the community appear to highlight the significance of chosen individuals.

At Solstice Park this is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the vessels from Ring Ditch 1 (Fig 29, P1 to P3). Although these are of different sizes, the proportions and profiles are very similar. Two carry short-line motifs on the shoulders (Fig 29, P1 and P3), but they were produced using contrasting techniques and the layout is different. The recovery of the two vessels from the same pit (Fig 29, P2 and P3) suggests a close relationship between the cremated individuals, yet the collared urns are quite unalike in size and decoration. It would seem that there was a concern with ensuring that the distinctions between people, which would have been so apparent in life were maintained and perpetuated in death.

Against this background it is perhaps not surprising that there are no precise local parallels for the Solstice Park vessels. Some common themes in the employment of shared motifs are however apparent, even though these elements were used to create quite different designs. The split herringbone motif on the middle style urns from Ring Ditches 1 (Fig 29, P3) and 2 (Fig 30, P4) echoes the decoration on the primary series collared urn from Amesbury 72 (Smith 1967,
A twisted cord herringbone pattern was also applied to a sherd from a middle to late style vessel found nearby in The Pennings (Longworth 1984, 1633).

This type of motif recurs on collared urns from all parts of the country (Longworth 1984), and in Wiltshire is found on primary series vessels from Winterbourne Stoke 28 (Longworth, 1733, Plate 5b), Wilsford 80 (ibid., 1722, Plate 52f), Collingbourne Ducis 11 (ibid. 1671 and 1672, Plate 10b and c), Avebury 64 (ibid., 1648, Plate 3a), West Overton 6b (ibid., 1713, Plate 49h) and Ogbourne St. Andrew (ibid., 1697, Plate 7d); and on secondary series vessels from Winterbourne Stoke (ibid., 1738, Plate 163b) and Preshute 1a (ibid., 1698, Plate 189e).

Similarly, the bordered triangles on the collar of the urn from Ring Ditch 6 (Fig 32, P8) are reminiscent of the design on the vessel from Amesbury 72 (Ashbee 1985, Figure 41), yet here the triangles are infilled. Infilled triangular motifs occur more widely as design elements on collared urns, including secondary series vessels from Amesbury 78 (Longworth 1984, 1630, Plate 155a), Amesbury 133 (ibid. 1984, 1632, Plate 150d; and Gingell 1988, Figure 16, 2), Winterbourne Stoke 32 (Gingell 1988, Figure 22), Collingbourne Kingston 8, (Longworth 1984, 1673, Plate 186c) and Warminster 5 (ibid. 1712, Plate 154d).

The hurdle pattern on the vessel from Ring Ditch 1 (Fig 29, P2) is relatively common in Dorset (cf. Longworth 1984), but has fewer Wiltshire parallels and none from the excavated barrows on New Barn Down and Earls Farm Down. Published examples include secondary series urns from Winterbourne Stoke 46 (Gingell 1988, Figure 34), Winterslow 21 (Longworth 1984, 1739, Plate 149e) and Wilsford (ibid., 1724, Plate 173b). The crude zig-zag motif on the third collared urn from Ring Ditch 1 (Fig 29, P1) has no local parallels.

The apparent use of pottery to emphasise and preserve the individuality of the dead is accentuated by the highly distinctive funerary deposits at Ring Ditch 2. Trevisker urns are rare outside the south-west peninsula and would have been an unusual sight in early Bronze Age Wessex. The recorded finds from Dorset and Wiltshire compare broadly with the Style 1 vessel (Fig 30, P5) and include a similar biconical urn from a barrow at the Winterslow Hut to the east of Salisbury (Abercromby 1912, No. 356). This is decorated with plaited cord chevrons and was found with Wessex II grave-goods including amber beads, an awl and a blade or razor (Abercromby 1912, No. 356; Parker Pearson 1990). The accompanying Style 6 cup is unique to Wiltshire (Fig 30, P6), but vessels of a similar size are a typical part of the south-western ceramic repertoire (Parker Pearson 1990).

Although the Winterslow urn has not been thin-sectioned, cassiterite has been observed in the fabric suggesting a south-western origin (Parker Pearson 1990; Tomalin 1988). Two other Style 1 vessels from Sturminster Marshall in Dorset (Calkin 1962, Figure 14, 1) and Hardelot, Pas de Calais, which have been thin-sectioned have proved to be gabbroic (Parker Pearson 1990). This indicates that at least some of the Wessex examples were transported from Cornwall, quite possibly by sea (ibid.).

By contrast, thin-sectioning of the Style 1 vessel from Solstice Park has not identified any typically south-western minerals and the fabric is very similar to the grog tempered wares used for the collared urns. Similarly, the Style 6 cup contains inclusions which would have been available in the Amesbury area. This is reminiscent of some of the Trevisker style urns from Dorset which also seem to have been copies made from local fabrics (Parker Pearson 1990).
Both of the Solstice Park vessels were clearly made by or for someone who was very familiar with the ceramic repertoire of the south-west peninsula. They could easily have been produced in Wiltshire, but a Dorset origin is equally possible. The only oddities displayed by Vessel 11 (Fig 30, P5) are the four ribbon handles rather than the more usual two found on Style 1 urns (Parker Pearson 1990) and the use of twisted rather than plaited cord. These idiosyncrasies may well be a product of the copying process.

The evidence indicates that both of the Trevisker vessels must have been replicas which were almost certainly designed to signify a specific relationship with the south-western peninsula. This may well be symptomatic of the range of contacts held by the wider community, where the significance of the pottery might also have rested on a more general notion of the exotic. Yet the deposition of these vessels suggests that they also refer to more personal connections which were severed with the death of the individuals concerned.

Funerary practices
The use of pottery in the various funerary rituals at Solstice Park is clearly part of a local and regional tradition, yet in some ways it is also idiosyncratic. The cup found in a pit beneath Ring Ditch 5 (Fig 31, P7) may reflect a widespread tradition of placing accessory vessels with both inhumations and cremations. This practice is repeated much later in the sequence at Ring Ditch 2 with the deposition of the miniature Style 6 vessel below the handle of the large Trevisker Urn. In this particular instance the position and contents of the cup echo the main burial even to the point of containing cremated remains, which for a miniature is highly unusual. While it is clear that these vessels were used in ceremonies marking the passage from life to death, it is less easy to determine whether they were made and reserved specifically for such occasions (cf. Allen and Hopkins 2000).

The large Style 1 Trevisker urn may well have been in circulation for some time prior to burial. The fourth handle was already missing when the vessel was deposited. Unfortunately the processes of attrition had led to fracturing along the old break, so that the degree of wear could not be assessed and it is possible that the handle was removed during the funerary ritual.

As at Solstice Park, the majority of collared urns from burial contexts are associated with cremations and most actually contain the cremated remains (Longworth 1984, 47-48). Where the orientation of the Wiltshire vessels is known both upright and inverted positions are recorded (ibid., 106, 119, 129-130 and 135).

The character of the deposit in the pit below Ring Ditch 1 (feature F81, Fig 29, P2 and P3) is far more unusual. There are only 13 recorded instances where two urns containing cremations were placed together in the same pit, and the majority are from northern Britain with outliers in Wales and Buckinghamshire (Longworth 1984, 49).

The position of Vessel 2 (Fig 29, P2) is remarkable in two respects. At a local level the orientation of its mouth towards the main New Barn Down barrow cemetery is unlikely to be fortuitous, and may reinforce the close spatial relationship between these monuments. A broader focus on the wider regional framework has also led to the identification of some intriguing parallels. There is only one other collared urn from Wiltshire, at Winterslow 21 (Longworth 1984, 130), which is known to have been deposited on its side. This secondary series vessel is also decorated with a twisted cord hurdle pattern (ibid., 1739, Plate 149e), which is a striking coincidence given the relative rarity of this motif in Wiltshire. Similar design elements occur on two of the four recorded examples found on their sides in Dorset (ibid., 100 and 133) at
Winterbourne Steepleton 19c (ibid., 517, Plate 38a) and Sturminster Marshall 2 (ibid., 434, Plate 204c). At Solstice Park the unusual placement of this vessel distinguishes the deposit as being of special character and this is reinforced further by its direct association with a second cremation urn. The singular nature of the Winterslow 21 vessel seems also to be emphasised by its association with a faience, amber and jet necklace.

In isolation the links suggested by the collared urns are very tenuous. They appear less so when repeated later in the sequence by the Trevisker pottery. The Wessex distribution of Style 1 urns also encompassed Winterslow and Sturminster Marshall, while the production of local replicas is echoed by a number of the Dorset finds. The high status burial assemblage found with the Solstice Park vessel is echoed by the artefacts accompanying the Winterslow Urn. These are clearly part of a local tradition, but they additionally reflect comparable funerary associations between Style 1 vessels and Wessex II grave goods in Cornwall (Parker Pearson 1990).

The assemblage from the pit to the west of the ring ditches (feature F402) provides a glimpse of the complex funerary rites which must have taken place as part of the burial process. The patterns discernible in the group are highly unlikely to be the product of chance. Apart from the emphasis on featured sherds, other aspects of the evidence point to a selected and structured deposit. Most obviously, all of the pottery was clearly separated from the remains of the calf, occurring in overlying contexts. It is also in good condition denoting burial soon after breakage. The representation of 10% of the mouths of each of the decorated urns seems more likely to reflect preferential selection than coincidence. The contrasting treatment of the undecorated urns, which evidently involved the incorporation of alternative proportions and parts, suggests that these may have been viewed in a rather different manner. Furthermore, the bottom and top of the layers containing most of the ceramics were distinguished by the rim sherds from the two barrel urns (layers 404 and 408), as if they marked the beginning and end of this episode. The rims from the smaller tub-shaped vessels occupied the intervening horizons, while the urn represented mostly by body sherds was confined to the upper part of the feature.

As a whole the deposit incorporates a wide range of vessel types, including tiny thin-walled fragments probably derived from cups. Not only does this suggest the selection of ceramics with contrasting functions and by implication alternative meanings, but it also points to the commemoration of an event involving the exchange of food and drink.

The nuances of shifting meaning conveyed by this study of the pottery are surely a reflection of the richness and complexity of early Bronze Age society. The ceramics refer to the past and emphasise individuality, allowing the identity of the living to be maintained and carried into death. The pottery also points to shared relationships at various levels and perhaps most tantalisingly appears to signal a chain of connections across the Wiltshire landscape to Dorset and the south-west.

THE ROMAN POTTERY
(Frances Raymond)

In total 344 sherds of Roman pottery, weighing 2,359 grams, were recovered from the ditch fills of Ring Ditches 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. All of this material is heavily abraded and is typical of a plough-soil assemblage, which must have entered the various features after long exposure to cultivation.
THE WORKED FLINT
(Paul Martin)

Introduction
This report summarises the flint assemblage from excavations at Solstice Park. A more detailed paper is currently being prepared (Martin in prep.). A total of 15,317 worked flints (232.81kg) was recovered, which can be sub-divided as follows:

- Ring Ditch 1 - 3633 pieces (33.123 kg)
- Ring Ditch 2 - 3058 (72.065 kg)
- Ring Ditch 3 - 32 (0.332 kg)
- Ring Ditch 4 - 1140 (12.815kg)
- Ring Ditch 5 - 1114 (16.242 kg)
- Ring Ditch 6 - 4160 (62.475 kg)
- Ring Ditch 7 - 948 (14.148kg)
- Linear features - 137 (2.396kg)
- Natural features - 645 (10.603kg)
- Other features - 63 (1.602kg)
- Clearance - 387 (7.009kg)

Flints from ring ditches
Much of the flint from the upper levels of ring ditches was recovered in conjunction with later finds such as Iron Age and Romano-British pottery. Within the secondary and primary fills of most ring ditches, however, the preliminary assessment recognised a consistent middle Bronze Age technology, which in some instances included a number of conjoining flakes (refits). In only Ring Ditch 7 was the assemblage (throughout all levels of the ditch) characteristic of an earlier (late Neolithic/early Bronze Age) technology.

Three equally spaced segments within each of Ring Ditches 2, 5, 6 and 7 were selected as a representative sample in order to characterise the flint assemblage (a total of 2003 pieces). The flints from Ring Ditches 2, 5 and 6 comprise a large number of waste flakes with homogeneous medium to heavy cortication and cortex. Included with these are a number of refitting pieces, the most noteworthy being a core/flake refit of 1:28 from the base of the primary fill in segment [1255] (1288) of Ring Ditch 2. The presence of these refits suggests that core reduction was taking place either within or adjacent to the ring ditches.

The flints recovered from the fill of Ring Ditch 7 mainly show a very light cortication compared with those from other ring ditches. The technology evident in the waste material, comprising feathered termination, is more characteristic of earlier industries. There are also refits present in this ditch, including polished flint axe fragments.

Within all ring ditches there was a very low ratio of tools to flakes. Ring Ditch 2 works out at a ratio of 1:41, Ring Ditch 5 at 1:111, Ring Ditch 6 at 1:52 and Ring ditch 7 at 1:67. Tools recovered include fabricators, borers and large rough scrapers.

Flints from natural features
Tree throws with lithic material were located within Ring Ditch 5 (feature F843) and Ring Ditch 7 (feature F56). Both these features contained worked flint which is characteristic of a late Neolithic or early Bronze Age date. Other tree throws located elsewhere across the site produced flints of many different periods, although most are also late Neolithic or early Bronze Age.
Notable pieces include a scalene triangle and blade core, both diagnostic to the Mesolithic period. Within a tree throw c. 10m to the east of Ring Ditch 2 (feature F1279), as well as containing 52 burnt lumps of flint, it also contained a large heavily corticated and slightly worn (scraper edge) end scraper. This form of scraper is distinctive to the earlier Neolithic period, with a close example from the primary ditch fill at Windmill Hill causewayed enclosure (Smith 1965, Fig. 40, F43).

**Flints from linear features**
The linear features on the site contained relatively few worked flints, and what was recovered is a mixed group that is likely to date from the Mesolithic period through to the middle or later Bronze Age. Much of the material comprises broad heavily corticated flakes from later prehistoric industries, with earlier flints comprising a small number of blade flakes, a backed blade microlith and a fine Mesolithic blade from linear feature F46.

**Flints from other features**
Within the fill of inhumation grave F711, Ring Ditch 5 four rough cores and 14 waste flakes of probable early to middle Bronze Age date recovered. Two of the cores had single flake refits.

Pit feature F402 within evaluation Trench 4 contained 87 pieces (845g) of worked flint. These predominantly comprise later prehistoric broad waste flakes, although a rough core, a thumb scraper and a transverse arrowhead were also present.

**WORKED STONE**
(M. Laidlaw)

Three worked stone fragments comprising one whetstone, one quernstone and one polished pebble were recovered from ditch sections of three ring ditches.

The whetstone is in a coarse sandstone and was recovered from tertiary fills in Ring Ditch 1. It is square in section, slightly waisted with tranverse grooves on both surfaces and over the rounded end.

The Sarsen quernstone fragment has one flat and worn surface and was recovered from the upper ploughsoil fills of Ring Ditch 6. The fragment is too small to attribute to type.

A small pebble with a polished surface was found in upper ploughsoil fills of Ring Ditch 2.

**ANIMAL BONE**
(L. Higbee)

A total of 522 fragments of animal bone was recovered during excavations. Most of the bone derives from two modern sheep skeletons, as well as cattle and horse teeth from the upper fills of Ring Ditches 1, 2 and 6. Red deer antlers were found in the primary fills of Ring Ditches 1 and 3.

The antler fragments include a portion of main tine and basal section of a shed antler both from Ring Ditch 1. A further antler object (Object 4) from Ring Ditch 3, segment [565], layer 589 is a complete but fragmented portion from a five tined crown from a mature male deer (Fig 34).
Antler from fully mature individuals, such as represented by the five tine crown, has the added advantage of providing two implements from a single antler. Simple division of the main beam produces a rake from the upper section and a pick from the lower section (Legge 1981). Comparison with published material on antler implements from Neolithic and Bronze Age contexts suggest that Object 4 was used as a rake possibly during the digging of the ring ditch. The significance of the deposition of the rake within the ring ditch is difficult to interpret in isolation. At other sites the deposition of rakes and picks can be demonstrated to have had a ritual or at least non-functional element since many were placed at the bottom of features in similar positions to other placed deposits of bone and other artefacts (Serjeantson and Gardiner 1995, 430). An alternative explanation is that they were discarded after completion of the work (i.e. digging the ring ditch) due to heavy wear. Unfortunately the preservation condition of the rake from Ring Ditch 3 is such that wear cannot be confidently assessed.

Pit feature F402, which was uncovered to the west of the ring ditches during evaluation work at the site, contained a good pottery assemblage dating to the latter part of the early Bronze Age. A small number of disarticulated cattle and sheep/goat bones were identified from the upper fills (403-407), the number of identified fragments vary from 1-5 per layer and most are small and poorly preserved. The skeleton of a young calf (418), aged less than 12-18 months of age, was recovered from lower fill (408). The animal lay on the eastern side of the feature and there were no obvious signs of butchery or pathology on any of its bones. Regardless of whether the animal represents a natural mortality or culled animal, the sequence of associated finds, which includes a large quantity of pottery and two flint tools, suggests that the deposition of this animal had special significance. A small number of other bones were also identified from (layer 408) including a distal cattle tibia from an animal over 2-2½ years old and the mandible from a 3-4 year old sheep/goat.

THE CHARCOAL FROM CREMATION GRAVE PITS
(Rowena Gale)

Introduction
This section of the report includes the analysis of a small assemblage of charcoal recovered from cremation grave pits in Ring Ditches 1, 2 and 6. Species identification was undertaken to assess and compare the selection and use of local species for the construction of pyres. Charcoal fragments measuring >2mm in radial cross-section were considered for species identification. The samples were prepared using standard methods (Gale and Cutler 2000).

Results
The taxa identified are presented in Table 3. The anatomical structure of the charcoal was consistent with the following taxa or groups of taxa:
- **Aceraceae.** *Acer campestre* L., field maple
- **Corylaceae.** *Corylus avellana* L., hazel
- **Fagaceae.** *Quercus* sp., oak
- **Rosaceae.** Subfamily: Pomoideae, which includes *Crataegus* sp., hawthorn; *Malus* sp., apple; *Pyrus* sp., pear; *Sorbus* spp., rowan, service tree and whitebeam. These taxa are anatomically similar.
Ring Ditch 1, cremated burials 27 and 127, pit F81
The charcoal was recovered from the fill of cremation grave pit F81 which contained two urned cremation deposits and associated fills (27 and 127); thus, the charcoal may be attributable to either one or both these cremations. Although rather fragmented, the charcoal indicates the dominant use of oak (Quercus sp.) (including sapwood and heartwood) from trees of moderate growth. Field maple (Acer campestre) was also present and, in addition, small pieces from charred herbaceous stems and very thin and degraded, possible woody root material (diameters 1-2mm).

Ring Ditch 2, cremated burial 1303, pit F1237
Charcoal was examined from the fill around Vessel 11, the Trevisker style urn and from its fill. The taxa identified included field maple (Acer campestre), oak (Quercus sp.) and the hawthorn/Sorbus group (Pomoideae) from deposits both within and surrounding the urn (Table 3). The samples were predominantly composed of large fragments of field maple (Acer campestre) which had originated from roundwood estimated at 100+mm in diameter. Unidentified charred herbaceous stems (diameter 2mm) were also present.

Ring Ditch 6, cremated burial 863, pit F826
Associated charcoal was sparse but included field maple (Acer campestre), hazel (Corylus avellana) and the hawthorn/Sorbus group (Pomoideae).

Comments
The charcoal analysis indicated the use of mixed species for the construction of the pyres using field maple (Acer campestre), oak (Quercus sp.), hazel (Corylus avellana) and the hawthorn/Sorbus group (Pomoideae). Although rather fragmented, charcoal from pit F81 (Ring Ditch 1) appears to have been biased in favour of oak (Quercus sp.) and therefore differed in character to that from pits F1237 and F826 (Ring Ditches 1 and 6).

Charcoal was relatively abundant in grave pit F1237 (Ring Ditch 2); these deposits demonstrated that the pyre probably consisted mainly of fairly stout lengths of field maple (Acer campestre), although oak (Quercus sp.) was also incorporated. The Pomoideae group (probably hawthorn in this environment) occurred only sparsely - perhaps used as kindling or infill. The use of multiple species in this cremated burial, including field maple (Acer campestre), for the construction of the pyre is of some interest since it appears to differ from evidence from comparative Bronze Age sites in other parts of Britain. Although it is possible that the use of field maple may have been determined by species availability, other sites have sometimes provided evidence of the use of a single species for primary or “significant” cremations, implying a ritual element in the selection of the pyre wood. The most favoured wood appears to have been oak (Quercus sp.), as recorded at Barrow Hills, Radley, Oxfordshire (Thompson 1999), Westhampnett, West Sussex (Gale, forthcoming), Gayhurst Barrow Cemetery, Buckinghamshire (Gale 2000) and at Risley Farm, Berkshire (Gale 1992). The exclusive use of ash (Fraxinus excelsior) was recorded at Yeovilton, Somerset (Gale 2001), and alder (Alnus glutinosa) for a child’s cremation a Lodge Farm (Gale 2004).

Since roughly one ton of wood is required to dispose of an adult body by burning (McKinley 1994), the practical aspects of the acquisition of sufficient fuel (timber/wood) clearly play an important part in the siting and construction of the pyre. The large number of prehistoric earthworks extant in the region of Amesbury today attest to the ritual significance and long term occupation of these chalklands and it is probable that much of the area was denuded of woodland by the early Bronze Age. The species identified typically grow on calcareous soils and, in the
right environment, can form dense woodland, although, in the contemporary landscape at Amesbury, woodland was more likely to have been sparse or scrub-like. Spatial and temporal differences between the ring ditches (and ?pyre sites) may also be relevant to species dominance.

The site was based on land sloping down to the western banks of the river Avon in a region of undulating chalkland. Charcoal from a group of late Neolithic pits at Boscombe Down (Gale 1996), located just southeast of the site at Amesbury, identified a more diverse range of species, which included predominantly oak (*Quercus* sp.) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*), but also ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), the hawthorn/ *Sorbus* group (Pomoideae), and probably holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and purging buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*). Interestingly, despite its proximity to the cemetery at Amesbury, field maple was not recorded in these early deposits at Boscombe, which could imply subsequent changes in the woodland composition in this area.

THE LAND MOLLUSCA  
(Roy Entwistle)

**Introduction**

A total of 22 samples were taken from two ring ditches (1 and 2) and three irregular subsoil features (F731, F646 and F1203). Columns of samples were taken from segment [62] in Ring Ditch 1 and segment [1276] in Ring Ditch 2, while single spot samples were taken from each of the three subsoil features, all located within ring ditches (F731 in Ring Ditch 4; F646 in Ring Ditch 3 and F1203 in Ring Ditch 2).

**The ring ditch samples**

**Ring Ditch 1**

None of the samples taken from the ditch fill contained shell in sufficient numbers to allow for detailed interpretation. The three samples from the primary silts produced a combined total of only nine shells, which undoubtedly reflects the unfavourable conditions created by the rapid erosion of blocky chalk from the ditch sides. However, some slight evidence for incipient ditch colonisation may be indicated by the presence of *Oxychilus cellarius*, *Discus rotundatus* and *Vitrea*, which occur in rock-rubble habitats (Evans and Jones 1973). The very small numbers of *Vallonia* sp. and the species *Helicella itala* and *Pupilla muscorum* are likely to be an allochthonous component derived from dry grassland habitats in the immediate vicinity of the ditch.

There is a small increase in shell numbers throughout the secondary silts but none of the species making up the “Punctum group” (Evans 1972, 331) are present. This group comprises *Punctum pygmaeum*, *Euconulus fulvus*, *Nesovitrea hammonis* and *Vitrina pellucida*, which together characterise the early stages of ditch colonisation by plants. The uppermost sample from the secondary silts corresponds to a more humic and flinty horizon that probably represents a truncated soil. The open country species *Helicella itala*, *Vallonia excentrica*, *Pupilla muscorum* and *Vertigo pygmaea*, though present in small numbers, are a dominant component of the assemblage and point to the existence of short-turf grassland nearby. Shaded conditions created by mixed scrub and tall grass growing in the hollow of the partly silted ditch are indicated at this level by shells of *Discus rotundatus*, *Carychium tridentatum*, *Vitrea contracta* and *Aegopinella pura*. The numbers of *Pomatias elegans* increase at this level, a trend often reported in association with clearance and ground disturbance. However, shells of *Pomatias elegans* also
display a tendency to be concentrated in sub-soil horizons (Bell and Jones 1990, 155), which supports the stratigraphic evidence for a soil profile at the top of the secondary silts.

The beginning of tertiary silting is marked by a decline in shell numbers, although there is little change in the overall species composition. The shade loving species *Discus rotundatus* and *Carychium tridentatum* are present along with single shells of *Aegopinella pura* and the family *Clusiilidae*, the latter represented by an abraded apical fragment. These occur in conjunction with an open country fauna which includes the introduced helicellid *Candidula intersecta*, an alien species which may have been introduced during the medieval period (Evans 1972, 179). The adjacent land-use from the base of the tertiary silts to the top of the ditch sequence was predominantly arable, with ploughing eventually extending over the ditch and probably the mound itself. This was followed by more stable conditions, allowing a soil profile to develop in the top of the ditch. The shell numbers from the tertiary silts are too small to support further interpretation, other than to note that shade loving species are absent.

**Ring Ditch 2**

Like those in Ring Ditch 1, the primary ditch silts produced very few shells. The two species that are represented, *Helicella itala* and *Trichia hispida*, are both found in open country habitats. The low representation of shells continues in the samples from layer 1298 (880-970 and 880-800mm). Since so few shells were recovered from layers 1299 and 1298, the assemblages have been omitted from the percentage frequency histogram (Fig 35).

Shell numbers increase sharply in sample 700-800mm (layer 1295), which marks the base of the secondary silts (Fig 35). The fauna is dominated by the open country species *Helicella itala*, *Vallonia, Pupilla muscorum* and *Vertigo pygmaea*, along with the intermediate taxa *Cochlicopa sp.* and *Trichia hispida*. Except for minor differences (the absence of *Trichia hispida* and the appearance of *Pomatias elegans*) the species composition remains unchanged in sample 600-700mm. During the interval when the lower secondary silts (1295) were accumulating the barrow mound itself and the margins of the ditch probably remained sparsely vegetated, with patches of exposed chalk favouring the xerophile species *Helicella itala* and *Pupilla muscorum*.

The complete lack of shade loving species in the assemblage from the base of the secondary silts suggests that scrub or long grass refugia were absent from the barrow and its immediate vicinity. This is quite likely to be a reflection of wider environmental conditions, with tracts of dry grazed grassland acting as a barrier to plant and snail colonisation. Indeed, the presence of *Vertigo pygmaea* throughout the secondary silts, albeit in small numbers, is indicative of short turf grassland maintained by grazing.

Some slight trace of initial ditch colonisation by plants appears higher in the secondary silts at 500-600mm (layer 1294). Although the fauna is overwhelmingly open country at 75% (Fig 35), the appearance of *Nesovitrea hammonis, Punctum pygmaea* and an increase in the numbers of *Trichia hispida* and *Cochlicopa sp.* all suggest that more stable and shaded conditions were becoming established in the ditch. These conditions seem to have been very localised, since the greater numbers of *Helicella itala, Trichia hispida, Vallonia sp.* and *Pupilla muscorum* indicate that a mosaic of dry short turf grassland, and probably arable land, was present in the vicinity of the site.

This trend becomes more prominent towards the top of the secondary silts (layer 1293, 400-500mm). Open country species continue to dominate at almost 78%, with *Helicella itala*, the *Vallonia sp.* and *Pupilla muscorum* all making significant gains. The fauna also includes a single
shell of the introduced helicellid *Candidula intersecta*. The flinty and vacuous character of the ditch fill at this level hampered accurate sampling, and it is possible that the single shell of *Candidula intersecta* is an intrusive element derived from the overlying tertiary silts.

During the same interval (400-500mm) shade loving species have increased to just over 10%, but this is mostly due to a rise in the proportions of *Punctum pygmaeum* from 2% to 8.5% (Fig 35). The presence of a single shell of *Discus rotundatus* is somewhat anomalous since it is a species more commonly associated with woodland habitats. However, its appearance in conjunction with a rise in the numbers of *Punctum pygmaeum* probably indicates a cover of damp herbage, scrub and ground litter in the ditch itself. The persistence of *Helicella itala*, *Trichia hispida*, *Vallonia sp.* and *Pupilla muscorum* as a significant component of the assemblage reflect a more general setting of short turf grassland with arable episodes.

The transition from secondary to tertiary silts marks the first encroachment of cultivation on the margins of the ditch and this is reflected in the composition of the snail fauna. At the base of the tertiary silts (layer 1292, 230-360mm) species diversity drops slightly, while there is a dramatic increase in shell numbers from 341 to 944. The greater numbers of *Helicella itala*, *Trichia hispida* and *Pupilla muscorum*, along with a rise in the abundance of *Vallonia excentrica* and a decline of *Vallonia costata* are paralleled in assemblages from colluvial deposits (Bell 1983). The date of the arable encroachment on the ditch is uncertain, but the presence of *Candidula intersecta* in the upper secondary silts (layer 1293) suggest that the extension of arable cultivation occurred no earlier than the medieval period.

An extended period of stability followed the formation of the tertiary silts, allowing a soil profile to develop (layers 1291 and 1292). The assemblage from the stone accumulation at the base of the soil (90-230mm) is overwhelmingly open country in aspect (Fig 35), with *Helicella itala*, *Pupilla muscorum* and the *Vallonia sp.* present in significant numbers. The establishment of well-vegetated conditions are indicated by *Trichia hispida*, *Punctum pygmaeum* and an increase in the *Limacidae*. These are likely to reflect localised conditions within a predominantly dry grassland environment, which developed following a relaxation in arable cultivation.

Predominantly open conditions are reflected in the assemblage from the upper horizon of the soil profile (layer 1291, 0-900mm) Little change is visible in the overall composition of the fauna (Fig 35), save for a slight increase in the percentage of shade loving taxa represented by *Punctum pygmaeum* and an abraded apical fragment of *Clausiliidae*. This, however, is misleading, for in numerical terms *Punctum pygmaeum* declines from 20 to 7 shells, while the abraded *Clausiliidae* shell is almost certainly residual.

Although the modern arable topsoil had been stripped from the site and was not available for sampling, it is unlikely to have added any significant detail to the interpretation. The land-use history of the site following the complete silting of the ditch is likely to have been characterised by prolonged episodes of Medieval and later ploughing, leading eventually to the destruction of the barrow mound.

**The spot samples**
None of the samples taken from the subsoil hollows produced sufficient shell numbers to support detailed interpretation. For that reason the discussion is limited to some general observations based on the general character of the assemblages.
Feature F646
Only a single apical fragment of *Pupilla muscorum* was recovered from this feature, which may have been a periglacial involution rather than a tree root cast.

Feature F731
The assemblage consists of 55 shells. The faunal composition shows a marked bias towards shade loving species (49%) and includes *Discus rotundatus*, the rupestral species *Acanthinula aculeata* and *Aegopinella nitidula*, all of which are characteristic of woodland habitats. On the other hand, shade loving species such as *Carvichium tridentatum*, *Aegopinella pura* and *Vitrea sp.* are common in habitats created by tall herbaceous vegetation, possibly suggesting that any woodland was rather open and may have included scrub and tall herbage. There is also a significant proportion of open country species (29%) in the assemblage. These consist of *Helicella itala*, *Pupilla muscorum* and *Vallonia excentrica*, all of which favour open dry habitats.

Feature F1203
Shade loving species comprise just over 22% of this small assemblage of shells, with woodland species being represented by *Discus rotundatus* and a single non-apical fragment of *Clausiliidae*. The open country species make up 48% of the assemblage and consist of *Helicella itala*, *Pupilla muscorum* and *Vallonia costata*.

Discussion

The pre-barrow environment
The earliest features selected for sampling were the three subsoil hollows located within ring ditches. In the field these were interpreted as the root casts of trees that had stood on the site prior to the construction of the barrows. Unfortunately, none of the samples contained sufficient shells for detailed interpretation, although the slightly higher shell count from Feature F731 (Ring Ditch 4) provides some insight into the pre-barrow environment. For the most part this appears to have been dominated by short grassland, but with some light woodland on the site of Ring Ditch 4, and possibly on the site of Ring Ditch 2 (Feature F1203). In broad terms this conforms to the evidence for an open landscape of long established grassland recovered from the pre-henge soil at Durrington Walls (Evans 1972) and from soils buried beneath the King Barrows (Allen and Wyles 1994).

In this generalised setting some localised habitat variation, created by scrub and long grassland, is indicated by the mollusc data from a subsoil hollow located within a ring ditch on Butterfield Down (Wyles and Allen 1996). However, making comparisons between these data sets is problematical as there is no reason to suppose that the data represent contemporaneous environmental conditions. Indeed it is probable that they reflect the separate ecological stages of a complex vegetation succession with marked chronological variation in different parts of the landscape.

The absence of buried soils, and the low shell numbers from the primary silts of the ring ditches, prevents any assessment of the local environment immediately preceding the construction of the monuments. There is, however, information available from Kerney’s analysis of mollusc samples taken during the excavation of two extant round barrows, also on Earl’s Farm Down (1964 and 1967). This points to the existence of dry, short turf grassland that had been established for a considerable time before the barrows were built. Despite the rather weak evidence from the primary ditch silts, the current analysis indicates that similar conditions prevailed when the ring
ditches were dug. From this we can infer that the open wood or scrub suggested by the fauna from the subsoil hollows had long since been cleared.

*The later environment*

Open conditions persisted during the subsequent silting of the ring ditches, and throughout that period the landscape was dominated by grazed grassland, probably interspersed with tracts of arable land. In the sequence from Ring Ditch 2, shaded conditions begin to increase, indicating the establishment of taller vegetation in the ditch and doubtless on the mound itself. This would imply that cultivation was not encroaching on the barrow, which may have stood in pasture alongside the arable fields. Indeed, the proximity of cultivated land is demonstrated by the presence of field boundary ditches (features F512 and F984), the former bisecting a group of four ring ditches.

Aerial photographs show a dense and extensive network of fields spreading across Earl’s Farm Down, many of which are likely to be of late prehistoric and Romano-British date. The impact of arable regimes on the ring ditches over this period is difficult to assess, but there is no indication in the silting patterns at Ring Ditch 1 and Ring Ditch 2 to suggest that the barrow mounds were being affected to a significant degree by ploughing. Sherds of prehistoric and Romano-British pottery were recovered from the tertiary fills in both ring ditches, with the later material in particular showing signs of the heavy abrasion typifying ploughsoil assemblages. While much of this pottery is likely to have entered the surrounding topsoil through late prehistoric and Romano-British manuring, its inclusion in the upper ditch fills seems likely to be the result of later cultivation. The medieval introduction *Candidula intersecta* appears in the upper fills of both ring ditches (Ring Ditch 1 and Ring Ditch 2) in association with the onset of intense colluvial sedimentation. This would suggest that the tertiary silting of the ditches and cultivation over the barrow mounds was mostly confined to the medieval and later periods.

The subsequent history of the barrows was undoubtedly characterised by severe plough attrition, with some respite during fallow periods. With the exception of Ring Ditch 1 (see below), there appears to be no record of the barrows from the 18th century onwards, which suggests that they had been completely levelled by that time.

**DISCUSSION**

**Introduction**

The ring ditches described above all would originally have encircled barrows, the mounds of which have now been completely removed by later cultivation. Consequently, in most cases the types of barrow these ring ditches were part of is not known. What is clear, however, is that the radiocarbon dates obtained and artefacts recovered confirm that these monuments were constructed and being used for burial over some 500 years and probably throughout the early Bronze Age period, perhaps even during the later Neolithic.

Ring Ditch 1 is likely to represent a ploughed-down outlier to the New Barn Down linear barrow cemetery, a cluster of extant early Bronze Age round barrows which occupy a prominent E-W ridge immediately to the north of the A303 (Fig 1). Ring Ditch 1 has been previously classified by Grinsell (1957) as a bowl barrow (Amesbury barrow 58a) and must therefore have been identifiable as an earthwork at that time (it is not shown on 18th century and later maps, however). Three other barrows in this group have been previously excavated (Ashbee 1985), comprising a bowl barrow (61), bell barrow (58) and disc barrow (61a).
Ring Ditches 2 – 7 are part of the Earl’s Farm Down group. These six monuments appear to form part of a small barrow cemetery with outliers and are likely to represent the western extent of a concentration of still extant barrows extending to the east of the site (Fig 1). Again other barrows have been excavated in this group (Ashbee 1985, Christie 1964 & 1967, Thomas 1958), comprising a bowl barrow overlapped by a saucer barrow (72), three further bowl barrows (70, 71 & 73), a bell barrow (74) and a disc barrow (67b).

The pre-barrow landscape
No evidence for a mound survived within any of the ring ditches and there was no preserved land surface pre-dating the construction of the barrows. There is therefore only limited evidence for earlier activity which largely consists of information from snail analysis. Relevant samples were collected from tree throws which were within and likely to pre-date the ring ditches, as well as the primary silts of the ring ditches themselves. The species present within the tree throws suggest a landscape of predominantly short grassland, but with some light woodland cover. Snails within the primary silts indicate that shortly after barrow construction the light woodland cover as identified in the tree throws had been cleared with open short turf grassland by now well established.

The fills of the ring ditches and some of the natural features investigated contained artefacts which pre-date barrow construction. The Neolithic Peterborough ware pottery recovered from the fills of Ring Ditch 1 suggests activity on the site of the barrow prior to its construction. Artefacts of this date are often found within buried soils beneath barrow mounds, and their presence within a secondary context may be due to more recent ploughing across the monument. It could be that the barrow had been deliberately placed over a previous habitation site, or one that already had a special significance to the local community and had been a place that was part of the religious beliefs of their ancestors.

Earlier finds from natural features include Mesolithic and Neolithic worked flints. It is not known whether their presence within natural features is incidental or deliberate, but they may provide a date for episodes of woodland clearance on the site.

Ring ditch chronology
The earliest dated burial within a ring ditch is inhumation INH824 within Ring Ditch 5. This burial is likely to have been inserted at the very end of the Neolithic period or at the start of the early Bronze Age (2460 - 2140 cal BC, at 2 sigma). A similar, although slightly later date (2010 BC +/- 110 years) was obtained for Phase 1 of Barrow 71 (Christie 1967) also within the Earl’s Farm Down group, with here the primary burial also an inhumation. As with Barrow 71, Ring Ditch 5 appears to have been used for multiple interments of both inhumation and cremation burial rites over an extended period. A radiocarbon date obtained for inhumation burial INH736 suggests that this child could have died many years later than INH824. Ring Ditch 7 is also likely to have been one of the earlier barrows as it too contained an inhumation grave pit and the ditch itself contained exclusively Neolithic flints.

Where human remains were encountered in other ring ditches cremation was the sole burial rite. Within Ring Ditch 2 the cremated bone within the large Trevisker style urn (cremated burial 1303, Vessel 11) has been dated at 1620 - 1410 cal BC (2 sigma). The remaining cremated burials placed within containers were all within collared urns (Ring Ditches 1, 2 and 6). Raymond (see above) has suggested that based on vessel traits the earliest collared urns are
within Ring Ditch 1 (c. 1800 - 1650 BC), with later styles apparent for vessels in Ring Ditches 2 and 6 (c. 1650 - 1450 BC).

The pottery recovered from pit feature F402 indicates a date for this deposit broadly contemporaneous with the Trevisker style urn from Ring Ditch 2 (see above). The complex layer sequence and position and type of finds recovered suggests that the feature was a structured deposit of special significance. Across the layer sequence were sherds of pottery sherds from many different vessels, the large part of a skeleton of a calf was in the base of the pit and a flint transverse arrowhead and a thumb scraper were also recovered.

**Ring ditch construction**

Most of the ring ditch profiles are of typical construction and profile for this area, comprising generally wide at the top then steep-sloping sides and a flat base. Exceptions to this are Ring Ditches 3 and 7 which had more rounded profiles and were generally shallow and irregular. It was apparent that the fills of these two ditches were noticeably different as well, with an absence of chalk rubble that was the dominant layer within other ring ditches. The material excavated from the ditches would have originally been used to construct an associated mound, but there are no indications from the way the ditches had subsequently become infilled to suggest what the original forms of the barrows might have been.

There is evidence from the site that some of the barrows may have been constructed around or on the site of an existing or former tree. Within Ring Ditches 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 the prominent features close to the centre of the ditches have been interpreted as natural tree throws, with excavation revealing that in two cases (1 and 4) charred bone was present in the fills (the bone in Ring Ditch 1 was undiagnostic whereas that in Ring Ditch 4 was definitely human). What is not certain is whether the trees had been removed prior to barrow construction, but their presence centrally within the ring ditches would suggest that the siting of the barrows was not coincidental and that the trees may already have been significant landscape features. The presence of tree throws on the site of funerary monuments has been previously identified near Basingstoke, Hampshire (Allen et al. 1995) and South Lincolnshire (French 1994). Amesbury barrow 74 of the Earl’s Farm Down group, which has not been published in any great detail, is also described as having a large irregular pit towards its centre (Thomas 1958).

Postholes are often present within the circumference of ring ditches and have been recorded in many of the other excavated barrows in these groups (eg. 61, 61a & 71). They are commonly interpreted as remnants of mortuary houses/temporary structures, or otherwise for structural or revetment purposes. Only in Ring Ditch 1 were postholes present, and in this instance only two. It is unlikely, therefore, that these postholes were integral to the barrow, and may even relate to earlier activity prior to its construction.

**Burials**

In two ring ditches (3 and 4) there were no inhumations or cremations present. While it is possible that there may never have been associated graves with these barrows, if there were any secondary burials that might have been incorporated into an overlying mound, any traces would have been subsequently displaced by later ploughing. Ring Ditches 5 and 7 were the only examples containing inhumations, whereas within the remaining ring ditches cremation was the only burial rite present.

Some of the ring ditches (1, 2 and 5) contained more than one burial (inhumation or cremation). There are many examples of this previously recorded nearby and more generally in the Wessex
area (eg. Ashbee 1985, Amesbury Barrow 61a; Christie 1967, Amesbury Barrow 71; Green and Rollo-Smith 1984, Barrows 5g, 5k, 24 at Shrewton). For Ring Ditch 5, the number of burials present (4 inhumed and 1 cremated) and the radiocarbon dates indicate that the barrow may have acted as a repository for the dead over many years and for perhaps succeeding generations. For Ring Ditch 1, however, the two cremated grave pits contained collared urns which stylistically indicate that these interments were broadly contemporaneous.

The Bronze Age copper alloy razor (Object 6) recovered from the upper fills of Ring Ditch 6 may once have been associated with a burial (perhaps a secondary interment in the mound), later to be incorporated in the ditch during episodes of ploughing. Only three razors of this period have been found in Wiltshire, but one of these was from Amesbury Barrow 71 which contained a razor of similar type within a secondary burial (Christie 1967).

**Inhumation burials**

At the centre of Ring Ditch 5 were two intercutting chalk-filled pits which contained the skeletal remains of a woman and three children (Fig 17). The earliest of this group (inhumation INH824 in pit F788) was that of a child placed in a crouched position within a charred wooden rectangular coffin or container. Burial deposition of this type is rare but has been identified elsewhere. Examples have been found across the country, including Bishop’s Waltham in Hampshire (Ashbee 1957), Stoborough in Dorset (Hutchins 1767) and Deeping St Nicholas in Lincolnshire (French 1994). The closest local parallel was a wooden plank found within the primary burial beneath Barrow G51 at Amesbury (Christie 1964).

Within the overlying backfill of pit F788 was an infant burial (inhumation INH 789).

A later grave (F711) cut F788 on its south side. This pit also contained two burials, comprising the poorly-preserved skeleton of a child in the centre (inhumation INH 736) and the deliberately-stacked bones of a woman against the southern edge (inhumation INH 713). The reason for this burial arrangement is uncertain although similarly piled human skeletal remains was recorded beneath Amesbury Barrow 61a (Ashbee 1985), although here the bones were from four individuals. The bones of female inhumation INH 713 show evidence for cut marks (some suggesting possible decapitation), but it could not be established whether this had taken place ante or post-mortem. While it has not been possible to establish parallels for this process, at Amesbury Barrow 71 (Christie 1967) the skeletal remains of a man were recovered with his skull containing an irregular trephine hole.

It is not known whether the four inhumations and the single cremation within Ring Ditch 5 are part of the same family group.

Ring Ditch 7 contained a single inhumation grave pit towards its centre that contained the unaccompanied remains of a probable adult male (inhumation INH 11).

**Cremated burials**

Ring Ditch 1 contained three cremations, two of which were present within a single pit (feature F81). The containers for the bone were all collared urns, and in one example a copper alloy awl (Object 98) was present in the top fill of a vessel (Vessel 3).

The largest of the ring ditches (2) contained two cremations, with feature F969 possibly a secondary burial incorporated into the mound, as only the base of the feature was present, and the collared urn container was badly damaged, probably by later cultivation. By contrast, the
cremation within pit F1237 was extremely well preserved. Great care seems to have been taken in constructing the pit, which was a close fit around the large urn within it. The urn itself (Vessel 11) contained the charred remains of an adult aged 45+ at death, and is a large Trevisker style vessel of a type that is rare outside the south-west peninsula. Thin sectioning of this vessel has established that it was probably made locally therefore suggesting links between this community and others in the far south-west. Within the vessel were at least 104 beads and spacers and other ornaments, most pieces probably from a single necklace. The human bone within the vessel are likely to have been from a female, as where faience is found associated with a burial the gender is almost exclusively female (Sheridan and Shortland 2004).

There are only seven previously recorded early Bronze Age burials in Britain containing over 100 beads (Woodward 2000, 117), but there have been many discoveries of just a handful of beads. Most notably, faience and amber beads were recovered from a cremation burial beneath Barrow 61a excavated by Ashbee (1985). There are other similarities between grave F1237 and the cremation pit beneath Barrow 61a. As well as both being adult cremations and containing beads, also within the features were miniature vessels and copper alloy awls. One major difference was that the miniature vessel within F1237 (Vessel 12) also contained charred human remains.

The cremated grave pit within Ring Ditch 6 (feature F826) contained a large inverted collared urn, with the charred remains of a mature adult within it. Charred human bone was also found unaccompanied in a natural feature (F697) within Ring Ditch 5.

**Post-barrow activity**

The substantial quantity of worked flint recovered from the site mostly post-dates the construction of the barrows and is middle Bronze Age or later in date. A flint assemblage of similar date and size was also evidenced during investigations of tree-damaged barrows on King Barrow Ridge and Luxenborough Plantation, Amesbury (Healy and Harding 1994, 74), where it was suggested that flint nodules contained in the chalk capping of the barrows would have provided a readily accessible source of material. However, the presence of refits in the Solstice Park assemblage, some with no apparent subsequent tool preparation (Martin in prep.), perhaps indicates that the former barrows may have had a more ritual focus.

The substantial linear features (F1902 and F46) have been interpreted as major prehistoric land divisions of late Bronze Age and early Iron Age date, and are considered to represent some of the earliest known evidence for formal settlement and territory marking (Bradley et al 1994). The profiles and nature of the fills of ditches excavated as part of the current exercise are similar to those recorded elsewhere, with deep, wide cuts, slow silting and occasionally surviving banks. In this area it is apparent that ditch F1902 was retained as a landscape division until relatively recently, and is shown on historic maps as late as 1883 (Borthwick 1992, map 6). Other linear ditches recorded on the site (see Fig 3) are probably part of a network of late prehistoric field systems which extend across a much wider landscape. The barrows were clearly important landscape features at this time as linear feature F512 appears to carefully bisect four of the ring ditches (see Fig 3).

The presence of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery in the upper fills of all the ring ditches suggests that it is probable that more intensive cultivation was taking place on the site at this time; the sherds are small and heavily abraded and typical of ploughsoil damage. There is evidence in the immediate vicinity for an expansion in arable cultivation at the end of the prehistoric period, based on the extensive evidence for field systems of this date both on the site
itself and nearby (see above). Mollusc analysis has shown that ploughing actually across the mounds probably began in the medieval period and is likely to have continued over a period of many years. This is probably why there was no evidence in any ring ditch for antiquarian excavations of burials, and why barrows are not shown in the locations of any of the ring ditches on 18th century (and later) maps of the site.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The drawings have been prepared by Sarah Cottam (main plans, profiles and awls), Roy Entwistle (pottery) and Marion O’Neil (the ornaments and razor).

Ms Helena Cave Penney of Wiltshire County Council Archaeology Service provided useful advice during the course of the work.

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The work of the various contributors in preparation of this report is greatly appreciated.

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Table 1. Summary results for each ring ditch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ring Ditch</th>
<th>Barrow Group</th>
<th>Burial type</th>
<th>Grave goods</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>New Barn Down</td>
<td>Two cremation grave pits: Pit F5</td>
<td>Cu alloy awl within Vessel 3, pit F81</td>
<td>Large tree throw in centre containing small quantity of charred bone. Two small post holes inside ring ditch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>contained upright collared urn; pit F81 contained two collared urns, one inverted the other on side</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Earl’s Farm Down</td>
<td>Two cremation grave pits: Pit F1237</td>
<td>Faience, shale and amber beads in Vessel 11, Cu alloy awls in Vessels 10 and 12</td>
<td>Radiocarbon date for charred bone in pit F1237 = 1620 - 1410 cal BC at 2 sigma Large natural feature close to centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>contained large inverted Trevisker style urn (Vessel 11) and miniature vessel (12); pit F969 contained inverted collared urn (10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Earl’s Farm Down</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Large tree throw close to centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Earl’s Farm Down</td>
<td>Cremated bone in natural tree throw</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Large tree throw at centre with small quantity of charred bone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Earl’s Farm Down</td>
<td>Multi phase inhumation pit and cremated bone in adjacent natural feature</td>
<td>One of the inhumation burials in charred rectangular container. Small cup from pit within ring ditch</td>
<td>Inhumation pits contained woman + 2 children and 1 infant. Cut marks on female skeleton INH824 - radiocarbon date from bone = 2460 - 2140 BC at 2 sigma; INH736 - radiocarbon date from bone = 2150 - 1880 BC at 2 sigma. Small cup in pit inside ring ditch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Earl’s Farm Down</td>
<td>Cremation within inverted collared urn + small quantity of charred bone in pit close to SE edge of ditch</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>C alloy razor (Object 6) from ditch. Large tree throw close to centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Earl’s Farm Down</td>
<td>Inhumation</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Large tree throw close to centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Comparanda for the constituent components of the Solstice Park necklace

Note: Examples from Beck & Shennan 1991 cited as ‘B&S’; those from Annable & Simpson 1964 are cited as ‘A&S’, with their relevant catalogue number; where specified, material identifications for the specimens listed in A&S had been provided by Gill Bussell, in Bussell et al 1982 and Pollard et al 1981. Otherwise, material identifications for the cited comparanda in black materials can only be regarded as provisional and may be wrong in several cases. This list of comparanda is not exhaustive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component type</th>
<th>Solstice Park Cat nos</th>
<th>Findspots of comparanda</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Fusiform beads of jet or similar-looking material, not necessarily from an ancient jet spacer plate necklace | 1–5, 70–1, latter as skeuomorphs | • Upton Lovell G2a, Wilts (jet)  
• Amesbury barrow G 39, Wilts  
• Stockbridge Down, Hampshire (‘lignite’)  
• Oxsettle/Oxteddle Bottom, Sussex (‘jet’) | • A&S 250–2  
• A&S 470–1  
• Stone & Hill 1940, fig 2.4,5  
• Curwen 1954, fig 42 |
| Fusiform beads of amber                              | 84–6                  | • Wilsford cum Lake barrow G47, 49 or 50, Wilts  
• Wimborne St Giles barrow G8, Dorset  
• Barrow Hills (barrow 16), Radley, Oxon  
• Southwick, Hants  
• Radwell ring ditch 1, Beds | • B&S 179, fig 11.17  
• A&S 411  
• Barclay 1999, 165, fig 5.12; Leeds 1938  
• B&S 171, fig 11.12.7  
• B&S 156–7, fig 11.5.3 |
| Squat biconical beads of jet or similar-looking material | 6                     | • Collingbourne Ducis, Wilts  
• Collingbourne Kingston barrow 8, Wilts  
• Winterslow barrow 21, Wilts  
• Barrow Hills (barrow 16), Radley, Oxon  
• Kirby Underdale, East Riding of Yorks  
• South Black Howe, North Yorks | • A&S 498  
• Longworth 1984, no 1673  
• Longworth 1984, no 1739  
• Barclay & Wallis 1998, fig 5.12; Leeds 1938  
• Longworth 1984, no 734  
• Smith 1994, pl 3.2 |
| Large flat rings of shale and similar-looking materials | 8–11 | Durrington, barrow G47, Wilts (non-jet, x2)  
Upton Lovell barrow G1, Wilts  
Upton Lovell barrow G2a, Wilts (jet, decorated with radial incised lines)  
Amesbury barrow 61a, Wilts  
Winterbourne Stoke barrow G68, Wilts  
Winterbourne Stoke barrow G67, Wilts (‘shale or lignite’, x5)  
Aldbourne barrow G6 (IV), burial 1, Wilts  
Shrewton barrow 5L, Wilts (‘lignite’, x2)  
Stockbridge Down, Hants (‘shale’)  
Chalton, Hants (‘jet’)  
Oxsettle/Oxteddle Bottom, Sussex (two ‘jet’, one with four tiny transverse perforations closely resembling those seen on Amesbury ring 10, the other with a circumferential groove and V-perforation for suspension as a pendant)  
Ashville Trading Estate, Abingdon, Oxon  
Salmonby, Lincs (‘jet’, with at least one small perforation across the hoop)  
Lythe burial 1, mound, North Yorks (‘jet’) | A&S 334–5  
A&S 341 (2 rings)  
A&S 243  
Ashbee 1985, fig 39.7  
A&S 460–1  
Beck & Stone 1936, 241  
Kinnes & Longworth 1985, no 280.9  
Green & Rollo-Smith 1984, fig 29  
Stone & Hill 1940, fig 2.6  
B&S, 151  
Curwen 1954, fig 42  
B&S 145; Parrington 1978, 27, fig 26.4  
Longworth 1984, no 903  
Kinnes & Longworth 1985, 274.3 |
| Small disc beads of shale and similar-looking materials | 12–69; 72 (as skeuomorph of 12–69) | Preshute barrow G1(a) aka the ‘Manton’ barrow, Wilts (‘lignite, x150, D 2–5mm; thicker than the Solstice Park examples)  
Upton Pyne barrow 7, Devon (look to be shale; x163, D4–5mm)  
Stockbridge Down, Hants (‘lignite’, x c 125, D 4–5mm)  
Southwick, Hants | A&S 203; Cunningham 1908  
Kirwan 1872  
Stone & Hill 1940, fig 2.11; see also also fig 2.10, ‘shale or other stone’, which is reminiscent of Cat no 72  
Gerloff 1975, 259 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Starting Page</th>
<th>Key Sites/Findings</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Roughly spherical beads of faience                          | 74            | Winterbourne St Martin, Dorset (x4)  
Chalton, Hants  
Cossington, Leics  
Stainsby, Lincs  
Eagleston Flat, Derbs (x2) |
|                                                              |               | Sydenham 1844, pl 17, c  
Longworth 1984, no 620  
Unpublished (inf Susan Ripper)  
May 1976, fig 43  
Barnatt 1994, fig 13 |
| Segmented faience beads                                     | 75–83         | Numerous (esp. in Wessex) and widespread; see Sheridan & Shortland 2004, fig 21.7.1 for distribution map |
|                                                              |               | Sheridan & Shortland 2004                                                        |
| Small chunky annular, oblate and bun-shaped beads of amber, less than 9mm in maximum dimension | 88–102        | Amesbury barrow G48, Wilts  
Amesbury barrow G54, Wilts  
Amesbury barrow G61a, Wilts  
Shrewton barrow G5J, Wilts  
Preshute barrow G1(a), Wilts  
Upton Lovell barrow G1, Wilts  
Norton Bavant (Scratchbury barrow G1), Wilts  
Chalton, Hants  
Southwick, Hants  
Oxsettle/Oxteddele Bottom, Sussex  
Little Cressingham, Norfolk |
|                                                              |               | B&S 147–8, fig 11.1.7 (part of); A&S 402–3  
B&S 148, fig 11.1.6; not in A&S  
B&S 148; Ashbee 1985, fig 39, 2 & 9  
Green & Rolo-Smith 1984, fig 28  
B&S 167, fig 11.9.4; A&S p47;  
Cunnington 1908  
B&S 175, fig 11.15.2 (part of)  
B&S 166, fig 11.9.2 (part of)  
B&S 151–2, fig 11.3.4 (part of)  
B&S 170–1, fig 11.12.7 (part of)  
B&S 162, fig 11.7.3 (part of)  
B&S 162–3, fig 11.8 (part of) |
| Amber beads of 'squashed bun' shape                         | 87            | Upton Lovell barrow G2(e), Wilts  
Upton Lovell barrow G1  
Winterbourne Stoke barrow G14, Wilts  
Collingbourne Kingston barrow G8, Wilts  
Norton Bavant (Scratchbury barrow G1), Wilts  
Hengistbury Head, Hants |
|                                                              |               | B&S 175, fig 11.15.1 (part of); A&S 227 (part of)  
B&S 175, fig 11.15.2 (part of); A&S 342 (part of)  
B&S 181-2; A&S 295–8  
B&S 153, fig 11.3.7; A&S 518  
B&S 166, fig 11.9.2 (part of)  
B&S 152, fig 11.3.6  
B&S 162, fig 11.7.3 (part of) |
| Oval-based, V-perforated amber objects | Oxsettle/Oxteddele Bottom, Sussex  
Radwell ring ditch II, Beds | B&S 157, fig 11.5.4 |
| Shrewton barrow 25 (Rollestone Field Group), Wilts  
Winterslow barrow JFSS 3, Wilts  
Winterbourne Stoke barrow G14, Wilts  
Wimborne St Giles barrow G13, Dorset (a re-used globular bead, perhaps originally from an amber spacer plate necklace)  
Radwell ring ditch I, Beds  
Driffield, East Yorks | B&S 169 fig 11.10.3; Green & Rollo-Smith 1984, fig 27.B16  
B&S fig 11.20.1 (part of)  
B&S 182, fig 11.19.6; A&S 293–4  
B&S 180, fig 11.19.1 (part of); A&S 475  
B&S 156–7, fig 11.5.3 (part of)  
B&S 154–5, fig 11.5.2; Gerloff 1975, pl 52B.3 |
| Cylindrical V-perforated amber object | No exact parallel; see text |
### Table 3. The charcoal from cremation graves

Key: h = heartwood; s = sapwood (diameter unknown); u = maturity unknown (*Quercus* only)

The number of fragments identified is indicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Acer</th>
<th>Corylus</th>
<th>Pomoideae</th>
<th>Quercus</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ring Ditch 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6      | 85      | Fill of cremation pit F81  
|        |         | 6 (1g) | -     | -       | 10h, 36s  
|        |         |        |       |         | (2g)     | 2 x herbaceous stems; 3 x woody roots, diameters 2-2mm.  
|        |         |        |       |         | (<1g)    |        |
| **Ring Ditch 2** | | | | | | | |
| 32     | 1241    | Fill of cremation pit F1237, around Vessel  
|        |         | 54 (5g) | -     | 1 (<1g) | 3h, 2s  
|        |         |         |       |         | (<1g)    | -      |
| 33     | 1303    | From disturbed fill in Vessel 11, cremation pit F1237  
|        |         | 6 (<1g) | -     | -       | 3 h      | 2 x herbaceous stems, compressed diameters 2 x 1mm |
| 34     | 1306    | Fill within vessel 11, cremation pit F1237  
|        |         | 103 (<7g) | -   | 4 (<1g) | 6u       | -       |
| -      | 1303    | Hand picked from disturbed fill of vessel 11, cremation pit F1237  
|        |         | 2 (5g)  | -     | -       | -        | -       |
| **Ring Ditch 6** | | | | | | | |
| 18     | 838     | Fill of cremation pit F826  
|        |         | 18 (1g) | 7 (<1g) | 1 (<1g) | -        | -       |
Figure 1: Site location showing the position of funerary monuments within the New Barn Down and Earl’s Farm Down barrow group
Figure 2: Aerial view of site from the east during the main excavations in 2002
Figure 3: Solstice Park; areas of investigation
Figure 4: Overview of Ring Ditch 1 from the north-west. Scales 2 x 2m
Figure 5: Plan, construction profiles and layer sequence for Ring Ditch 1
Figure 6: Construction profiles and sequence of infilling for all ring ditches. The inner side of the ditch is always to the right.
Figure 7: Cremation grave pit feature F81 with in situ collared urns (Vessels 2 and 3). View from north-west. Scale 0.3m
Figure 8: Plan, construction profiles and layer sequence Ring Ditch 2
Figure 9: Cremation grave pit feature F969 with in situ collared urn (Vessel 10). View from north. Scale 0.3m
Figure 10: Cremation grave pit feature F1237 with in situ collared urn (Vessel 10). View from north. Scale 0.5m

Figure 11: Detail of miniature urn (Vessel 12) and decoration on Trevisker style urn (Vessel 11). View from north-east. Scale 10cm
Figure 12: Plan, construction profiles and layer sequence Ring Ditch 3
Figure 13: From bottom: Ring Ditches 4, 5 and 6. View from east. Scales 2 x 2m
Figure 14: Plan, construction profiles and layer sequence Ring Ditch 4
Figure 15: From bottom: Ring Ditches 5, 3 and 2. Excavated graves can be seen in the centre of Ring Ditch 5. View from south-west. Scales 2 x 2m
Figure 16: Plan, construction profiles and layer sequence Ring Ditches 5 and 6
Figure 17: Plan of inhumation grave pit features F711 and F788. Profile across F788
Figure 18: Excavation of inhumation burial INH824. View from south-west

Figure 19: Overview of Ring Ditch 6. Overlapping fills with Ring Ditch 5 can be seen bottom right. View from south-west. Scales 2 x 2m
Figure 20: Cremation grave pit feature F826 with in situ collared urn (Vessel 8). View from north. Scales 1m and 0.5m

Figure 21: Overview of Ring Ditch 7. View from north-east. Scales 2 x 2m
Figure 22: Plan, construction profiles and layer sequence Ring Ditch 7
Figure 23: Inhumation grave pit feature F12 with in situ skeleton INH11. View from north. Scales 1m and 0.5m
Figure 24: Profiles across linear features F1902 and F46. Plan and profile of pit feature F402
Figure 25: The copper alloy awls: 1 Object 13, Ring Ditch 2, Vessel 10; 2 Object 98, Ring Ditch 1, Vessel 3; 3 Object 54, Ring Ditch 2, Vessel 12.

Figure 26: The copper alloy razor from Ring Ditch 6, segment [818].
Figure 27
Figure 29: Funerary vessels from cremation graves within Ring Ditch 1. Scale 1:4
Figure 30: Funerary vessels from cremation graves within Ring Ditch 2. Scale 1:4
Figure 31: Undecorated cup from pit feature F693 within Ring Ditch 5. Scale 1:4
Figure 32: Funerary vessels from cremation graves within Ring Ditch 6. Scale 1:4
Figure 33: Other pottery from within the ring ditches and associated deposits
Figure 34: In situ antler rake (Object 4) within Ring Ditch 3. View from north-west. Scale 0.2m
Figure 35: Percentage frequency histogram for the mollusc sequence through Ring Ditch 2