Chapter 9: Discussion

THE CHRONOLOGY OF DEPOSITIONAL CONTEXTS AND MONUMENTS

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Discussion themes

The following discussion of the development of the site is directed towards an understanding of the chronology of specific ritual-funerary practices and monumental structures, the transformation of traditional practices over time, and the formal constitution of the ritual-funerary complex in time and space. Specific artefact chronologies, with the exceptions of Grooved Ware and Beakers, receive minimal consideration here as they are more fully discussed in Chapter 7. However, the large number of high-value radiocarbon dates (see Table A.1) associated with a wide range of late Neolithic/earlier Bronze Age artefact types does offer an exceptional opportunity for comparing the absolute dating of ceramic traditions, metalwork assemblages and other material culture types from a single site. This is especially relevant to the contemporaneity of materially exclusive cultural practices in this period, the definition of which remains a major methodological and interpretive problem.

The organisation of the following discussion, according to a broad period division, calls for brief explanation. The full range of radiocarbon dates from Radley can be subdivided on the basis of apparent breaks in the radiocarbon date sequence (Fig. 9.1), which may relate to discontinuities in cultural activity. These breaks occur *c.* 2700–2600 cal BC, 1500–1300 cal BC, and 800 cal BC-cal AD 200, defining three distinct prehistoric periods: earlier Neolithic; later Neolithic/earlier Bronze Age; and late Bronze Age. The latter is relatively unimportant (5 radiocarbon dates) and is only discussed in relation to the general chronological development of the ritual-funerary complex. Most of the discussion, therefore, concentrates on the earlier Neolithic with 21 dates, (including Abingdon causewayed enclosure; see Appendix 2 for these dates) and the later Neolithic/earlier Bronze Age (26 dates).

Earlier Neolithic funerary monuments and mortuary deposits

Single Inhumation Graves (Figs 3.9–10)

Of the three earlier Neolithic individual inhumations in graves to the NE of the oval barrow, the unaccompanied adult in pit 5356, possibly female, is dated to 3800–3100 cal BC (95% confidence)(4700±100 BP; OxA-4359); the child in pit 5354, accompanied by a flint flake, is dated to 3650–3100 cal BC (95% confidence) (4650±80 BP; OxA-1882); and the old adult male accompanied by three flint flakes in pit 5355 is dated to 3380–3090 cal BC (92% confidence) (4530±50 BP; BM-2710).

Earlier Neolithic inhumations in apparently non-monumentalised contexts are well known in southern Britain (listed by Kinnes; 1979, 122–27). Many of these 'burials', however, consist of disarticulated and incomplete skeletal deposits: the number of articulated inhumations from formal burial contexts like those at Radley is in fact very small. There are several single inhumations known from the causewayed enclosures at Whitehawk and Offham Hill, Sussex; Staines, Surrey; and Abingdon itself (*ibid.* 120–21), as well as Windmill Hill, Wiltshire (Whittle 1990), and the possible

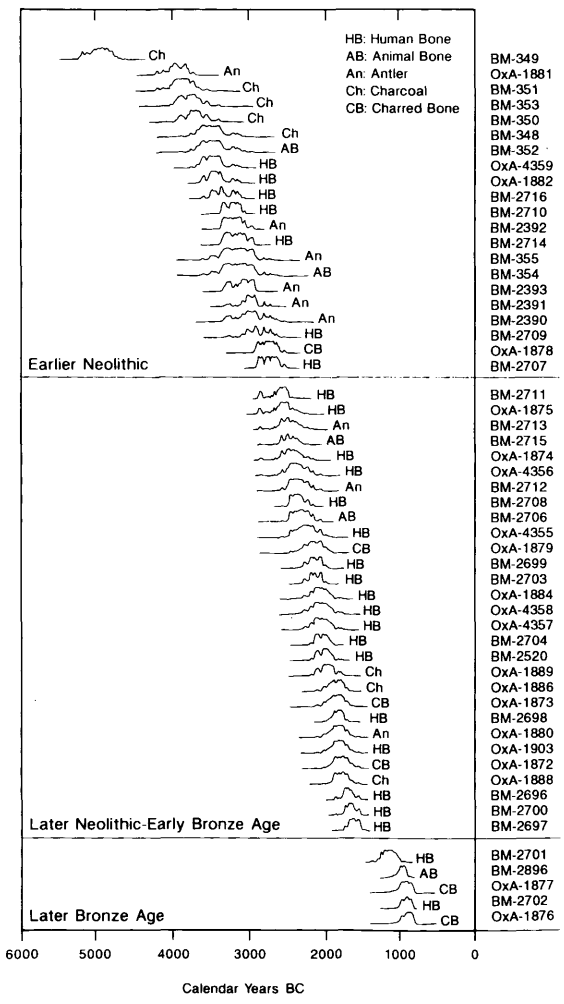


Figure 9.1 Calibrated age spans in chronological order, shown in probability distribution form with sample types and basic period divisions

causewayed enclosure at Goring, Oxfordshire (Allen 1995, 23–8). There are also several apparently isolated single 'flat' graves like those at Knook Castle, Wiltshire; Pangbourne, Oxfordshire; and Nethercourt Farm, Kent (Kinnes 1979, 126–27). Only one grave of this kind has provided radiocarbon samples: the adult male burial sealed by the bank of the outer enclosure ditch at Windmill Hill (Whittle 1990; 1993), dated to 3690–3370 cal BC (95% confidence)(4745±70 BP; OxA-2403, human bone) and 3650–3100 cal BC (95% confidence)(4650±70 BP; OxA-2404, pig bone). These dates accord very closely with the two earlier dates from Radley, and the accompanying pig bone and displacement of parts of the human skeleton also evoke parallels with the Radley examples.

The social significance and ritual context of earlier Neolithic single graves is ambiguous. As Kinnes points out: 'flat graves and single inhumations of earlier Neolithic date are known in the south ... but relationship to the overall mortuary pattern remains undetermined' (1992, 88). Nonetheless, the radiocarbon dates from Radley and Windmill Hill suggest a tradition of single burial of complete articulated individuals accompanied by grave goods in the period *c.* 3700 to 3100 cal BC, (Fig. 9.2) contemporary with other mortuary traditions evident at earthen long barrows, chambered long barrows, round barrows, causewayed enclosures and other monumental and non-monumental mortuary sites (including the linear mortuary structure at Radley).

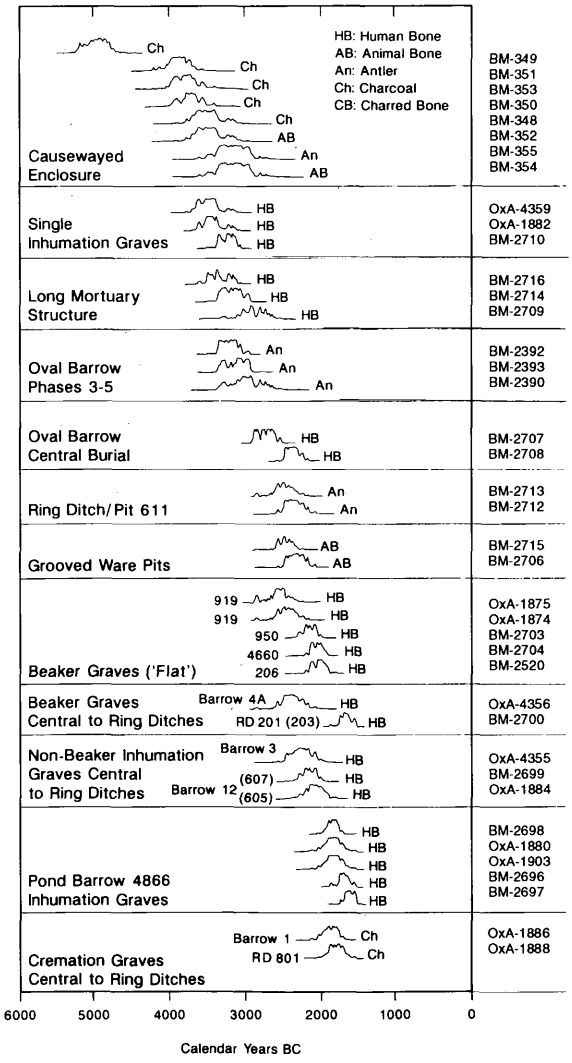


Figure 9.2 Calibrated age spans grouped by context type, shown in probability distribution form with sample types

The Linear Mortuary Structure *(Figs 3.5–8)*

Each of the three separate human bone deposits in the linear mortuary structure provided radiocarbon samples. The westernmost, an old adult male, is dated to 3650–3050 cal BC (95% confidence) (4600±70 BP; BM-2716); the central deposit, an old adult female, is dated to 3360–3020 cal BC (84% confidence)(4470±70 BP; BM-2714); and the easternmost deposit, an adult female, is dated to 3350–2550 cal BC (95% confidence)(4270±100 BP; BM-2709).

Although the dates are statistically different at 95% confidence (Bayliss, pers. comm.) (T'= 7.3; T'(5%)= 6.0; v= 2; Ward and Wilson 1978), all three age ranges overlap in the period 3350–3050 and the archaeological context of these burials does not suggest an extended period of use. It is also unlikely that redeposited bone material has extended the time span, particularly as the earliest date derives from the securely stratified articulated burial. Given that there is no evidence for the remains of other individuals, and considering the regular linear spacing of the skeletal deposits, there is little to suggest that the mortuary structure was used over an extended period, or that anything other than a single mortuary tradition is represented.

Comparable linear mortuary structures, with no visible monumental component such as a ditched mound, demarcated enclosure or timber superstructure, are extremely rare, though the Fengate 'flat grave' is a very close parallel (Pryor 1984, 19–27). Other possible examples in the Oxford region at Drayton and Cassington, which unfortunately produced no radiocarbon dates, are discussed by Alistair Barclay below. Other parallels are found exclusively in monumental contexts, especially from the non-megalithic long barrows and related monuments recently reviewed by Ian Kinnes (1992), and from Neolithic round barrows (Kinnes 1979). Five of these sites (Lochhill, Morayshire; Dalladies, Kincardineshire; Street House, Cleveland; Wayland's Smithy, Oxfordshire; and Fussell's Lodge, Wiltshire) have radiocarbon dates that may help define the chronology of such long mortuary structures, though they all derive from charcoal samples with probable large age offsets and possible depositional offsets. In the case of Wayland's Smithy the stratigraphic relationship between the date sample and the long mortuary enclosure is tenuous (Whittle 1991, 80–1); at Lochhill the origin of the dated charcoal sample from the infilled phase 2 stone chamber is unclear and the same problem exists for the charcoal from the burnt phase 2 stone chamber at Dalladies (Kinnes 1992, 47–8; Piggott 1971–2).

Only Street House offers a stratigraphically secure radiocarbon chronology based on eight dates, though seven of these, affected by the British Museum laboratory error, are relatively imprecise once revised (Bowman *et al.* 1990; Vyner 1984). Nonetheless, the Street House dates are consistent and the single new result, calibrated to 3820–3630 cal BC (79% confidence)(4940±60 BP; BM-1969N), suggests a construction date in the mid-fourth millennium cal BC once an age offset for the mature oak sample is taken into account.

At present, therefore, the radiocarbon dates from the burial deposits in mortuary structure 5352, in terms of their minimal age offsets and secure stratigraphic context, are among the most reliable for dating linear mortuary structures; in this case to the late fourth millennium cal BC. Considering the dates from Dalladies and Street House, which suggest construction and use of such structures at monumental sites in northern Britain from at least the middle of the fourth millennium cal BC, it seems likely that the non-monumental Radley example is a late expression of this mortuary tradition.

The Oval Barrow (Figs 3.2–4)

The radiocarbon dates for the oval barrow have been discussed in detail by Richard Bradley (1992a; 132, 134–35, 138), but there are several issues which need further consideration if the site is to be evaluated alongside the other earlier Neolithic elements.

The primary rectilinear form belongs to the wide and varied class of monuments known as mortuary enclosures. Their form and size vary greatly, a point exemplified by the two, arguably related, sites at Dorchester-on-Thames (R Bradley 1992a; Whittle *et al.* 1992). The rectangular plan of the Barrow Hills enclosure is comparable to a number of cropmark sites on the Upper Thames gravels, notably at Stadhampton and Stanton Harcourt, which have been interpreted as being of similar type (Barclay 1995, 107; Whimster 1992, fig. 1). Further afield, the example at Windmill Hill may serve as a close parallel (R Bradley 1992a, 138; Smith 1965, 30–35), as may the square enclosure with a central burial at Plantation Quarry, Willington, Bedford (Dawson 1996, 4–11). No systematic survey of these enclosures on the Upper Thames gravels has been undertaken and a number of sites may have been missed or identified as double barrows of Bronze Age date (Loveday and Petchy 1982, 18; Benson and Miles 1974, map 20).

The lack of radiocarbon samples for phase 1 is especially unfortunate as there are no dates available for monuments of this kind elsewhere. It is possible, however, that many, if not all, of the rectilinear enclosures in the Upper Thames could be of early Neolithic date and their development may yet prove to run parallel with that of long barrows. Indeed it has been argued that on the gravels the development of rectilinear enclosures, U-shaped and oval enclosures occurred independently of long barrows, which are found predominantly on the chalk (R Bradley 1992b, 19).

At Radley, the apparent natural silting of the phase 1 enclosure ditch points to an extended period of time before the phase 2/3 reconstruction took place, and the different form of the later monument (U-shaped enclosure and/or causewayed ditch with possible internal mound) may also suggest some temporal discontinuity. If this is correct, considering the radiocarbon dates available for the later phases, the phase 1 enclosure could date to the mid-fourth millennium cal BC.

The four radiocarbon dates that relate to the construction sequence, from three successive phases (3–5), all derive from antler deposits in the ditch terminals at the SW end. These deposits, it is suggested, represent a recognised depositional practice that was materially and spatially consistent from each episode to the next (R Bradley 1992a, 138), implying a relatively short temporal span (a ritual practice communicated over a few generations perhaps). The wide calibrated age ranges for the relevant radiocarbon dates, at two sigma, do not allow for precise dating of either the depositional practice represented or the construction sequence. Nevertheless, leaving aside the two later dates (BM-2390 and BM-2391) which are particularly imprecise, the date from the floor of the phase 3 ditch — 3370–3030 cal BC (92% confidence)(4500±60 BP; BM-2392), and the date from the middle fill of the phase 4 ditch — 3340–2910 cal BC (95% confidence)(4420±70 BP; BM-2393), indicate construction and use of the phase 3 and phase 4 monuments during the last third of the fourth millennium cal BC.

The transformation of the monument from rectilinear enclosure into an oval barrow is open to more than one interpretation, mainly dependent on the spatial separation of structural features rather than demonstrable sequence, and different authors see the monument as having anywhere between three and five structural phases (R Bradley 1992a; Kinnes 1992).

It is clear, however, that two successive reconstructions or enlargements of the site can be recognised, represented by phases 2/3 and phases 4/5. Whether phases 2 and 3 represent a single period of activity or the development from a U-shaped enclosure (phase 2) to an oval barrow (phase 3) defined by a ditch with two causeways, cannot be established. U-shaped enclosures known from other sites like North Stoke, Oxfordshire; Manor Farm, Horton, Berkshire; and Barford, Warwickshire (Case 1982d; Ford forthcoming; and Loveday 1989), date from the second half of the 4th millennium cal BC.

The formal typology and chronology of oval barrows are very poorly defined. At present the radiocarbon dates available from bone or antler samples recovered from reasonably secure stratigraphic contexts at oval barrow sites span the period *c.* 4100–2800 cal BC (Thickthorn Down and Wor Barrow phase 3 in Dorset, Aldwincle I, Northamptonshire; Normanton Down, Wiltshire; Grindale I, Yorkshire; North Marden and Alfriston in Sussex; Mount Farm and Radley in Oxfordshire). This range can perhaps be reduced to *c.* 3700–2800 cal BC if the radiocarbon date from Thickthorn Down is rejected (BM-2355; Kinnes 1992,

119). Even so, this timespan could still subsume significant changes in structural forms and the ritual-funerary uses of such sites, and obscure considerable variation between different regional types (cf Thomas 1991b, 114). It is certainly notable that oval barrows which have continuous ditches or narrow causeways, like Radley, are associated with later dates than those with flanking ditches open at one or both ends, which seem to be earlier (the only exception being Alfriston).

The dating of the central grave at Radley is ambiguous and open to more than one interpretation. The radiocarbon dates on human bone from each of the burials in the central grave are dismissed by Bradley for both technical and interpretive reasons (R Bradley 1992a, 138). While there is little doubt that a problem does exist, given that the two radiocarbon age ranges relating to a single burial event fail to overlap even at two sigma, the argument that the dates are 'in conflict' with those from the barrow ditches is based on the assumption that the central grave *must* relate to the early phases of the site. It is difficult on both formal and artefactual grounds to accept the association between phase 1 and the central grave proposed by Bradley (1992a, 138) if the mid-fourth millennium date for the phase 1 enclosure is accepted. With the exception of the leaf arrowhead, the grave items are unlikely to be this early, but are probably not as late as the radiocarbon results indicate. Belt sliders and polished flint knives of Kinnes' stage D (1979, fig. 6.2) and many of the single graves in which they have been found are now generally accepted as being of middle Neolithic date (Kinnes 1994, 99; Pollard 1994, 51). The radiocarbon dates for the knife-associated burial at Mount Farm, Dorchester-on-Thames — 3500–2850 cal BC (95% confidence)(4450±100 BP; HAR-4673) and the burial with a Seamer axe and jet belt slider at Whitegrounds barrow, Burythorpe, Yorkshire — 3500–2900 cal BC (95% confidence)(4520±90BP; HAR-5587), would support a late fourth millennium cal BC date for the Radley example.

The grave pit also provides equivocal evidence for phasing the burials. It is possible that the shallowness of the central grave pit (R Bradley 1992a, 132) was due to its insertion into an existing mound at a much higher level, much as Bradley argues for the shallow Anglo-Saxon SFB immediately alongside (*ibid.*, 133). It may be the case, therefore, that the central grave relates to the re-use of an existing, possibly eroded, monument. It is worth noting, however, that long barrow tradition mortuary deposits tend to be placed at or near the ground surface, whereas primary burials in middle Neolithic round or oval barrows can sometimes be placed in quite deep graves, as at Linch Hill, Stanton Harcourt (Grimes 1960, 156).

The central grave was aligned on the long axis of the barrow. The two corpses were laid symmetrically in the grave with the female oriented towards the front or SW and the male towards the back or NE (Fig. 3.3). The layout of the burials may perhaps coincide with the division of the interior into frontspace and backspace. The organisation of the monument may echo the patterns recognised at a number of chambered long barrow sites (Thomas 1991b, 68–70).

Antler, retouched flint, fragments of human crania and middle Neolithic pottery occurred around the SW or front end. These deposits accumulated throughout the structural life of the monument and appear to have had a restricted distribution (Fig. 3.2).

The monument complex includes a second oval barrow, also discovered as a cropmark, but unexcavated. The precise character of this monument remains uncertain; though it is likely to have been an oval long barrow. Neither monument is more than 25 m in length, and both are of a similar size to the first phase of Wayland's Smithy, (Kinnes 1992, fig. 1D.9). The fact that the excavated site appears to align on the crop-mark oval barrow could indicate that both are of approximately the same date. The alignment of monuments can be paralleled at a number of Neolithic sites, notably Dorchester-on-Thames, Stanton Harcourt and Stadhampton (Bradley and Chambers 1988; Barclay 1995, 101, fig. 55; Whimster 1992, 4). Intervisibility between sites appears to have been important and alignments of earlier Neolithic monuments recur in both upland and lowland Britain.

The Abingdon Causewayed Enclosure and the Ritual-Funerary Complex

Interpretation of the Abingdon causewayed enclosure, excavated by Leeds in the 1920s (Leeds 1927; 1928), Case in the 1950s (1956a), and Avery in 1965 (Avery 1982), has been recently reviewed by Bradley in his discussion of the oval barrow (1992a, 139–40). The chronology of the site, however, even with eight radiocarbon dates from Avery's excavations (1982, 17), remains obscure (Appendix 2). As both Avery and Bradley observe, the dates from charcoal samples are consistently earlier than those on bone and antler from the same contexts, and from interstratified contexts, suggesting the presence of old wood. It seems reasonable, therefore, to treat the dates from charcoal samples with circumspection. The three remaining dates are all on bone or antler samples from probable backfill or dump deposits in the middle and upper fills of the recut inner causewayed ditch (section CII).

The single date from the middle fill is calibrated to 3800–3000 cal BC (95% confidence)(4710±135 BP; BM-352); the two from the upper fills are calibrated to 3650–2650 cal BC (95% confidence) (4450±145 BP; BM-354) and 3650–2700 cal BC (95% confidence) (4460±140; BM-355). This may indicate an extended temporal separation between the depositional episodes concerned, though all three dates are imprecise and overlap at two sigma. Alternatively, there is a possibility that redeposited material was present which might account for the earlier date. Avery envisages the backfilling of the inner ditch as a deliberate, short-lived clearance episode, related to the settlement use of the interior of the enclosure after the construction of the outer earthwork (phase 2; Avery 1982, 12). It is evident that the radiocarbon-dated contexts relate to activities that took place some time after the inner enclosure was first built, since its ditch

segments had silted naturally prior to being recut, and were only then backfilled with the dated cultural deposits. This would suggest construction of the inner earthwork some time in the mid-fourth millennium cal BC, if not before. There is no comparable dating evidence for the outer ditch and bank.

Bradley questions Avery's interpretation that the outer earthwork replaced the inner; he argues that the artefacts and organic deposits in the inner ditch are unlikely to represent settlement refuse associated with the inner earthwork, cleared when the outer enclosure was constructed, as there is little sign of the erosion which would occur if the material was exposed in surface middens. He suggests instead that the two ditches may have been used for different purposes, the inner having a wide range of deliberate structured deposits including articulated animal bones, antlers and human cranial fragments, while the outer ditch lacks such material and appears to have silted naturally (R Bradley 1992a, 140). He also compares the deliberate deposits in the inner ditch with those in the oval barrow ditches (phases 3–5) and suggests that the two represent a similar tradition of material deposition if not direct contemporaneity. This interpretation is possibly supported by the radiocarbon dates from the contexts concerned; those from the upper fills of the inner enclosure being close to those from the oval barrow phases 3/4.

The place of the outer earthwork in this scheme still remains uncertain. It is possible that new use of the enclosure site required the addition of a stronger and much larger outer earthwork (cf Thomas 1991b, 153; R Bradley 1992a, 140), while the inner earthwork was still in existence. The deposition of cultural material in the inner ditch may, as Bradley has suggested, relate to activity within the later enclosure rather than clearance of occupation material accumulated during the life of the earlier site. The absence of cultural material in the outer ditch can be explained both in terms of the physical barrier of an earthwork interposed between the enclosure interior and the ditch, and in terms of structured deposition that respected inside/outside distinctions. This interpretation suggests a chronological sequence at the enclosure in which construction, silting, recutting and abandonment of the inner earthwork took place in the mid-fourth millennium cal BC, followed by construction of the outer earthwork and deposition of cultural material in the interior (from which the radiocarbon dates derive) in the later fourth millennium cal BC.

The Radley evidence also has implications in relation to the wider chronology of earlier Neolithic depositional practices. Where similar deposits are recognised at different sites, or across separate geographical areas, it may be possible to argue for the existence of temporally-specific and widely accepted practices that may be radiocarbon-dated in broad terms. One example is the deliberate deposition of cultural material in some causewayed enclosure ditches in the mid- to late fourth millennium cal BC, for example in the main enclosure ditch at Hambledon Hill (phase 2) dated to *c.* 3600–3300 cal BC (Cunliffe 1993, 55), and the inner ditch at Maiden Castle, dated to *c.* 3600 cal BC (Sharples 1991, 51, 253), both of which are roughly contemporary with the deposits at Abingdon.

In contrast, the relative chronologies of depositional events which are formally distinct as well as spatially separate are extremely difficult to define using radiocarbon dates alone, even within the same monument complex, especially as many earlier Neolithic mortuary deposits were probably the result of short-lived sequences of activity (Kinnes 1992, 104–5). If the study of these mortuary practices is, as Thomas argues, largely concerned with 'alternative strategies for the treatment of the dead, rather than passive fossils of shared belief or cultural affinity' (Thomas 1991b, 107), the contemporaneity of such practices is a critical issue. This certainly applies to Barrow Hills, where an understanding of the inter-relatedness of the mortuary deposits in the linear mortuary structure, the causewayed enclosure and the oval barrow is of considerable importance. Unfortunately, radiocarbon dating is too imprecise to establish the contemporaneity of different practices, even within a closely-defined area with a large number of high-quality dates.

LATER NEOLITHIC FEATURES

The radiocarbon dating of late Neolithic contexts at Radley, leaving aside the Beaker graves and related funerary deposits (discussed below), is less extensive and less informative than might be expected. There are no radiocarbon dates for the segmented ring ditch (2132), which on formal grounds probably belongs to this period. The central burial of the oval barrow site may belong to this period, though the radiocarbon dates are ambiguous and an association with the earlier Neolithic monument is equally possible. There is one date from a possibly disturbed burial (942) in the area of intercutting pits S of the segmented ring ditch, calibrated to 2700–2450 cal BC (77% confidence) (4020±60 BP; BM-2711), though the precise relationship of this mortuary deposit to the pit group is uncertain. Of the six pits with Grooved Ware deposits, two have provided radiocarbon samples which are discussed below. The remaining feature which is certainly late Neolithic is ring ditch/pit 611, the deposits in which are also radiocarbon-dated.

Grooved Ware Pits

The two pits with Grooved Ware pottery that provided radiocarbon samples, 917 and 3196, were very similar, both consisting of deliberate deposits of animal bone, charred plant and wood remains, pottery and other artefacts (Figs 4.32, 4.37). The material similarity of these pit deposits, and the other undated Grooved Ware contexts in the same area of the site, suggests a coherent set of activities repeated over a relatively short period. The relevant radiocarbon dates on animal bone samples are consistent with this view: the deposit in pit 917 is dated to 2510–2350 cal BC (54% confidence) or 2700–2200 cal BC (95% confidence) (3940±60 BP; BM-2715) ; and that in pit 3196 to 2460–2190 cal BC (66% confidence) and 2600-2000 cal BC (95% confidence)

(3830±90 BP; BM-2706). The Grooved Ware recovered from 3196 has its closest affinities with the Woodlands substyle (Cleal, Ch. 7; cf Wainwright and Longworth 1971, 238–40).

There are four similar radiocarbon-dated pit deposits, with Grooved Ware (all probably in the Woodlands substyle) at two other sites in the region: Barton Court Farm pit 544 — 2590–2190 cal BC (95% confidence)(3910±70 BP; HAR-2388), and pit 865 — 2780–2450 cal BC (78% confidence)(4030±70 BP; HAR-2387); and Roughground Farm, Gloucestershire, pit 784 — 2929–2450 cal BC (95% confidence)(4100±100 BP; HAR-5498), and pit 962 — 2700–2100 cal BC (92% confidence)(3940±80 BP; HAR-5500), 2600–2000 cal BC (95% confidence)(3820±90 BP; HAR-5501). These dates, like those from Radley, are all on bone and antler samples from deliberate pit fills, each with Grooved Ware pottery and similar depositional sequences. It is therefore likely that they all relate to one coherent tradition of material deposition. The temporal span of this tradition in the Upper Thames is presently difficult to define, given the wide age ranges of the relevant radiocarbon dates, but if the one imprecise determination is excluded (HAR-5498, from Roughground Farm), the practice probably falls within the period *c.* 2650–2150 cal BC. The regional dating framework may become clearer once dates are available from the large number of Grooved Ware-associated pit deposits recently excavated at Yarnton (Hey 1994).

Within the overall chronological span of Grooved Ware ceramics the pottery from Radley seems to be datable to the middle or latter part of the tradition. Leaving aside dates on charcoal samples, and particularly imprecise dates, the overall radiocarbon chronology at two sigma for Grooved Ware in southern Britain spans the period *c.* 3000–2000 cal BC (Garwood forthcoming). In terms of typological definitions, the substyles defined by Wainwright and Longworth (1971) may have little chronological relevance and may instead relate to different depositional contexts (Thomas 1991b, 98). This may be further complicated by the evidence for curation of Grooved Ware in the form of repaired vessels (Cleal 1988). A detailed review of Grooved Ware ceramic types in relation to the large number of high quality radiocarbon dates now available, from both monumental and non-monumental contexts, may go some way to resolve these issues (Garwood forthcoming).

The chronological relationship between the Grooved Ware and Beaker deposits at Radley is also open to question. Although there is now a general acceptance that Grooved Ware and Beaker ceramics were both in use in Britain during the second half of the third millennium cal BC (Cleal 1984, 152), the archaeological evidence from Radley again demonstrates the exclusivity of Beaker funerary ceramics and Grooved Ware in individual depositional contexts (Thomas 1991b, 98–102). In wider terms, it can be argued that the coexistence of Grooved Ware and Beaker ceramic traditions may have been of relatively short duration, perhaps two or three centuries (Garwood forthcoming). Given the wide overlapping ranges of radiocarbon determinations it is impossible to demonstrate contemporaneity of material-specific depositional events using radiocarbon dates alone. These problems are considered in more detail below in relation to wider late Neolithic-early Bronze Age material culture chronologies.

Ring Ditch 611 and Associated Deposits

The unusual ring ditch or pit feature 611, characterised by a deep, steep-sided ditch enclosing a small area and possibly having an external bank, is also dated to the late Neolithic (*c.* 2600–2200 cal BC) on the basis of two radiocarbon dates (see Chapter 4). This is approximately the same as the date range for the Grooved Ware pits.

Within the Upper Thames valley there are broad parallels to this monument in terms of scale at Dorchester-on-Thames (sites IV, V, VI and 2) (Atkinson *et al.* 1951b; Whittle *et al.* 1992, 153–7); Gravelly Guy and the Vicarage Field, Stanton Harcourt (Barclay 1995, 107–9); and City Farm, Hanborough, site 4 (Case *et al.* 1964–5). Three of these sites have been radiocarbon dated. The measurement of 1960–1620 cal BC (95% confidence)(3460±65 BP; GrN-1685) on charcoal from the City Farm site relates to the revetment that may have lined a recut of the ditch or, as the excavators suggest, the original ditch (Case *et al.* 1964–5, 25–8). The date of 1760–1520 cal BC (94% confidence)(3379±40 BP; UB-3126) for the Gravelly Guy site relates to later activity and not to the monument's construction (Barclay 1995, 88). The determination of 2820–2660 cal BC 95% confidence)(4230±50 BP; BM-4225N) on antler from the primary fill of site 2 at Dorchester-on-Thames suggests construction in the first half of the 3rd millennium cal BC (Whittle *et al.* 1992, 196), but the penannular form of the ditch is markedly different to that at Radley.

The morphological variation among these monuments is worth noting: the Radley and Vicarage Field monuments and the second phase of the Gravelly Guy example were annular, the Dorchester-on-Thames and City Farm monuments and the first phase of Gravelly Guy were penannular. At present, however, there is no convincing sequence of forms suggested by the radiocarbon dates of the monuments.

The form of 611 and the deposits in it suggest that it was used initially for ceremonial activities. Like ring ditch 611, none of the other parallels had primary funerary deposits. Only at Radley were there complex deposits of animal bone in a primary level.

It is clearly impossible to point to any exact parallels for the Radley monument (with its upstanding central area surrounded by a deeper ring ditch), or for the deposit of animal remains arrayed around the entire ditch circuit. It may, therefore, be most appropriate to regard the ring ditch / pit as an otherwise unrecognised late Neolithic monument type concerned with ritual practices involving the deposition of animal remains and perhaps Grooved Ware ceramics. On the other hand, the Radley example clearly belongs in more general terms to the wide ranging 'hengiform' monument category which includes the examples discussed above.

The Segmented Ring Ditch

Although the segmented ring ditch is thought to be late Neolithic, its precise date is uncertain (Fig. 4.7), as are the dates of the associated secondary burials. Its ditches contained relatively few artefacts and no material of Neolithic date, which is perhaps surprising given its proximity to the Neolithic pits and the quantity of redeposited Neolithic material from nearby ring ditches 611 and 801 and barrow 12. It is possible that a central burial was removed by ploughing. Ring ditches 201 and 602 were also segmented or interrupted, although they were less deep and on the whole less substantial (Figs 4.8, 4.71). In plan it is similar to some of the late Neolithic ring ditches at Dorchester-on-Thames (Atkinson *et al.* 1951b, 26).

LATE NEOLITHIC AND EARLY BRONZE AGE FUNERARY DEPOSITS

Beaker Typology and the Radley Radiocarbon Dates

During the last 25 years Beaker ceramics have probably attracted more intense typological debate than any other category of British Neolithic/Bronze Age material culture, and perhaps the most varied interpretive discussion. These typologies have been thrown into further doubt in the review of Beaker radiocarbon chronology conducted by the British Museum, which identified little patterning among the radiocarbon dates in relation to the expected typological sequence, (Kinnes *et al.* 1991, 38–9; cf Thomas 1991a, fig. 2). Whether this is due to the chronological weakness of these typologies, methodological error, or the probabilistic nature and wide age ranges of radiocarbon determinations, remains open to debate (cf comments by Lanting and van der Waals in Kinnes *et al.* 1991, 69–70).

The reliance on radiocarbon dates to define a timescale for both funerary and 'domestic' beakers divided into 250-year spans (Case 1993) may also be misleading, as most Beaker-related contexts provide ranges of 300–600 years at 95% confidence (Kinnes *et al.* 1991, 50–64), and it is evident that little assessment is made of the contextual integrity of dated samples, potential age offsets for dates from charcoal samples, or depositional offsets relating to the redeposition or curation of beakers.

Several cultural issues are also relevant to the formation of a reliable chronological framework. The typological development of Beakers and the frequency of their deposition in funerary contexts probably followed a different pattern in each region, with an unknown degree of selectivity applied to those Beakers chosen for burial (Thomas 1991a, 132–34). This has almost certainly left gaps in regional sequences and an 'unrepresentative' range of funerary vessels, with awkward implications for typological study based mainly on the evidence from grave contexts. The regional approach to Beaker studies advocated by Case, embracing non-grave assemblages, may offer the best long-term hope for establishing coherent typologies (Case 1993, cf Lanting and van der Waals 1972), though this is yet to be realised.

In this context, discussion of the radiocarbon dates for the Radley Beakers in relation to conventional typological labels may be open to question. Nonetheless, until the imprecision of the existing radiocarbon chronology is addressed, or a more reliable typochronology devised, there are no other frameworks available for detailed discussion of individual Beakers. Providing such frameworks are not regarded as concrete representations of the relationships between discrete Beaker 'types', they may still be seen as an expression of changing trends in Beaker styles over time. The age spans of dated samples associated with Beakers at Radley are listed in Table 9.1 alongside the conventional classifications of each Beaker (Clarke 1970; Lanting and van der Waals 1972; Case 1977).

Table 9.1. Age spans of samples associated with Beakers at Barrow Hills

Context	Drawing	Lab. no.	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence	Clarke	Lanting and van der Waals	Case (1977)
Grave 919	P24	a. OxA-1875	3990±80	2620–2450 (52%)	2900–2250 (95%)	BW?	Step 1/2?	Middle?
	P25	b. OxA-1874	3930±80	2510–2310 (58%)	2700–2100 (93%)	W/MR (E?)	Step 1/2?	Early/Middle
Barrow 4A	P76	OxA-4356	3880±90	2500–2270 (61%)	2650–2000 (95%)	E	Step 2	Middle
Grave 950	P26	BM-2703	3720±50	2200–2030 (68%)	2300–1970 (95%)	W/MR	Step 2/3	Middle
Grave 4660	P27	BM-2704	3650±50	2140–2070 (31%); 2050–1960(37%)	2190–1890 (95%)	E	Step 2	Middle
Grave 206 (ring ditch 201)	P74	BM-2520	3630±60	2050–1930 (48%)	2200–1870 (95%)	AOC	Step 2/3	Middle
Grave 203 (ring ditch 201)	P75	BM-2700	3360±50	1740–1610 (67%)	1770–1520 (93%)	S3	Step 6	Late

Categorisation of the Radley Beakers according to these typologies is fairly straightforward with the exception of the two vessels (P24 and P25) from grave 919 (Fig. 4.14, Cleal, Chs 4 and 7). These were originally identified as a Wessex/Middle Rhine and a Barbed Wire Beaker (eg Kinnes *et al.* 1991, 53–4), though formally and decoratively these ascriptions are probably too specific. On the other hand, their recent revised identification as 'undifferentiated style 2 Beakers' (Case 1993, 262) is certainly too vague, given the minimal degree of decorative zone contraction, horizontal bands of tooth-comb decoration and short vertical tooth-comb impressions on the larger vessel, consistent with the criteria used by Lanting and van der Waals to define their Step 2 Beakers (1972, 36, figs 1–4). While the radiocarbon dating of individual Beakers within typological sequences is extremely imprecise, with considerable overlaps in age ranges, it is still apparent that the sequence of dates associated with the Radley Beakers broadly agrees with the expected order according to existing typologies. The radiocarbon dates for each Beaker are discussed below with reference to comparable vessels elsewhere.

European, Step 2 Beakers *(barrow 4A, grave 4660; Figs 4.23, 5.2).* The two radiocarbon date ranges associated with the Beakers which fall within this category are widely spread, though they overlap at 95% confidence. As there are good reasons to believe that they were deposited in a fairly narrow time span (one or two centuries; see below), the overlap of age spans suggests a date in the period *c.* 2400–2000 cal BC. The only other possible date for this style of Beaker in Britain is that from the primary grave at Chilbolton, associated with a vessel previously classified as a Wessex/Middle Rhine Beaker though very similar typologically to European Beakers (Russel 1990, 161). The relevant date range of 2500–1950 cal BC (95% confidence)(3740±80 BP, OxA-1072) conforms with the suggested date for the two Radley Beakers. The other possible example from Little Pond Ground is less convincing, having far more affinity with Wessex/Middle Rhine vessels (cf Green 1974, 117).

Wessex/Middle Rhine, Step 2 or Step 3 Beakers *(graves 919, 950; Figs 4.14, 4.21).* The especially early dates for grave 919 may reflect the status of the larger vessel as a possible early form of Wessex/Middle Rhine Beaker, with European-type affinities. These are 2900–2250 cal BC (95% confidence) (3990±80BP; OxA-1875), and 2700–2100 cal BC (93% confidence) (3930±80BP; OxA-1874). The latter date for this vessel would seem most appropriate. The radiocarbon date on a bone sample from disturbed grave 950, associated with a smashed Wessex/Middle Rhine Beaker, is of moderate value given the indirect artefactual association and the condition of the bone material, though the age range of 2300–1970 cal BC (95% confidence)(3720±50 BP; BM-2703) is certainly consistent with the new date from primary grave 28 at Barnack, Cambridgeshire, 2330–2130 cal BC (90% confidence)(3770±35 BP; BM-2956) and another date for a probable Wessex/Middle Rhine Beaker from Little Pond Ground, 2350–1750 cal BC (95% confidence)(3670±80 BP, HAR-340).

All-Over-Cord, Step 2/3 Beakers *(grave 206; Fig. 4.75).* The value of the radiocarbon date from very fragmentary human bone for dating the All-Over-Cord Beaker is questionable on grounds of sample quality and contextual integrity. The date range of 2200–1870 cal BC (95% confidence) (3630±60 BP; BM-2520) is certainly later than might be expected on typological grounds, though the tall profile and shape of the Beaker suggests affinities with typologically later Wessex/Middle Rhine vessels, and certainly accords with Step 3 forms and decoration in the Lanting and van der Waals scheme (1972, fig. 1). The only other date associated with an All-Over-Cord Beaker is that from Sorisdale, Coll, with an age range of 2500–2270 cal BC (95% confidence)(3890±45 BP; BM-1413; Kinnes *et al.* 1991, 54), which is more in line with the early age expected on typological grounds.

Late Southern (S3), Step 6 Beakers *(grave 203; Fig. 4.78).* The late date of 1770–1520 cal BC (95% confidence)(3360±50 BP; BM-2700) from the grave at the centre of ring ditch 201, associated with a developed Southern Beaker (Step 6), is acceptable typologically and entirely in accordance with other dates for similar vessels. In this respect the dates from The Wig, Wiltshire, of 1970–1690 cal BC (95% confidence)(3500±50 BP, BM-2644) and Lambourn, Oxfordshire, of 1770–1520 cal BC (93% confidence)(3360±50 BP; BM-2643) are especially close to this example.

The radiocarbon dates associated with Beakers from Radley are thus in broad agreement with expected typological sequences, and with other dates associated with comparable Beakers, despite the significant methodological and interpretive problems outlined above with regard to the study of Beaker typology. This suggests that the misgivings about existing typological schemes expressed in the British Museum review (Kinnes *et al.* 1991, 38–9) may have been overstated; indeed, 'a potential chronology of styles' could still lie hidden among the date ranges listed in the article. Lanting and van der Waals' comments, which incisively question the conclusions of the British Museum review (*ibid.* 69–70), find considerable support in the Barrow Hills evidence. If a radiocarbon chronology is at all viable, it is apparent that the temporal resolution of Beaker typologies requires a far larger number of reliable, and certainly more precise, radiocarbon dates.

Chronology of Beaker Burials and Related Graves

The chronology of Beaker burial contexts is self-evidently central to the definition of Beaker typology, but may also be directly relevant to the analysis of contemporary non-Beaker funerary traditions. In general, discussion of ritual-funerary practices in the late Neolithic and first part of the early Bronze Age in southern Britain is dominated by the evidence from rich Beaker and Wessex I graves, though these were clearly exceptional among the wider range of accompanied and unaccompanied inhumation burials. In addition, the

frequency of burial episodes, particularly the deposition of complex grave assemblages, may well have varied over time: the evidence certainly points to a high degree of temporal specificity underlying the exclusivity of artefact assemblages in late Neolithic/early Bronze Age burials (eg between Step 2/3 and Step 5/6 Beaker artefact association groups and Wessex graves; cf Burgess 1980, 107–8). In this context, it is probably most appropriate to envisage a broad continuum of ritual-funerary traditions that shifted in expression and meaning according to social changes and socio-political events, with changing forms of material representation as new symbolic referents were selected from the changing material culture range. From this standpoint it is clearly essential that the study of grave contexts endeavours to correlate the temporal and spatial expression of funerary and monumental traditions that are usually studied in isolation.

There are four inhumation burials with diagnostic grave assemblages at Radley which can be considered alongside the Beaker burials on both formal and chronological grounds (two of them can also be related to Beaker graves in spatial terms): the inhumation burials central to barrow 3 (Atkinson 1952–3), barrow 12 (graves 607, 605; Figs 4.50–1), and the burial in grave 4970 adjacent to pond barrow 4866 (Fig. 4.64). The radiocarbon age ranges for these contexts, all derived from human bone samples, are summarised in Table 9.2 alongside the range of Beaker dates.

In both the Beaker and non-Beaker contexts, where details of the grave layout are known, the inhumations were crouched with males on their left side and females on their right, suggesting a high degree of consistency in funerary tradition over time, and among formally distinct burial 'types' (earlier and later Beaker graves, non-Beaker graves with metalwork, and graves with Food Vessels). Besides the clear overlaps in the radiocarbon age ranges of these burial types, the artefacts in two of the non-Beaker contexts (barrow 3 and grave 607) have some degree of chronological specificity and can be paralleled in broadly contemporary Beaker grave assemblages elsewhere: the double-pointed awl from grave 607 (Fig. 4.50, M6) is an artefact associated with stylistically early Beaker assemblages of Steps 2–4 (Burgess 1980, 62); the Milston type dagger from barrow 3 (Fig. 5.2, M10; Gerloff 1975, 52, corpus no. 63) is of a form occasionally associated with later Beaker assemblages, including those from East Kennet 1c (Kinnes 1977–8) and the primary grave of ring ditch 4013 at Gravelly Guy, Stanton Harcourt (Gerloff forthcoming). The chronology of Food Vessels is obscure, but the minimal overlap between the early date for Food Vessel grave 605 of 2350–1750 cal BC (95% confidence)(3670±80 BP; OxA-1884) and the late date for Beaker grave 203 of 1770–1520 cal BC (93% confidence)(3360±50 BP; BM-2700) suggests that a tradition of inhumation burial with Food Vessels at Radley was contemporary with Beaker funerary

Table 9.2. Age spans of Beaker and Beaker-related inhumations at Barrow Hills. RGA = *rich grave assemblage*

Context	Lab. no.	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence	Grave Assemblage		
Grave 919	a. OxA-1875	3990±80	2620–2450 (52%)	2900–2250 (95%)	BW?	Step 1/2?	
	b. OxA-1874	3930±80	2510–2310 (58%)	2700–2100 (93%)	W/MR(E?)	Step 1/2?	RGA
Barrow 4A	OxA-4356	3880±90	2500–2270 (61%)	2650–2000 (95%)	E	Step 2	RGA
Barrow 3	OxA-4355	3785±90	2360–2130 (57%)	2500–1950 (95%)	Milston-type flat rivetted dagger		
Grave 607 (barrow 12)	BM-2699	3720±60	2210–2030 (63%)	2330–1950 (95%)	Double-pointed copper awl		
Grave 950	BM-2703	3720±50	2200–2030 (68%)	2300-1970 (95%)	W/MR	Step 3	
Grave 605 (barrow 12)	OxA-1884	3670±80	2200–1940 (68%)	2350–1750 (95%)	Food Vessel		
Grave 4660	BM-2704	3650±50	2140–2070 (31%); 2050-1960 (37%)	2190–1890 (95%)	E	Step 2	RGA
Grave 206 (ring ditch 201)	BM-2520	3630±60	2050–1930 (48%)	2200–1870 (95%)	AOC	Step 2/3	
Grave 4970 (pond barrow 4866)	BM-2698	3500±50	1890–1750 (68%)	1970–1690 (95%)	Food Vessel		
Grave 203 (ring ditch 201)	BM-2700	3360±50	1740–1610 (67%)	1770–1520 (93%)	S3	Step 6	RGA

practices. This supports the widely-accepted contemporaneity, over a century or two in the early second millennium cal BC, argued for late Beaker graves, related non-Beaker graves with rivetted daggers, and Food Vessel-associated inhumations, together with Wessex I graves (Burgess 1980, 81–2; R Bradley 1984b, 81, table 4.4; Tomalin 1988, 212, fig. 6).

In terms of the spatial ordering and sequence of funerary events and monument construction at Radley, there are some distinct temporally-defined spatial arrangements that also have important implications for the inter-relatedness and social significance of different funerary traditions. These patterns are described in more detail below in relation to the phasing of the site, but two contrasting spatial arrangements are especially informative in relation to the Beaker graves. The first consists of the alignment consisting of Beaker graves 4660, 206 and barrow 4A and the non-Beaker grave 607, spaced at intervals of *c.* 70–120 m on a SW–NE alignment (Fig. 9.7). In each case the inhumations were of adult males (where surviving, lying on their left sides: grave 4660, grave 607, barrow 4A), all in rectangular pits with the long axes oriented NW–SE, with heads to the NW. In every case the grave assemblages were at the grave's SE end, and where the skeletons survived, at the individual's feet (Figs 4.22, 4.50, 4.73, 5.1). In two cases the graves were central to small ring ditches (grave 607 within ring ditch 602, and barrow 4A), though the linear arrangement suggests that the other graves were also marked, perhaps by low earth or turf mounds (like Long Crichel barrows 14 and 17; Piggott and Piggott 1944, 75-7). The dating of this grave alignment is imprecise, though at 95% confidence the relevant age ranges overlap within the period *c.* 2200–2000 cal BC (OxA-4356; BM-2699; BM-2704; BM-2520). This aligned group of similar graves and monuments, established early in the early Bronze Age sequence, seems to be spatially ordered, with consistent use of one set of mortuary practices (presumably with reference to a single socio-religious scheme). The prominence and social significance of Beaker-related funerary rituals and associated monuments at this stage in the development of the ritual-funerary complex appears to be very clear, emphasised further by the notable rich grave assemblages from grave 4660 and barrow 4A (Figs 4.23, 5.2)

In contrast, the spatial and monumental setting of the late Beaker grave 203, and the character of the assemblage (Figs 4.71, 4.76–9), seem to reflect an entirely different social valuation of Beaker-related funerary practices. The late radiocarbon date for this grave and associated small ring ditch, 1770–1520 cal BC (93% confidence)(3360±50 BP; BM-2700), suggests they belong to a late phase in the development of the round barrow group. At the time the burial took place it is likely that much of the linear barrow group to the N already existed. The barrows at the W end of this group were associated with a series of rich early Bronze Age graves, and two of these assemblages clearly relate to the Wessex rich grave tradition. Within the Radley monumental landscape, and in the wider cultural context, the late Beaker grave appears anomalous. The related round barrow was small, and separate from the main alignment of massive round barrows nearby, while the grave assemblage, although sizeable, is not marked by notable bronze artefacts or especially rare objects or materials. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that this late Beaker grave had a social relevance different to the earlier Beaker burials. It was situated in a monumental landscape dominated by structures that no longer had significant Beaker referents, and must have been perceived within an entirely different cultural milieu to that which had existed generations before.

It is frequently assumed that Beaker graves represent a unitary ritual-funerary tradition that hardly changed over centuries, with Beaker funerary practices and grave assemblages often being treated as though they were all broadly contemporary and inevitably referred to the same set of cultural 'meanings' (eg Thomas 1991a; Barrett 1994, 86-108; Mizoguchi 1993). These are questionable assumptions: while the continuity of Beaker funerary practices in simple material and organisational terms is undeniable, the wider social, material and monumental context of such burials undoubtedly changed through time, culminating in a phase during which distinctive Beaker, Food Vessel, Collared Urn and Wessex-type rich grave funerary traditions seem to have coexisted. Bradley has suggested three separate phases of complex burial deposition (1984b, table 4.1), interpreted as periods of social stress during which élites invested in elaborate funerals and monument building in order to establish or confirm asymmetrical power relations with reference to religious schemes (*ibid.*, 73–5). The first phase, represented by Beaker rich graves, is dated by Bradley to *c.* 2500–2350 cal BC; the second, which may be associated with Wessex 1 graves, to *c.* 2200–2000 cal BC, and the third, associated with Wessex II burials, to *c.* 1700–1400 cal BC. While the dating of the Radley 'rich graves' can be reconciled with Bradley's scheme (see Table 9.3), the wide overlapping age ranges must cast doubt on the simple tripartite division and temporal separation of the rich grave phases originally identified. Nevertheless, as Bradley has argued *(ibid.)*, and the evidence of the Beaker and Beaker-related graves at Radley demonstrates, the construction of a burial chronology in this period must depend on an understanding of changes in the social and religious constitution of funerary practices over time (Garwood 1991, 18–19).

Early Bronze Age Inhumation and Cremation Graves

Alongside the Beaker and Beaker-related graves at Radley, several other types of early Bronze Age funerary deposit were radiocarbon dated. The inhumation graves associated with pond barrow 4866 are discussed in more detail below in relation to the monument itself. There are also five cremations with urn-type vessels and one unaccompanied cremation dated using charred bone, the problems with which are discussed in Appendix 1. These dates are not discussed further here. The remaining dated burials consist of two unaccompanied inhumations from barrows 15 and 17 (human bone

Table 9.3. Age spans of rich Beaker grave assemblages at Barrow Hills and elsewhere

Context	Lab. no.	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence	Beaker and Grave Assemblage
Barrow Hills grave 919	OxA-1874	3930±80	2510–2310 (58%)	2700–2100 (93%)	E-W/MR? Copper rings
Barrow Hills barrow 4A	OxA-4356	3880±90	2500–2270 (61%)	2650–2000 (95%)	E. Gold earrings
Chilbolton, Hampshire, primary burial (Russel 1990)	OxA-1072	3740±80	2290–2030 (68%)	2500–1950 (95%)	E. Gold earrings, copper dagger, antler spatula, stone bead necklace, other objects
Barnack, Cambridgeshire, primary burial 28	BM-2956	3770±35	2290–2140 (68%)	2330–2130 (90%)	W/MR. Copper dagger, wristguard, pendant
Gravelly Guy, Stanton Harcourt, Oxon, 4013/12	UB-3122	3709±35	2190–2110 (35%); 2090–2030 (33%)	2210–2020 (90%)	S3. Rivetted bronze dagger, copper alloy awl or pin fragment, wristguard, 'sponge finger', antler spatula, flintwork
Irthlingborough 1, Northamptonshire	UB-3148	3680±50	2140–2020 (57%)	2210–1920 (93%)	S2. Flint dagger, jet buttons, spatulae, wristguard, amber ring, other objects
Barrow Hills grave 4660	BM-2704	3650±50	2140–2070 (31%); 2050–1960 (37%)	2190-1890 (95%)	E. Copper dagger, bone pin, other objects
West Cotton 1, Northamptonshire	UB-3311	3610±45	1740–1610 (67%)	1770–1520 (93%)	S2. Flint dagger, jet button
Barrow Hills grave 203 (ring ditch 201)	BM-2700	3360±50	1740–1610 (67%)	1770–1520 (93%)	S3. Awl, spatulae, flintwork

samples), and three cremations (two with grave goods) from barrow 1, barrow 12 and ring ditch 801 (charcoal samples).

The radiocarbon date from barrow 15 is of questionable value given the nature of the sample and its context (OxA-4357; from a disturbed and possibly mixed burial deposit). The determination from barrow 17 is also of little value except to date the burial itself, placing it within the range of Beaker-related inhumation graves at 2200–1920 cal BC (68% confidence)(3660±90 BP; OxA-4358). The dated cremations are more interesting in terms of their artefact associations and/or stratigraphic and spatial positions, though the charcoal samples raise questions about possible age offsets. One of the samples derived from a large oak object, probably a bier (OxA-1887; pit 605 at the centre of barrow 12), which could easily entail both depositional and age-at-death offsets making the true age of the burial context perhaps 100 or 200 (and possibly up to 500) years younger than the radiocarbon date. The other samples consisted of mixed tree and plant charcoals, including oak (OxA-1886; OxA-1888), which again suggest appreciable age-at-death offsets. It is clearly difficult to assess these dates interpretively, especially as radiocarbon determinations from similar burial contexts elsewhere are susceptible to the same problem.

The combination of indeterminate age offsets and wide calibrated age spans reduces the value of charcoal samples for dating grave assemblages, particularly where the artefact types were relatively 'long-lived' in terms of their use for grave deposition. This certainly applies to the bronze awl (Fig. 4.9, M1) from grave 802 central to ring ditch 801, dated to 1880–1690 cal BC (68% confidence)(3450±70 BP; OxA-1888). In contrast, the grave assemblage from the barrow 1 central burial (grave 11) is far more diagnostic, consisting of a bronze knife-dagger, ring-headed bone pin and bone tweezers, possibly in a leather box (Figs 4.82–3). This assemblage is directly comparable with several Wessex rich grave groups from Wiltshire and Dorset (especially Wilsford G56, Winterbourne Stoke G4 and Winterbourne Came G38; Gerloff 1975, pl. 45), which are placed — on the grounds of associated dagger types — in late Wessex I (Armorico-British 'C') and early Wessex II (type Snowshill) contexts. The radiocarbon date from the Radley barrow 1 grave, calibrated to 1940–1750 cal BC and 2040–1680 cal BC (3520±70 BP; OxA-1886) at 68% and 95% confidence respectively, accords reasonably well with the Wessex I/II overlap in existing Wessex chronologies; these place Wessex I in the period *c.* 1950–1700 cal BC, and Wessex II in the period *c.* 1750–1450 cal BC (cf R Bradley 1984b, table 4.4, 89; Burgess 1986, 350; Tomalin 1988, fig. 8; Randsborg 1990, 89–93). An adjustment to account for the old oak charcoal in the sample, along the lines suggested by Warner (1990) would further emphasise a 'mid-Wessex' date, though this approach may be dubious where such dispersed, comminuted samples are concerned.

Given the rarity of radiocarbon-dated Wessex-type burials, the Radley date deserves some wider discussion, especially with regard to the expected typological sequence of Wessex grave assemblages, and the temporal duration of the funerary tradition in

general. Radiocarbon dates for Wessex and related burials in Britain are listed in Table 9.4.

It is evident that the radiocarbon chronology for Wessex and related graves is very poor indeed: there are no dates available for classic Wessex I assemblages (the dates from Manor Farm, which suggest contemporaneity with the Wessex tradition, are questionable on the grounds of context integrity, sample quality and artefact association; cf Needham 1987a), and most dates for Wessex II graves are on charcoal samples, many of which are known to derive from mature oak timbers and are therefore likely to include large age-at-death and perhaps depositional offsets, including those from Earls Barton (Jackson 1984, 11) and Hodcott Down barrow 'A' (Richards 1986–90, 12). The oft-quoted late date from Edmondsham, Dorset, may also be doubtful because of the charred bone sample. For what it is worth, given the probable age offsets inherent in the charcoal samples and the wide age spans represented, the available dates do not contradict the expected typological sequence.

The dendrochronological dates from Reinecke A1 grave contexts in Central Europe indicate an early origin for the Wessex grave tradition in the 20th/19th centuries cal BC (Randsborg 1990; cf Krause *et al.* 1989). Taken with the Radley barrow 1 date and the Wessex II dates which are centred on the 17th/16th centuries cal BC, it is evident that the Wessex funerary tradition lasted for a period of at least 400 to 500 years. Within this time span, however, considering the wide calibrated age ranges and the very small number of dates, it is not possible to use radiocarbon dating to support the widely-accepted argument for a temporal separation of Wessex I and II grave groups (R Bradley 1984b, 89). The resolution of Wessex grave chronology clearly requires high-precision dates on short-life source materials (eg branches or twigs in the case of charcoal) from secure burial contexts. Other possibilities, especially samples from bone artefacts and from carbon residues preserved in corrosion deposits on bronzework, are presently being assessed (S Needham, pers. comm.), though in the case of bone this is particularly contentious given the destructive process involved.

The Round Barrows

Radiocarbon Dating Round Barrows

The radiocarbon dating of late Neolithic and Bronze Age round barrows, and related burial deposits and associated structures, is an extremely wide-ranging and complex subject, which hitherto has attracted remarkably little attention given the number of relevant radiocarbon dates available (*c.* 500–550 at present from England and Wales, with perhaps 50–100 further dates from related non-monumental grave contexts).

The Barrow Hills samples were derived exclusively from stratigraphically isolated graves and ditches, as are most samples from funerary monuments of the period. Only in the case of barrow 12 is there a series of radiocarbon dates that can be related to a structural sequence, and even then with caution. In addition, reference to spatial relationships for dating purposes — between ring ditches and central graves in particular — is dependent on *a priori* assumptions about their contemporaneity, which may often be questioned given the frequent insertion of secondary burials into round barrows in this period, and the destruction of deposits placed on old land surfaces or within mounds which have been truncated.

A further problem is the possibility of substantial age offsets resulting from charcoal samples (the principal source of radiocarbon dates for barrow sites of the period after *c.* 2000–1800 cal BC), and their low quality (where they consist of dispersed, comminuted and/or unidentifiable charcoal). The characteristic low precision of radiocarbon dates from these funerary sites, from both bone and charcoal samples, further limits the value of radiocarbon chronologies. These factors, in combination with inherent stratigraphic problems at many sites and widespread misuse of radiocarbon dates (or over-reliance on low-value dates for interpretation) has critically undermined the effectiveness of radiocarbon dating for the study of round barrow sites.

The interpretive difficulties outlined so far, especially with regard to stratigraphic association, apply to the seven round barrows with associated radiocarbon dates at Radley. The dating of these must therefore be treated with caution.

Pond Barrow 4866 *(Figs 4.60–4)*

This monument can only be dated by association, the date from the cremated bone deposit on the floor of the hollow being unreliable. There are four of these dates from the seven inhumation and cremation graves in an arc 5 m to the S and E of the hollow (three on human bone: BM-2696, BM-2697, BM-2698; and OxA-1880 on antler accompanying a burial). There is a fifth date from the isolated inhumation a similar distance to the NW (OxA-1903).

These radiocarbon dates (Table 9.5) suggest a sequence of burials within the period *c.* 2000–1500 cal BC, though the considerable degree of consistency in burial form among the inhumations and cremations in the graves to the S and E of the pond barrow suggests a much shorter period. All five identifiable inhumations were those of women and children. Those to the S and E of the pond were crouched and lying on their right sides, three probably in wooden coffins. In addition, one of the inhumations and the two cremations at the N end of the arc of graves were accompanied by Food Vessels, indicating continuity of artefact association. The child burial to the NW of the hollow, grave 5274 (Fig. 4.61), appears at first sight to be distinctive in terms of its spatial separation, crouched posture on the left side, and associated flint assemblage. However, this burial is in fact very similar to the other early radiocarbon-dated grave 4969 (Fig. 4.62) — a child burial in a coffin with a flint tool — and their relative spatial positions on a NW–SE alignment at equal distances from the primary cremation deposit on the floor of the pond barrow suggest a direct association connected with the early use (if not construction) of the site. This alignment is reminiscent of the line of pits and burials outside the pond barrow at Down Farm, oriented on one of the

Table 9.4. Age spans of Wessex and Wessex-related burials in Britain. Ch = *charcoal,* CB = *charred bone,* HB = *unburnt human bone*

Context	Lab. no	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence	Sample	Grave Assemblage
Barrow Hills barrow 1	OxA-1886	3520±70	1940–1750 (68%)	2040–1680 (95%)	Ch	Wessex I/II. Knife-dagger, bone tweezers and pin
Edmondsham, Dorset (Proudfoot 1963; Burleigh *et al.* 1976)	BM-709	3477±52	1880–1740 (68%)	1940–1680 (95%)	Ch	Wessex II. Dagger, bronze pin, perforated whetstone, bone tweezers
	BM-708	3069±45	1420–1300 (67%)	1440–1210 (95%)	CB	
Shaugh Moor ring cairn 2, Devon (Otlet and Walker 1982)	HAR-2220	3430±90	1890–1670 (65%)	1980–1520 (95%)	Ch	Wessex I/II? Faience beads
Manor Farm, Borwick, Lancashire (Olivier 1987)	HAR-5661	3450±70	1880–1690 (68%)	1960–1600 (94%)	HB	pre-Wessex/Wessex I? Flat dagger, flat axe
	HAR-5628	3270±80	1680–1500 (61%)	1750–1410 (95%)	HB	
Norton Bavant, Wiltshire (Butterworth 1992; S Needham pers. comm.)	BM-2909	3410±35	1760–1670 (64%)	1780–1620 (81%)	HB	Wessex I/II. Dagger, knife-dagger, perforated whetstone, bone pin and belt hook, miniature vessel
Hodcott Down A, Berkshire (Richards 1986-90)	HAR-3608	3370±70	1750–1600 (59%)	1880–1510 (95%)	Ch	Wessex II? Knife-dagger, awl
	HAR-3599	3340±70	1740–1520 (68%)	1780–1450 (90%)	Ch	
	HAR-3607	3490±80	1930–1730 (65%)	2040–1620 (95%)	Ch	
Earls Barton, Northamptonshire (Jackson 1984)	BM-681	3214±64	1530–1420 (57%)	1680–1390 (95%)	Ch	Wessex II. Dagger
	BM-680	3169±51	1510–1420 (68%)	1530–1370 (87%)	Ch	
Hove Barrow, Sussex (Burleigh *et al.* 1976)	BM-682	3189±46	1520–1430 (68%)	1540–1390 (89%)	Ch	Wessex II. Dagger, battle axe, amber cup
Nottington, Dorset (Burleigh *et al.* 1981)	BM-1640	3140±45	1460–1390 (48%)	1520–1310 (95%)	Ch	? Rivetted dagger
Portsdown, Hampshire (Rudkin 1984)	BM-1119	3009±57	1390–1210 (62%)	1420–1090 (95%)	HB	Wessex II? 'Vase support'

Table 9.5. Age spans of inhumations in area of pond barrow 4866, in chronological order

Context	Lab. no.	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence	Grave form and associations
Grave 4969	OxA-1880	3490±80	1930–1700 (68%)	2040–1620 (95%)	Child in coffin, with antlers, flint piercer
Grave 5274	OxA-1903	3480±80	1910–1690 (68%)	2040–1610 (95%)	Child, possible coffin, with flint assemblage including a chisel arrowhead
Grave 4970	BM-2698	3500±50	1890–1750 (68%)	1970–1690 (95%)	Adult female, possible coffin, with Food Vessel
Grave 4906	BM-2696	3380±50	1750–1610 (68%)	1780–1520 (88%)	Adult female, unaccompanied
Grave 4968	BM-2697	3320±50	1680–1590 (46%)	1740–1510 (95%)	Double burial, possible coffin

central post holes (Barrett *et al.* 1991a, fig. 4.9). It is also interesting that the predominance of child and female burials at Radley is paralleled at Down Farm (*ibid.* 132–4) and possibly Winterbourne Steepleton, Dorset (Atkinson *et al.* 1951a, 6–7). The radiocarbon dates for graves 4969 and 5274 suggest that the initial use of the pond barrow dates to *c.* 2000–1600 cal BC. Considering the argument for a consistent tradition of burial practice at the site (probably over a relatively short period of a few generations) and the radiocarbon age ranges, it is possible to suggest a timespan for funerary activity within the period *c.* 1900–1500 cal BC.

The only comparable radiocarbon dated pond barrow site is Down Farm, Dorset (Barrett *et al.* 1991a, 128–38), for which there are eight radiocarbon dates relating to early Bronze Age activity. Unfortunately, there are a large number of technical and interpretive problems with these dates and only one sample provides a reliable and reasonably precise date for funerary activity at the site. This remaining sample was from a cremation deposit in pit 2 (part of the pit alignment on the SW side of the site), which is calibrated to 2140–1870 and 2350–1650 cal BC (61% and 95% confidence respectively) (3620±110 BP; BM-2189R). This sample consisted of oak heartwood and the date may be easily 100–200 years older than the true age of the dated context, placing the funerary deposit in the first half of the second millennium cal BC. It is evident, given the poor quality of this dating evidence from Down Farm, and the ambiguous character of the Wilsford shaft 'pond barrow' in Wiltshire (Ashbee *et al.* 1989, 4–9), that the Radley example is presently the only firmly dated monument of its class, at least in terms of its use as a focus for funerary practices.

Barclay has identified parallels to this monument at Wally Corner, Berinsfield, Oxfordshire (Barclay and Thomas 1995), and suggests that two further examples may be found at Radley Barrow Hills: the second phase of ring ditch 611 (Figs 4.3, 4.5) and feature 4583 (Fig. 4.12), although it may be that their primary function was not funerary. The Radley examples all lay at the SW end of the barrow cemetery and share a common WSW–ENE alignment, parallel with its main axis. They are all thought to be early Bronze Age in date, and are placed in phase 5b (Fig. 9.8). Features 4583 and 4866 were new constructions and may have been paired on either side of barrows 12 and 13 (Fig. 1.10). It is not clear whether ring ditch 611 was deliberately transformed into a 'pond barrow' by lowering its interior or, as seems more likely, that the monument weathered into an embanked hollow which was used for ritual activities. It is notable, however, that the 'ponds' at Radley and Wally Corner are deeper and smaller than those of comparable sites in Dorset and Wiltshire (Ashbee *et al.* 1989 139–41; Barrett *et al.* 1991a, 136, fig. 4.13).

The Small Ring Ditches *(Figs 4.9, 4.48, 4.71, 5.1).*

The four small ring ditches (*c.* 8–12 m internal diameter) are all associated with radiocarbon dated central burials: barrow 4A; the inner penannular ring ditch 602 of barrow 12; penannular ring ditch 201; and continuous ring ditch 801. In no case was there any direct stratigraphic relationship: the association of ring ditches and central pits is based entirely on their spatial arrangement, which must of course be treated with caution.

Locally, Barclay suggests that the site can also be compared closely with other small barrows at Thrupp, Radley (Thomas *et al.* 1980, 306–9), Dorchester-on-Thames (Whittle *et al.* 1992, 175, fig. 22; Simpson and Case 1963, 93–5), North Stoke (Catling 1959, 1–13) and Linch Hill, Oxfordshire (Grimes 1943–4, 38–45). Most enclose Beaker-associated funerary deposits, and have internal diameters ranging from 6 m to 15 m.

The radiocarbon dates for barrow 4A and ring ditch 602 suggest construction of both in the period *c.* 2500–2000 cal BC. There are several examples of small funerary monuments with central Beaker graves belonging to this period (eg Pyecombe, Sussex; Butler 1991), though few are reliably radiocarbon-dated. The closest parallels in terms of scale, with dates on human bone from the central burials, are the sites at Manston, Kent, 2140–1880 cal BC (95% confidence) (3630±50 BP; BM-2642); Irthlingborough 1 inner ditch, 2210–1920 cal BC (93% confidence) (3680±50 BP; UB-3148); and perhaps Shrewton 24, 2350-2030 cal BC (95% confidence) (3750±50 BP; BM-2516).

Table 9.6. Age spans of samples from small ring ditches at Barrow Hills. Ch = *charcoal,* HB = *unburnt human bone*

Ring ditch	Lab. no.	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence	Sample	Dated Context
Barrow 4A	OxA-4356	3880±90	2500–2270 (61%)	2650–2000 (95%)	HB	Beaker burial
Ring ditch 602 (Barrow 12)	BM-2699	3720±60	2210–2030 (63%)	2330–1950 (95%)	HB	Inhumation burial 607
Ring-ditch 801	OxA-1888	3450±70	1880–1690 (68%)	1970–1600 (94%)	Ch	Cremation burial 802
Ring ditch 201	BM-2700	3360±50	1740–1610 (67%)	1770–1520 (93%)	HB	Beaker burial 203

In contrast, the dates associated with ring ditches 201 and 801 (taking into account the oak charcoal in 802), may be seen to fall in the period *c.* 1900–1600 cal BC. The closest parallel for these sites is the small ring ditch with a central inhumation at Oakham, Leicestershire (Clay 1987), dated to 1880–1520 cal BC (95% confidence)(3390±70 BP; OxA-2578; human bone sample). Both 201 and 801 are also regarded as late in the sequence for the Radley complex on artefactual and spatial grounds, and probably post-date the construction of some of the large barrows in the main linear group (eg barrows 1 and 3).

This wide chronological range for small ring ditches goes some way to undermine a simplistic unilinear model that envisages an overall increase in barrow size over time. The dating of the penannular ditches in the cases of both 602 and 201 also suggests a wide temporal range for this ditch form, supported by the late dates for small penannular ditches in the mid- to late second millennium cal BC in Dorset, including Knighton Heath (Petersen 1981), and Simon's Ground barrows B and C (White 1982). It is clear that superficial categorisations of round barrows on the basis of small size or of ditch form, and simple associations with particular artefact types (eg Beaker pottery), are likely to be misleading and subsume a range of monuments relating to very different ritual-funerary traditions in quite different cultural contexts.

Large and Multi-Phased Barrows

Barrow 12. The barrow 12 structural sequence is the only one associated with a series of radiocarbon dates, mainly from the central burials. Two are on charred bone samples and are excluded from discussion: OxA-1872 from a cremation deposit in the outer ditch fills; and OxA-1873 from the cremation beneath a fragmentary, inverted urn placed in the centre of the silted hollow of ring ditch 611. Also excluded is OxA-1889, on charcoal of uncertain origin from the layer overlying the inverted urn. The remaining three dates are summarised in stratigraphic order in Table 9.7.

The sequence suggests construction of the small primary barrow, with a penannular ring ditch and a central Beaker-related grave, in the period *c.* 2300–2000 cal BC. The later enlargement of the monument probably involved the construction of an outer bank and the backfilling of the adjacent silted ring ditch 611; sealing the cremation deposit. The two central burials of the enlarged monument consist of an unaccompanied cremation on a charred oak bier or tray (OxA-1887; Fig. 4.50), and a secondary child inhumation accompanied by a Food Vessel (OxA-1884; Figs 4.51–2). Allowing for age offsets for the dates on charcoal, especially in the case of the oak bier, and assuming that the secondary inhumation burial was closely associated in time with the underlying cremation, it is possible to date the enlargement of the monument to *c.* 2300–1800 cal BC. The very close formal similarity between the cremation burial and the grave deposit at the centre of barrow 2 (a cremation in a central pit on a charred timber bier or tray, in this case accompanied by gold bead covers and a bronze awl; Atkinson 1952–53, 19–21), may imply a close temporal relationship. The Wessex ascription for the goldwork from barrow 2 (Taylor 1980, 47, corpus no. Be 4) in this context suggests a date for the barrow 12 enlargement in the latter part of the suggested age range (in the 20th or 19th centuries cal BC).

Comparable barrow sequences which have also been radiocarbon dated are extremely rare. There are currently about 30 excavated round barrows in England and Wales which have radiocarbon dates associated with more than one clearly distinguished structural phase, of which only nine, including Radley barrow 12, have multiple ditches with a small primary ring ditch (less than 12 m inner diameter). In each case, the chronology of the structural sequence suffers from interpretive problems, particularly with regard to the association of dated contexts and structural features, and the likelihood of age offsets for charcoal samples. It is particularly difficult to define appropriate age offsets (where relevant) and to establish the association of dated contexts and structural sequences for the dates from Bowthorpe, Norfolk (Lawson 1986), Amesbury 71, Wiltshire (Christie 1967), Irthlingborough 1, Northamptonshire (dating information supplied by John Humble), and Four Crosses 5, Powys, (Warrilow *et al.* 1986, 66–8). At Eaton, Leicestershire (Clay 1980), the

Table 9.7. Age spans of samples from barrow 12, in stratigraphic order. Ch = *charcoal,* HB = *unburnt human bone*

Context	Lab. no.	BP up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence	cal BC	Sample	Structural phase
Grave 607	BM-2699	3720±60	2210–2030 (63%)	2330–1950 (95%)	HB	1. Inner penannular ring-ditch
Grave 605/2	OxA-1887	3830±70	2400–2200 (59%)	2500–2130 (93%)	Ch	2. Barrow enlargement, outer ditch with probable outer bank, two successive central burials
Grave 605/1	OxA-1884	3670±80	2200–1940 (68%)	2350–1750 (95%)	HB	

two radiocarbon dates may well relate to the same phase. The dates from the three remaining sites at Barnack, Cambridgeshire (Donaldson 1977), West Ashby, Lincolnshire (Field 1985), and Winwick, Cheshire (Freke and Holgate 1987–88), are open to alternative interpretations but it can be argued that the primary inner small ring ditches in each case were constructed in the period *c.* 2300–1900 cal BC, and the barrow enlargements/second outer ring ditches in the period *c.* 2000–1600 cal BC, which accords with the chronology proposed for barrow 12. The dates selected for this interpretation are listed in Table 9.8.

Although this chronological framework is extremely tentative, other radiocarbon dates associated with comparable single-phase structures have similar age spans. The aggrandizement of existing round barrows and other monuments was a practice that clearly emerged while the Beaker funerary tradition was still recognised, as the sites at Barnack, Shrewton 24 (Green and Rollo-Smith 1984), and Long Crichel 7 (Green *et al.* 1982) clearly demonstrate, but it became far more common in the context of non-Beaker funerary traditions from the beginning of the second millennium cal BC (cf R Bradley 1984b, 83). Where barrows went through a rapid series of enlargements or additions, as seems to have been the case with many large early Bronze Age sites (eg Amesbury 71, Barnack, West Ashby, Trelystan barrows 1 and 2, etc.), it is difficult to imagine chronologies based on radiocarbon dates sensitive enough to establish the temporal span of individual structural phases. This suggests a need for detailed formal typological analysis of round barrow monuments at a regional level, with the use of radiocarbon dating only as a broad chronological guide (Garwood, in prep.).

The large ring ditches. Three of the large round barrows are associated with radiocarbon dates: barrow 12 phase 2, and barrows 1 and 3 (Figs 4.48, 4.51, 4.80–3, 5.1). On the basis of relative spatial positions and material associations, one can argue for a sequence of construction from E to W for barrows 3 to 1 in the main alignment. If the close temporal relationship between the central cremation deposits in barrow 2 and barrow 12 (phase 2) is accepted, this places the enlargement of barrow 12 chronologically between the construction of barrows 3 and 1. The radiocarbon dates support this interpretation: the sequence of age ranges parallels the expected temporal sequence for construction and use of the three monuments. The relevant dates are listed in Table 9.9.

There are numerous radiocarbon dates from relatively secure contexts associated with large single-phase round barrows in southern England with continuous ring ditches (greater than 20 m internal diameter) enclosing single grave deposits. These are listed in Table 9.10, together with two dates from similar sites where central burials were not found.

This series of dates is interesting in several respects. It is apparent, taking this class of especially large single-phase funerary monuments in isolation and allowing for age offsets among the charcoal samples, that a general increase in ring ditch diameter is evident from *c.* 2400 to 1400 cal BC: from an average internal diameter of less than 25 m in the period *c.* 2400–1700 cal BC, to an average of *c.* 32 m in the period *c.* 1900–1400 cal BC. Where artefactual evidence, stratigraphic evidence and radiocarbon dates are available for large multi-phase sites elsewhere, this pattern is repeated (eg at Sproxton and Eaton, Leicestershire; West Ashby, Lincolnshire; Grendon 1, Northamptonshire (Gibson and McCormick 1985); Fordington Farm, Dorset (Bellamy 1991) and Amesbury 71, Wiltshire). Similar sites which are not radiocarbon-dated also appear to follow this pattern on the basis of artefactual and stratigraphic evidence, including Long Crichel 7 (Green *et al.* 1982) and Frampton 1 (Forde-Johnston 1958), both in Dorset.

There must be some question, however, about the coherence of this apparent process of enlargement in both chronological and cultural terms. The form of some of the dated sites is uncertain: several were undoubtedly 'bell' barrows with large mounds, but some of the plough-eroded sites may have been 'disc' barrows with large ring ditches but less substantial mound structures. There is also no certainty that this evidence reflects a gradual uninterrupted process of increasing monument scale: in Wiltshire, for example, there are several extremely large round barrows associated with Wessex I grave assemblages which belong to the very early second millennium cal BC (eg Wilsford 5 and Winterbourne Stoke 5: cf Grinsell 1957; Grinsell n.d.). Unfortunately, there are no radiocarbon dates from

Table 9.8. Age spans for primary barrows and their subsequent enlargements. Ch = *charcoal,* HB = *unburnt human bone*

	Site	Context	Lab. no.	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence	Sample
PRIMARY MONUMENTS	Barrow Hills barrow 12	Grave 607	BM-2699	3720±60	2210–2030 (63%)	2330–1950 (95%)	HB
	Barnack, Cambridgeshire (Donaldson 1977)	Primary Burial 28	BM-2956	3770±35	2290–2140 (68%)	2330–2130 (90%)	HB
			HAR-1645	3670±80	2040–1870 (54%)	2140–1700 (95%)	Ch
		Burial 27	HAR-1205	3590±80	2040–1870 (54%)	2200–1740 (95%)	HB
	West Ashby (Field 1985)	Primary ditch silt	HAR-3290	3670±80	2200–1940 (68%)	2350–1750 (95%)	Ch
	Winwick, Cheshire (Freke and Holgate 1987–8)	Pit 921	HAR-5262	3690±80	2200–1960 (68%)	2450–1850 (95%)	Ch
		Primary ditch silt	HAR-5260	3630±70	2050–1910 (48%)	2210–1870 (91%)	Ch
	Irthlingborough 1	Primary burial	UB-3148	3680±50	2140–2020 (57%)	2210–1920 (93%)	HB
BARROW ENLARGEMENTS	Barrow Hills barrow 12	Grave 605/1	OxA-1884	3670±80	2200–1940 (68%)	2350–1750 (95%)	HB
	West Ashby	Fill of inner ditch	HAR-3270	3480±70	1900–1700 (68%)	1980–1630 (93%)	Ch
	Winwick	Phase 2 stake circle	HAR-5261	3470±70	1890–1690 (68%)	1980–1620 (95%)	Ch
		Burial in outer ditch silt	HAR-5258	3390±70	1780–1610 (61%)	1880–1520 (95%)	Ch
	Barnack	Burial 39	HAR-1430	3450±70	1880–1690 (68%)	1960–1600 (94%)	HB
		Burial 37	HAR-1207	3400±80	1780–1610 (54%)	1910–1520 (95%)	HB
	Eaton, Leicestershire (Clay 1980)	Burial F11	HAR-3941	3450±70	1880–1690 (68%)	1960–1600 (94%)	Ch
		Hearth in 2nd ditch silt	HAR-3942	3430±80	1880–1670 (68%)	1940–1520 (95%)	Ch

Table 9.9. Age spans for large barrows at Barrow Hills, in suggested order of construction. Ch = *charcoal,* HB = *unburnt human bone*

Barrow	Context	Lab. no.	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence	Sample
Barrow 3	Central grave. Milston dagger.	OxA-4355	3785±90	2360–2130 (57%)	2500–1950 (95%)	HB
Barrow 12, phase 2	Grave 605/2. Oak bier.	OxA-1887	3830±70	2400–2200 (59%)	2500–2130 (93%)	Ch
	Grave 605/1. Food Vessel.	OxA-1884	3670±80	2200–1940 (68%)	2350–1750 (95%)	HB
Barrow 1	Central cremation, grave 11. Wessex II.	OxA-1886	3520±70	1940–1750 (68%)	2040–1680 (95%)	Ch

Table 9.10. Age spans for single-phase large round barrows with continuous ditches in southern England, in chronological order. Ch = *charcoal,* HB = *unburnt human bone*

Barrow	Context	Ditch diameter (m)	Lab. no.	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence	Sample
Barrow Hills barrow 3	Central grave	25	OxA-4355	3785±90	2360–2130 (57%)	2500–1950 (95%)	HB
Amesbury 39, Wiltshire (Ashbee 1979–80)	Cremation pyre?	23	HAR-1237	3620±90	2140–1880 (68%)	2300–1700 (95%)	Ch
Roxton B, Bedfordshire (Taylor and Woodward 1985)	Central grave	25	HAR-997	3620±80	2050–1890 (50%)	2300–1750 (95%)	Ch
Buckskin, Hampshire (M Allen pers. comm.)	Posthole (no burial)	24	HAR-8370	3590±100	2050–1870 (46%)	2300–1650 (95%)	Ch
Barrow Hills barrow 1	Central grave	24	OxA-1886	3520±70	1940–1750 (68%)	2040–1680 (95%)	Ch
Edmondsham, Dorset (Proudfoot 1963; Burleigh *et al.* 1976)	Cremation pyre	29	BM-709	3477±52	1880–1740 (68%)	1940–1680 (95%)	Ch
	Cremation deposit		BM-708	3069±45	1420–1300 (67%)	1440–1210 (95%)	CB
Snail Down III, Wiltshire (Thomas forthcoming)	Cremation pyre	31	NPL-141	3490±115	1980–1680 (68%)	2150–1500 (95%)	Ch
Milton Lilbourne 4, Wiltshire (Ashbee 1986)	Pyre	32	HAR-6458	3460±80	1890–1680 (68%)	1980–1600 (95%)	Ch
	Mound core		HAR-6455	3380±80	1880–1630 (68%)	1930–1520 (95%)	Ch
Ascot, Berkshire	OLS (no burial excavated)	*c.* 32	HAR-478	3430±70	1880–1670 (68%)	1930–1590 (92%)	Ch
Milton Lilbourne 2, Wiltshire (Ashbee 1986)	Mound core	*c.* 30	HAR-6456	3420±80	1770–1600 (56%)	1890–1510 (95%)	Ch
Hodcott Down A, Berkshire (Richards 1986–90)	Central grave	32	HAR-3608	3370±70	1750–1600 (59%)	1880–1510 (95%)	Ch
Amesbury 58, Wiltshire (Ashbee 1984)	Mound core	31	HAR-6226	3310±80	1460–1300 (57%)	1530–1130 (93%)	Ch
Earls Barton, Northamptonshire (Jackson 1984)	OLS (pyre?)	39	BM-681	3214±64	1530–1420 (57%)	1680–1390 (95%)	Ch
			BM-680	3169±51	1510–1420 (68%)	1530–1370 (87%)	Ch

these sites, and as they were all poorly-recorded in 19th-century excavations it is unclear whether they really were exceptionally large single-phase mounds, or enlarged multi-phase monuments.

While the available radiocarbon dating evidence may suggest an increase in the diameter of large single-grave round barrows built in one constructional episode, this was certainly just one line of monument development and mortuary deposition within a wider range of inter-related funerary and monumental traditions. These include the reuse of existing monuments, multiple burial, resorting of graves, construction of distinctive monument forms like disc barrows and small mounds, and the spatial arrangement of mounds in particular monumentalised settings. At present the relative chronologies of specific funerary practices and the wider development of monument types are not well understood.

A general increase over time in the size of large single-phase barrows built specifically for single burials may suggest an increasing ability on the part of élite groups to mobilise manpower for special monument construction (perhaps also implying larger socio-political units). Alternatively, the evidence may be interpreted as demonstrating a *decline* in the real power of these élite groups: one response to this decline may have been a greater investment, during the mid-second millennium cal BC, in round barrow monumentalism to emphasise continuing authority (R Bradley 1984b, 91–5). The increasing concern with elaborate funerals and highly visible cremation practices rather than narrowly focused mortuary rites in the course of the

second millennium cal BC, suggested by John Barrett (1988b; 1990, 186), is also consistent with a parallel increase in the sheer scale of funerary architecture, again to emphasise ever more strongly the status of the social élites concerned with barrow construction.

Round Barrow Typo-Chronology

Discussion and visual representation of round barrow development and broader typologies are extremely rare. There are presently fewer than 20 multi-phase round barrows which have had their structural sequences assessed in detail and their successive monument forms reconstructed; the best-known of these are probably Amesbury 71 (Christie 1967; cf Barrett 1988b, fig. 3.5; Cunliffe 1993, fig. 3.12), Barnack (Donaldson 1977, 225–27), Long Crichel 7 (Green *et al.* 1982; cf Barrett *et al.* 1991a, fig. 4.7) and Trelystan barrows 1 and 2 (Britnell 1981, 186–91, fig. 30; cf Warrilow *et al.* 1986, fig. 15). The evidence from Trelystan is especially well presented and a similar approach has been adopted for the Radley evidence as a means of illustrating the development of round barrow forms over time, with reference to associated artefacts and relevant radiocarbon dates (Figs 9.3–4). This kind of chronological approach to the interpretation of round barrows, using the evidence from multi-phase sites in particular, will probably generate a reformation of round barrow typology in the future, but existing typological frameworks for these sites are still largely based on 19th-century categorisations of surface form (eg bowl, bell and disc barrows), or descriptive categorisations of structural features (eg stake and post rings; Ashbee 1960, 60–5). Only recently has there been any attempt to construct local typologies using evidence from a number of sites excavated in modern times. The one published scheme of this kind, for mid-Wales, is based on excavations at Trelystan and Four Crosses, Powys (Warrilow *et al.* 1986, 80–5, fig. 15). The Radley evidence is presented in a similar way (Fig. 9.3), though unfortunately there is little information with regard to mound forms because of the truncated nature of the site (see below). This is the first detailed analysis of the relative chronology of the round barrow forms within a Wessex-type linear barrow group.

RADIOCARBON DATING AND THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE MONUMENT COMPLEX
by Paul Garwood

Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age material culture chronology

The large number of high-value radiocarbon dates from Radley associated with a wide range of late Neolithic and early Bronze Age artefacts offers an unusual opportunity for comparing the absolute dating of ceramic traditions, metalwork assemblages and other material culture types. The temporal relationships among dated assemblages at Radley are represented in Figure 9.4. Only those artefacts in *direct* stratigraphic association with the dated samples are shown. This allows for a comparison of the possible temporal currency of artefact categories in formal depositional contexts, though allowance must be made for age offsets in the case of charcoal samples in particular.

This diagram, at first sight, suggests considerable temporal overlaps in the currency of otherwise exclusive artefact categories. The dates for Grooved Ware (BM-2715 from pit 917, BM-2706 from pit 3196), for example, overlap at both one and two sigma with those for most of the Beakers. Similarly, the earlier age range associated with a Food Vessel (OxA-1884 from barrow 12) predates and barely overlaps with the age range for the latest Beaker date (BM-2700 from ring ditch 201), which seems to indicate the use of Food Vessels in funerary contexts at the same time as Beakers. The age spans for the tanged copper dagger from grave 4660 (BM-2704) and the flat rivetted dagger from barrow 3 (OxA-4355), which should be later in date, completely overlap at two sigma. This chronological 'evidence', however, is misleading if used uncritically: given the probabilistic nature of calibrated dates and the wide age ranges within which these artefacts were deposited, such overlaps can in no way 'prove' even the general contemporaneity of artefact types. Furthermore, because the deposition of particular assemblage types often appears to have been episodic, it is possible that single radiocarbon age spans could subsume several distinct phases of artefact deposition that were in reality separated by decades or even centuries. In this light, there must be some doubt about discussions of Neolithic and Bronze Age material culture that assume chronological overlaps on the basis of radiocarbon dates.

Comparison of late Neolithic and early Bronze Age material culture chronologies also demands a re-examination of the *exclusivity* of material assemblages in formal depositional contexts. This has been interpreted either as an expression of chronological sequence where material culture forms were replaced by others, or as the result of the deliberate physical and temporal separation of practices (and associated symbolic referents) that were in vogue at the same time but relevant to different fields of cultural discourse (cf Barrett 1988a). While the contemporaneity of exclusive cultural practices and their material associations is one of the most important problems facing Neolithic and Bronze Age archaeology (cf Thomas 1991b), it is very clear that the chronological definition of materially exclusive depositional events is presently beyond the reach of radiocarbon dating.

The Radley ritual-funerary complex in chronological context

It is evident, considering the limitations of radiocarbon dating outlined above, that the radiocarbon chronology for Radley serves best as a broad framework with which to order a more detailed site interpretation based on stratigraphic, spatial and artefactual evidence. The discussion of the development of the Radley complex follows this approach. Comparisons of site sequences based on this kind of analysis are also more likely to offer effective chronological frameworks for defining

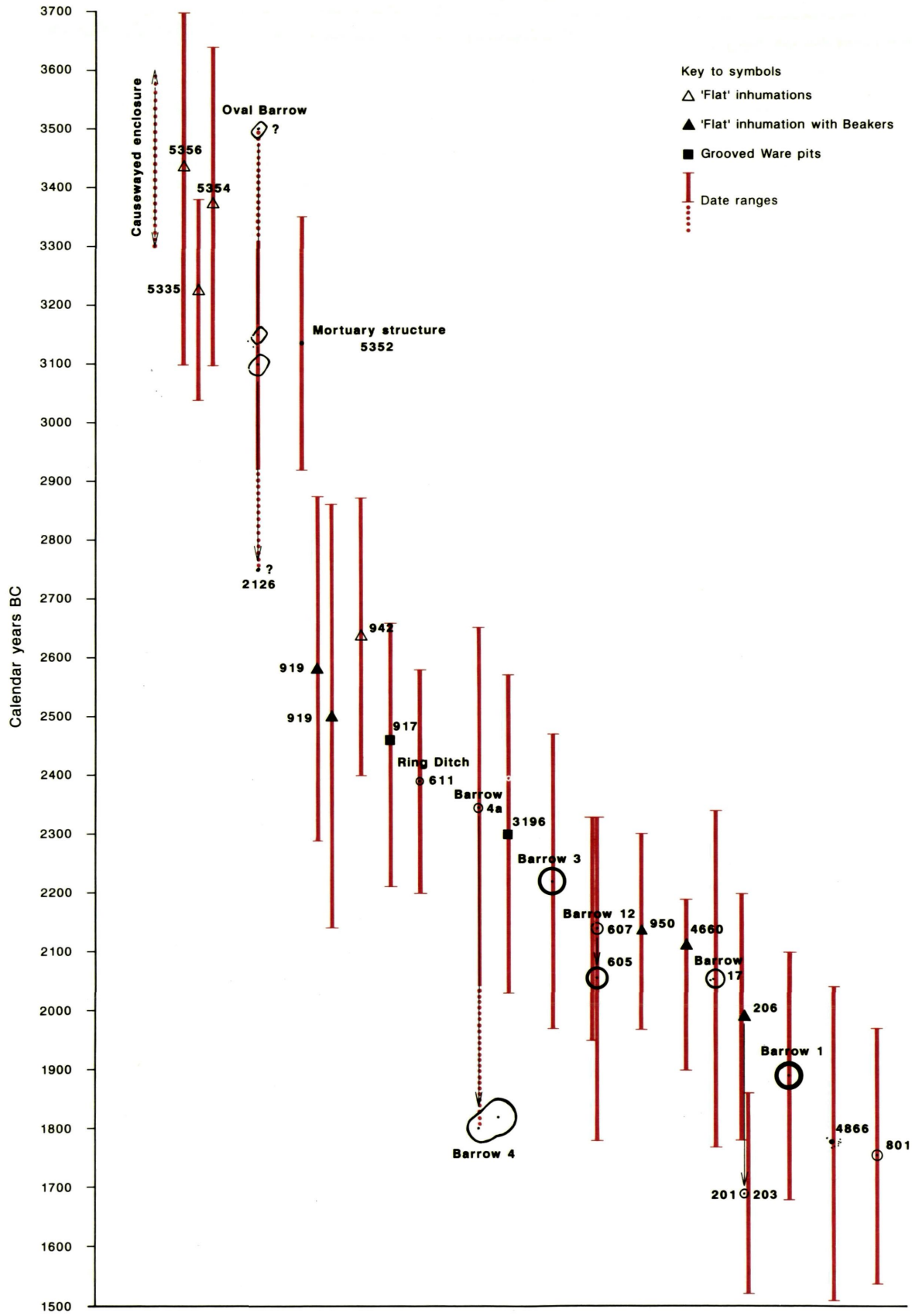


Figure 9.3 Temporal relations of ^{14}C- dated elements of the monument complex. Individual age ranges are shown at 2 σ. Ranges for the causewayed enclosure and the early phases of the oval barrow are based on the arguments in Chapter 9. The range for phases 2 to 5 of the oval barrow is the mean of BM-2390 to -2393, that for ring ditch the mean of BM-2712 and -2713, and that for pond barrow 4866 the mean of BM-2696, -2698, and -2700 and OxA-1880 and 1903

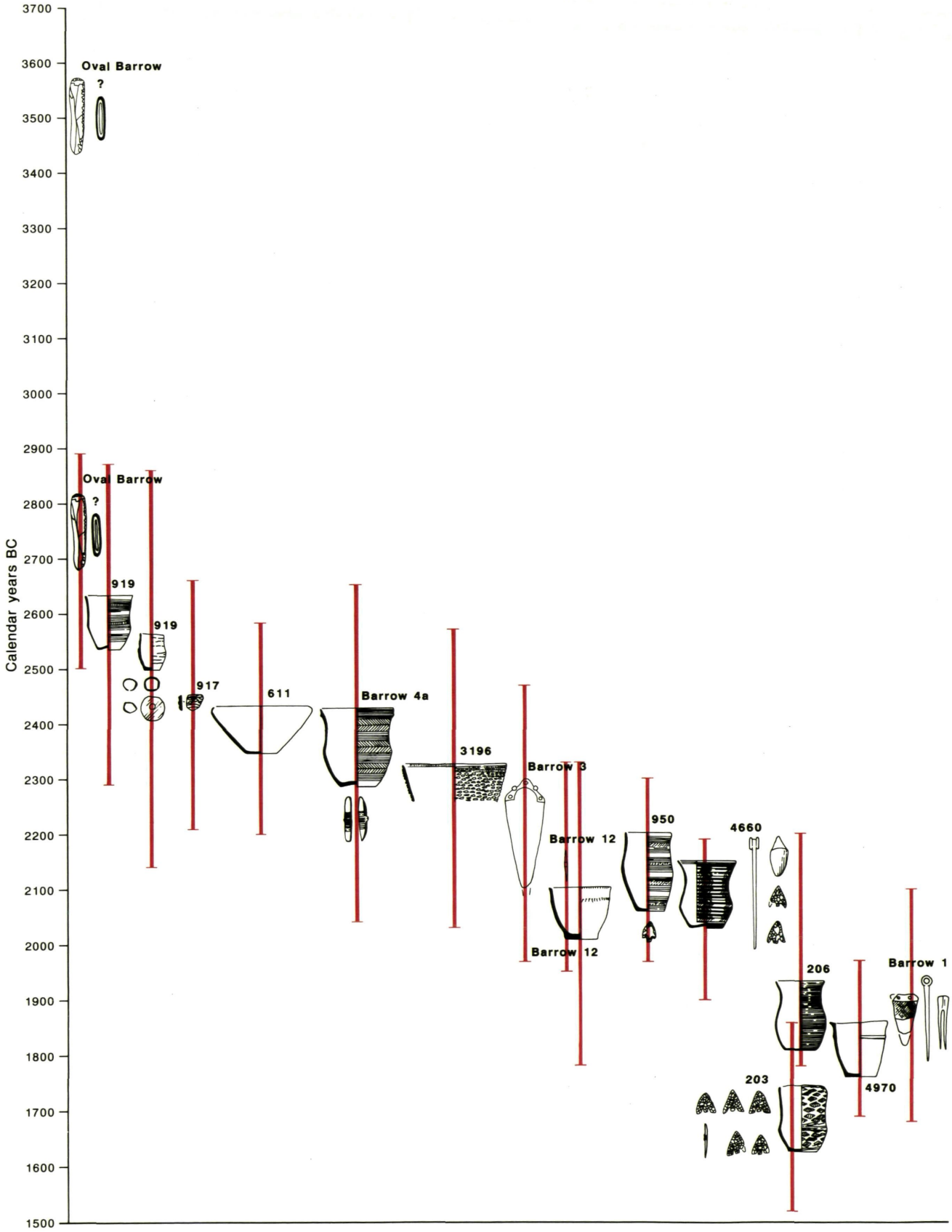


Figure 9.4 Selected artefacts from ^{14}C-dated contexts. Individual age ranges are shown at 2 σ. The two dates tentatively suggested for the central burial in the oval barrow are based on the arguments in Chapter 9. The range for ring ditch 611 is the mean of BM-2712 and -2713

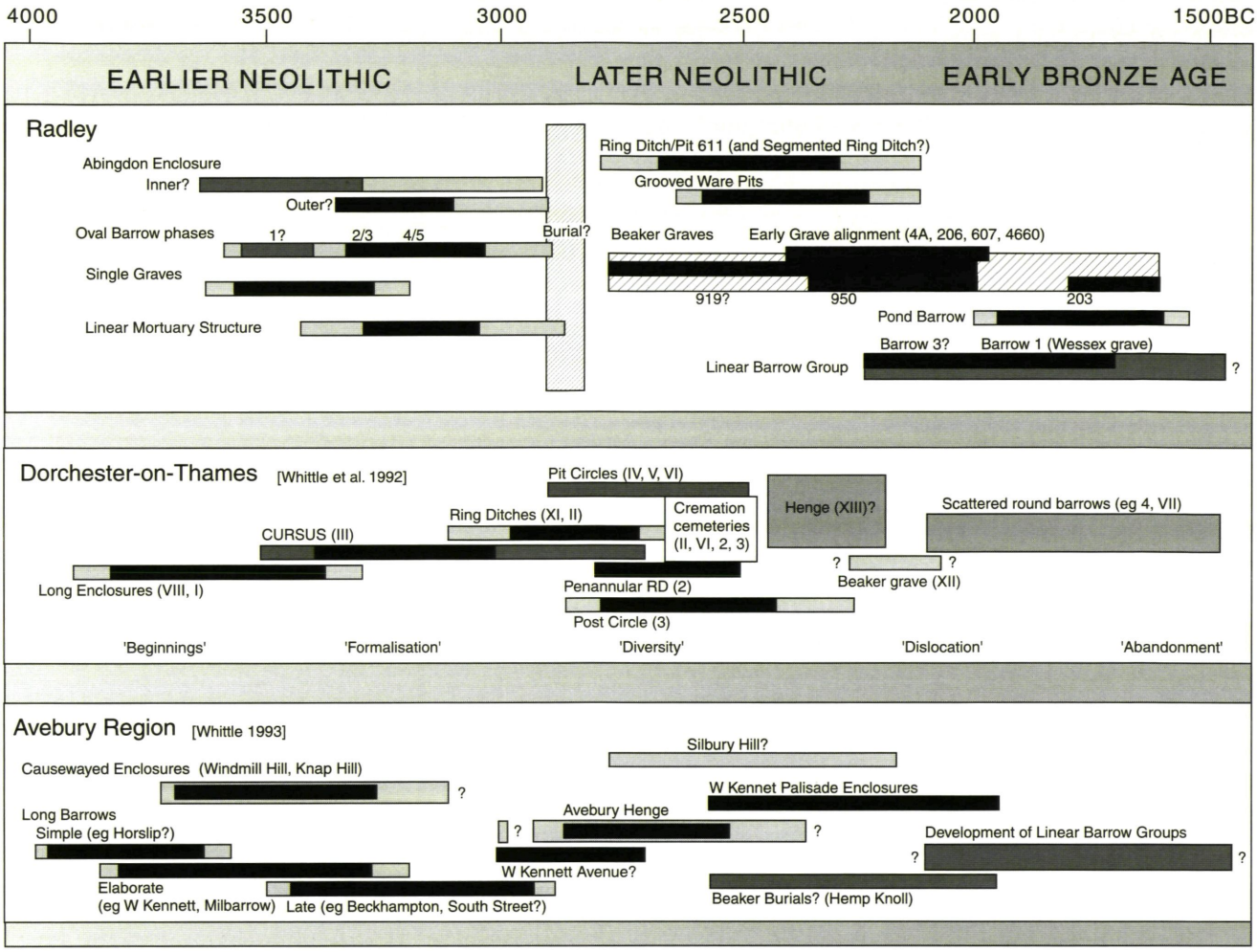


Figure 9.5 Monument chronologies for Radley, Dorchester-on-Thames and the Avebury area

and interpreting the continuity and/or episodic expression of cultural practices in the ritual-funerary domain at local, regional and larger geographical scales than radiocarbon dates alone.

Although precise chronological and interpretive schemes clearly cannot be based on radiocarbon dating, the study of monumentalism and ritual-funerary traditions over the very long term is certainly possible using a radiocarbon chronology that accepts a degree of precision with age ranges of *c.* 300 to 400 years. This kind of study is probably most valuable at a regional level; as a way of defining the wider regional context of individual sites or ritual-funerary complexes, and their development over time relative to cultural changes in other regions.

In Figure 9.5 the monument chronologies for the two well-dated ritual-funerary complexes in the Oxford region at Radley and Dorchester-on-Thames are represented alongside the monument sequence for the nearest Wessex core region (Avebury). These chronologies are based mainly on large radiocarbon date assemblages. The diagram is highly interpretive and schematic, but aims to illustrate simply the relative development of the two Thames Valley sites, which are only *c.* 8 km apart, with reference to the well-known Avebury monument complex 50 km to the SW. The age spans shown in black represent probable construction phases and periods of use that have been radiocarbon-dated, with light tone indicating chronological uncertainty. Age spans with dark tone indicate periods of probable construction and use that have no absolute dating evidence, while hatching represents generalised use of certain monuments or monument types where the dating evidence is especially poor. The relevant evidence for Radley has been outlined above. The Dorchester sequence is based on the phasing summary in the most recent overview (Whittle *et al.* 1992, 195–98, tables 10–12; cf Bradley and Chambers 1988, fig. 3; R Bradley 1993, fig. 54; Thomas 1991b, 159, fig. 7.5). The Avebury sequence is also based on the most recent chronological assessment, which includes a list of radiocarbon dates for Neolithic sites in the region (Whittle 1993; especially tables 1 and 2).

Given the proximity of Radley and Dorchester-on-Thames, and the less well-dated group of sites at Drayton/Sutton Courtenay (which includes a long barrow, a long enclosure and two cursuses; Bradley and Holgate 1984), it may be possible to look upon these monument clusters as elements within a single much wider ritual-funerary complex, comparable in area to

the central Avebury region. It is also interesting that the Dorchester cursus and the two Drayton cursuses are all roughly oriented on the Radley and east Abingdon area, though whether this was deliberate remains very much open to question. Even allowing for episodic ritual-funerary activity at Radley and Dorchester (Whittle *et al.* 1992, 198; cf Bradley and Chambers 1988), their inter-relationships may be partly reflected in relative monument sequences over the long term.

As Figure 9.5 illustrates, the earlier Neolithic at Radley is marked by a nucleated and perhaps coherent grouping of mortuary and enclosure sites; the sequence at Dorchester, in contrast, seems to represent the development of an ever more formalised linear monument arrangement, culminating in the massive cursus (Whittle *et al.* 1992, 196). Subsequently, in the period *c.* 3000.1–2600 cal BC, there appears to have been a break in monument construction at Radley, with a possible discontinuity in ritual-funerary activity; at Dorchester, however, this period was marked by the construction of new monument forms, including ring ditches, pit circles and a post circle, some of which were used as sites for cremation cemeteries in the mid-third millennium cal BC. It appears as if an overall shift took place in the monumentalised landscape that resulted in the relative abandonment of the area around Radley, in favour of greater investment in monuments and ritual-funerary activity at Dorchester-on-Thames. This period of 'diversity' in monument construction probably culminated in the construction of a large henge (site XIII). It is suggested that this marked a re-structuring or dislocation of activity formerly focused on the cursus alignment (*ibid.*, 197–98).

It was precisely in this period, in the later 3rd millennium cal BC, that a resurgence of monument construction and a range of new ritual-funerary practices are evident at Radley, including Grooved Ware deposition, ring ditch sites, and several rich Beaker graves and round barrows. No Grooved Ware was found at Dorchester except for a rim from Site I (*ibid.*, table 11), though pit deposits may have been overlooked, and there are only two known Beaker graves: one from the complex itself (site XII, adjacent to the henge), and one 'flat' grave at Queensford Mill (Simpson and Case 1963), though the burial at Mount Farm is nearby (1.5 km to the NE). Thereafter, the Dorchester complex seems to have been virtually abandoned except for the construction of a few scattered early Bronze Age barrows (eg sites VII and 4; with cremation burials and Collared Urns). At Radley, the final Neolithic and early Bronze Age was clearly a period of intense monument construction. The impressive alignment of extremely large round barrows at Radley, 700 m long, with a series of rich graves, has few parallels outside Wessex and none in the Upper Thames. It should be noted, however, that this comparison between Radley and Dorchester-on-Thames is made on the basis of excavated sites only; cropmark evidence at the latter site may point to the existence of further early Bronze Age round barrows.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Radley and Dorchester complexes were closely inter-related, and that comparisons which simply *contrast* the development of such ritual-funerary sites may be underestimating the wider structuring of monumentalised landscapes in the Neolithic. In the case of Radley and Dorchester, it is evident that when new monument construction on a large scale occurred in one area (*c.* 3000–2600 cal BC at Dorchester; *c.* 2200–1700 cal BC at Radley), there seems to have been a corresponding phase of abandonment or dislocation within the other complex. During those periods when monuments were being constructed and intensively used in both areas (*c.* 3700–3000 cal BC and *c.* 2600–2200 cal BC), there was almost no replication of monument forms or their spatial arrangement from one area to the other. It is as though some pervasive socio-religious division existed, which demanded the creation of exclusive fields of cultural discourse and their physical separation at an extremely large spatial scale. This is reminiscent of the landscape division proposed for the Stonehenge area in the later Neolithic, between henge / Grooved Ware and round barrow / Peterborough Ware domains (Thomas 1991b). In this context, the inter-relatedness of the Radley and Dorchester monument chronologies suggests that the identification of supposedly 'isolated' ritual-funerary complexes may be misleading, and that the spatial scale of monumentalised landscapes in the Neolithic (made up of several foci of ritual-funerary activity and monument-building) may be far larger than often assumed.

The comparison between the Thames valley and the Avebury region sequences in Figure 9.5 is mainly intended to place Radley in a wider cultural-chronological context through reference to the nearest (and especially well-dated) concentration of Neolithic monuments in Wessex (Whittle 1993, 31–9, table 1). Although the distinctiveness of regional sequences in the British Neolithic is widely recognised, and constitutes the main framework for analysis and interpretation at large geographical scales (eg R Bradley 1984a; Bradley and Gardiner 1984; Thomas 1991b), this regional focus has tended to distract attention from inter-regional patterns of cultural change over the long term. Monument and material culture sequences in different regions in the fourth to second millennia cal BC are consistently marked by discontinuities in the periods *c.* 3100–2900 cal BC and *c.* 2100–1900 cal BC. Although this broad temporal pattern has long been recognised and is deeply entrenched in the archaeological literature, there is rarely any attempt to explain the periods of cultural change that seem to be represented (though see Whittle 1981; Braithwaite 1984; Garwood 1991). The major interpretive issue in this context is the duration and intensity of such transformations, which is largely a chronological problem. Unfortunately, the very nature of radiocarbon age spans will inevitably mask and stretch the uncertain extent of transitional phases (eg. earlier to later Neolithic at Radley), so that sequences always appear to be overlapping and never simply consecutive. It is ironic that radiocarbon dating, which aims to establish absolute temporal frameworks, should be inherently ambiguous when it comes to dating the boundaries

which give order to prehistoric chronologies and guide interpretations of cultural change.

The development of the ritual-funerary complex

Chronology and Phasing

The spatial development of the Radley ritual-funerary complex over time is represented graphically in the form of seven phase plans (Figs 9.6–9). It must be emphasised that the phasing of the site is essentially interpretive and schematic, and that it draws upon only the most reliable dating evidence in the form of selected radiocarbon dates and especially diagnostic material assemblages. For full details of the substantive evidence the reader should refer to the datelist in Table A.1, along with the relevant site descriptions and finds reports.

The severe limitations of both radiocarbon dating and typo-chronological analysis for creating precise material culture and monument chronologies have already been discussed at length. A critical aspect of the phasing of the Radley ritual-funerary complex undertaken here is the identification of *spatial relationships* between particular monuments and/or depositional contexts. This approach is highly interpretive, in that the definition of such spatial-temporal associations depends on assumptions about the nature of Neolithic and Bronze Age ritual-funerary practices and monumentalism, and about the relative chronologies of depositional practices and monument forms, all of which will be open to reinterpretation.

In particular, it is assumed that the spatial positioning of new monuments or practices depended on 'readings' of the existing cultural landscape ('readings' conditioned by social concerns and mytho-historical or religious schemes), and ordered according to recognised 'rules' for monument construction and the proper enactment of ritual-funerary practices in both time and space (ie constituting specific 'fields of discourse': Barrett 1988a; cf Garwood 1991, 14; R Bradley 1993, 44-68; Barrett 1994, 72–7). The spatial ordering of monuments within ritual-funerary complexes of this period cannot, however, be necessarily explained with reference to just one cultural scheme: it is now becoming evident, in the case of final Neolithic and early Bronze Age round barrows, for example, that both 'readings' and 'rules' changed over time.

The importance of the Radley phase sequence is evident at several levels. First, it provides an unusually detailed picture of changing relationships among a diverse range of earlier Neolithic ritual-funerary monuments and mortuary deposits. Second, it offers an opportunity for defining the late Neolithic use of an ancient monumentalised landscape that was restructured in the course of new ritual-funerary activity. Third, it provides an almost unparalleled insight into the complex spatial development of a large final Neolithic/early Bronze Age round barrow group that included an imposing alignment of large mounds comparable with similar linear barrow groups in Wessex.

The following description of the phasing of the Radley ritual-funerary complex is organised as follows: earlier Neolithic (phases 1 and 2); late Neolithic/early Bronze Age (phases 3, 4, 5a and 5b); and late Bronze Age (phase 6). For each period division there is a general discussion of the overall quality of the dating evidence and the significance of the chronological boundaries defined, together with assessments of those monuments and depositional contexts which are difficult to date. The description of individual phases will mainly refer to the spatial setting and ordering of the relevant monuments and deposits, with brief summaries of artefactual evidence and relevant radiocarbon dates, as a guide to more detailed assessments of the material evidence and radiocarbon chronology elsewhere in the report. The use of radiocarbon dates in this context will tend to be selective and discursive. The reader may assess the selection and interpretive use of individual dates with reference to the descriptions of the specific monuments (Chapters 3–6).

Earlier Neolithic *(Phases 1 and 2)*

Discussion. The treatment of the Abingdon causewayed enclosure and the Radley oval barrow as a single complex should, of course, be extended to encompass the earlier Neolithic single graves and the linear mortuary site nearby. It is possible, on the basis of the dating evidence and site interpretations to propose a division of the earlier Neolithic period at Radley into two phases.

This temporal division is undoubtedly problematic, especially as there is little direct dating evidence for phase 1. The radiocarbon age ranges are certainly imprecise enough to allow for alternative interpretations. Nonetheless, it has been suggested that the causewayed enclosure was built in two separate phases; an initial small enclosure with an insubstantial bank replaced by a much larger enclosure with a revetted internal rampart. A broad formal distinction can also be made between the first phase of the oval barrow, consisting of a rectangular, continuous-ditched enclosure, and the later ovate monument with a discontinuous ditch and probable internal mound. Although the dating is uncertain, it may be possible to equate the two-stage monument construction and enlargement/replacement sequences at each site, especially as the later phases at both the enclosure and oval barrow are radiocarbon dated to the late fourth millennium cal BC.

The unexcavated oval cropmark site NW of the causewayed enclosure, possibly a second oval barrow (Fig. 1.4–6), is undated. If it is a Neolithic monument it could belong to either phase 1 or phase 2. However, it is interesting that the long axis of the first phase of the excavated oval barrow seems to be aligned on this site, which may suggest that it is similarly early and therefore more likely to belong to phase 1. This possible spatial association is reminiscent of the alignment of early Neolithic long enclosures at Dorchester-on-Thames (Whittle *et al.* 1992, 196, fig. 3).

The linear mortuary structure (5352) almost certainly belongs to phase 2 on the basis of radiocarbon dates. It is more difficult, however, to ascribe the single inhumation graves to a particular phase, as one of the

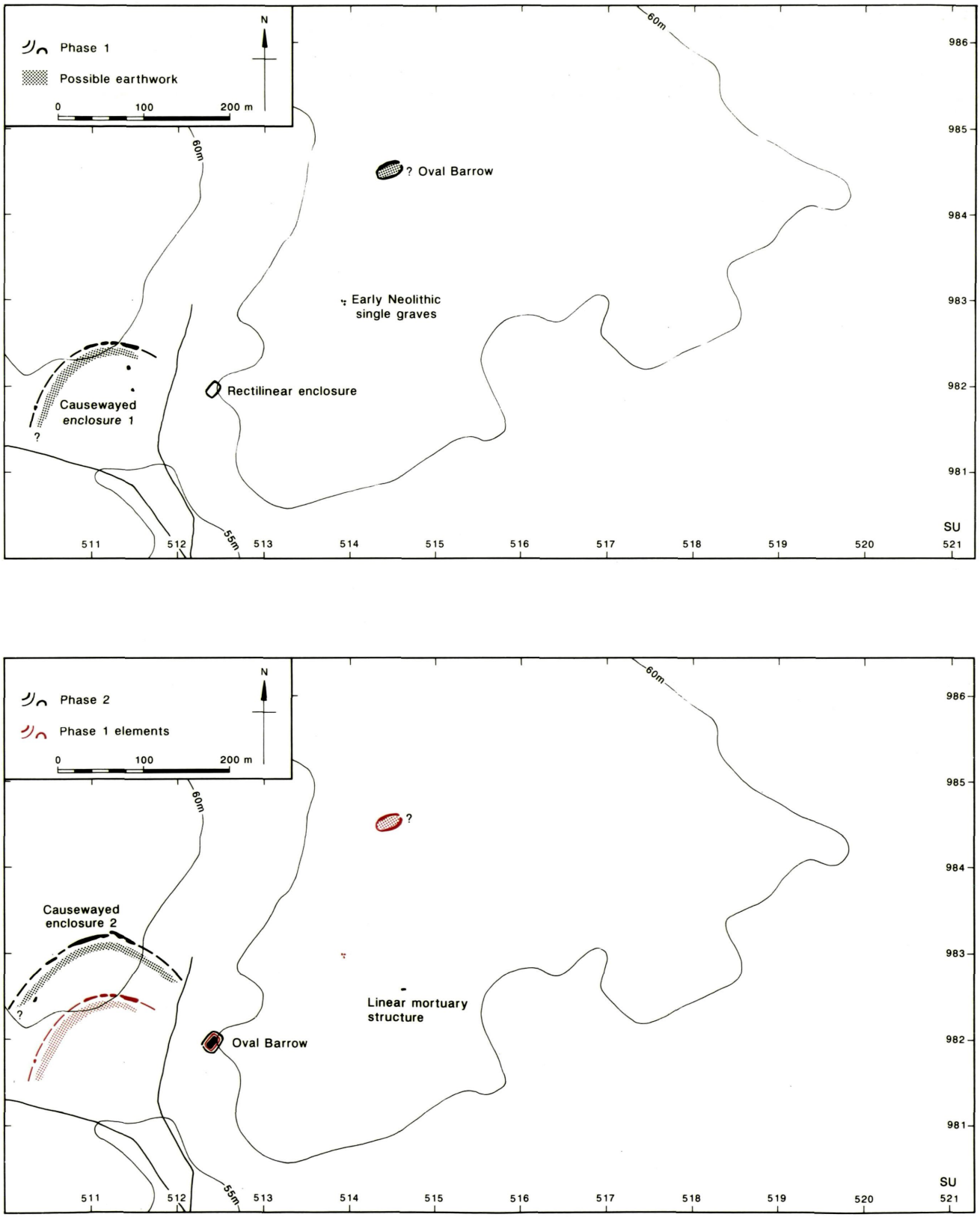


Figure 9.6 Interpretative phase plans showing spatial distribution of monuments and ritual-funerary deposits in earlier Neolithic phases 1 and 2

Table 9.11. Phase 1. HB = *unburnt human bone*

	Context	Lab. no.	Sample	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence
Single inhumation graves	5354. Burial of child crouched on top of primary fill of pit, possibly in coffin or mortuary structure	OxA-1882	HB	4650±80	3530–3340 (61%)	3650–3100 (95%)
	5356. Burial of an adult (? female), crouched on floor of pit, unaccompanied	OxA-4359	HB	4700±100	3540–3360 (52%)	3800–3100 (95%)
	5355. Burial of old adult male crouched on floor of pit	BM-2710	HB	4350±50	3240–3100 (50%)	3380–3090 (92%)

three radiocarbon dates available suggests a late fourth millennium cal BC date, while the other two indicate a mid-4th millennium date. As the only other grave of this kind which has been radiocarbon-dated also appears to be relatively early (Windmill Hill; Whittle 1990), on balance it seems most probable that the inhumation graves belong to phase 1, alongside the first causewayed enclosure and the first phase of the oval barrow site.

The development of the earlier Neolithic landscape was certainly more complex and episodic than the two-phase scheme adopted here suggests, though this division does highlight the changing *forms* of the monuments rather than any major change in the physical configuration of the cultural landscape structured by monuments. The first causewayed enclosure, for example, appears to have been relatively small, insubstantial and open compared to the later enlarged enclosure with a substantial and perhaps continuous rampart (which may imply a more defensive function; cf Case 1956a; Avery 1982). The deposits in the middle and upper fills of the recut inner ditch probably relate to the use of this second enclosure. This sequence seems to indicate the *replacement* of an existing enclosure by another and a possible change in function. Similarly, the alteration of the oval barrow from an open enclosure to a closed mound seems to indicate a complete change of monumental form at the same location (rather than construction of a new monument in a new setting).

This pattern suggests a formative stage of enclosure and monument construction in the mid-fourth millennium cal BC, followed by a transformative stage in which the existing landscape structure was consolidated, yet at the same time altered, as the architectural forms and internal spatial arrangements of individual monuments were reordered. This new 'reading' of the cultural landscape, and its alteration, may again be analogous to the Dorchester-on-Thames sequence where the early alignment of long enclosures was confirmed — and at the same time transformed — through the construction of the cursus monument in the later fourth millennium cal BC (Whittle *et al.* 1992, 196–98).

Some degree of continuity in ritual-funerary activity is perhaps also indicated by the location of human burials in roughly the same area of the monument complex in each period. However, the relationship between these formal mortuary deposits and the human remains at the oval barrow and causewayed enclosure sites remains unclear, particularly in the context of earlier Neolithic mortuary practices that might have included use of the enclosure site or oval barrow for excarnation or other funerary activities (cf Drewett 1977). Although the recovery of human cranial fragments from the oval barrow ditches, and human bones from the interior of the causewayed enclosure, may indicate that each of the earlier Neolithic sites at Radley had some mortuary function, this does not necessarily demonstrate a direct association between them in terms of a coherent multi-stage sequence of mortuary practices. It is also notable that the single graves and linear mortuary structure occupy locations which do not appear to have been monumentalised, and that the very small number of burials indicates that only rare short-term funerary events are represented. This may suggest that the social significance of such burial deposits was marginal in relation to the ritual or ceremonial use of the large monuments nearby. Indeed, these short episodes of mortuary deposition could have been related to particular social or political situations that were of little relevance to the customary activities that normally took place within the monument complex.

Phase 1 (c. 3700–3300 cal BC) *Fig. 9.6; Table 9.11.* The earliest causewayed enclosure site, represented by the inner earthwork consisting of short, pit-like ditch segments, with an internal bank probably of simple dump construction, was located on the W side of a small stream. Little artefactual evidence was recovered from the initial ditch silts or from the primary fills of the recut ditch (Avery 1982) and there are no associated radiocarbon dates. Immediately to the E, on the other side of the stream and situated on a low prominence, was a small rectilinear enclosure (the oval barrow, phase 1; R Bradley 1992a). This consisted of a continuous-ditched enclosure oriented SW–NE, the long axis of which was perhaps aligned on another possible oval barrow to the NW. Unfortunately, there were very few associated artefacts in the ditch, and there are no radiocarbon dates for this phase of the monument. The possible oval barrow to the NW is known only as a cropmark, but may be interpreted as belonging to phase 1 on the basis of its spatial relationship with the rectilinear enclosure.

Table 9.12. Phase 2. HB = *unburnt human bone,* AB = *unburnt animal bone,* Ant = *red deer antler*

	Context	Lab. no.	Sample	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence
Causewayed enclosure (inner ditch)	Middle fill (layer 13, partly organic) of recut inner enclosure ditch (section CII)	BM-352	AB	4710±135	3690–3340 (68%)	3800–3000 (95%)
	Upper fill (layer 4c, silty-sand) of recut inner enclosure ditch (section CII)	BM-354	AB	4450±145	3340–3020 (55%)	3650–2650 (95%)
	Upper fill (layer 3d) of recut inner enclosure ditch (section CII)	BM-355	Antler artefact	4460±140	3340–3020 (57%)	3650–2700 (95%)
Oval Barrow phases 2/3	Floor of west terminal of phase 3 ditch. Base of silting sequence of ditch segment, sealed by backfill (probably from phase 4/5 ditch)	BM-2392	Ant	4500±60	3340–3090 (68%)	3370–3030 (92%)
Oval Barrow phases 4/5	Middle fill of phase 4 ditch segment	BM-2390	Ant	4320±130	3350–2650 (68%)	3350–2600 (95%)
	Middle fill of phase 4 ditch segment	BM-2393	Ant	4420±70	3110–3020 (27%); 3000-2920 (23%)	3340–2910
	Lowest fill of phase 5 ditch segment	BM-2391	Ant	4330±80	3100-2880 (67%)	3350–2650 (95%)
Linear Mortuary Structure 5352	Articulated burial of old adult male at one end of mortuary deposit. Pig jaw lying on chest	BM-2716	HB	4600±70	3510–3410 (27%); 3390–3310 (22%)	3650–3050 (95%)
	Disarticulated remains of ageing adult female in middle of linear mortuary deposit	BM-2714	HB	4470±70	3340–3220 (31%); 3190–3030 (37%)	3360–3020 (84%)

The three single articulated inhumations in pits *c.* 180 m to NE of the rectilinear enclosure also probably belong to this phase. Two of the burials were associated with flint artefacts, and all three inhumations provided radiocarbon samples, two of which suggest a mid-fourth millennium cal BC date.

Phase 2 (c. 3400–2900 cal BC) *Fig. 9.6; Table 9.12.* The causewayed enclosure in phase 2 appears to have been massively enlarged, in the form of an outer earthwork consisting of a substantial interrupted ditch, with a large internal bank that was probably revetted (Case 1956a), constructed *c.* 80–100 m outside the inner ditch circuit and concentric with it. This enlargement of the phase 1 enclosure seems to represent a new use of the site, possibly with a greater emphasis on defence. The partially-silted recut inner ditch was probably filled in during phase 2, partly with organic materials, charcoal and artefacts. The three associated radiocarbon dates on bone and antler samples suggest that this activity took place in the later fourth millennium cal BC.

The oval barrow was also remodelled in phase 2 (Bradley's phases 2 to 5; 1992a, 129–32). An ovate discontinuous ditch with a probable internal mound was constructed on the site of the naturally-silted rectilinear enclosure. This oval barrow was later enlarged. Deliberate deposits of antler in the ditch silts on the SW side of the site are all radiocarbon dated to the late fourth millennium cal BC. The central double burial, with a jet belt slider and polished flint knife, may belong to this phase or to the later Neolithic (phase 3).

The linear mortuary structure, *c.* 240 m E of the oval barrow, which consists of a linear arrangement of articulated and disarticulated human remains within a probable timber setting, clearly belongs to phase 2. The two most precise radiocarbon dates (of three) suggest use of this structure in the late fourth millennium cal BC.

Later Neolithic and Earlier Bronze Age (phases 3, 4, 5a, 5b)

Discussion. The chronological division between the earlier Neolithic and later Neolithic at Radley is evident in the form of discontinuities in both material culture deposition and in the construction and use of monuments. This division is also well represented in the chronological distribution of radiocarbon age ranges from the site. The length of time represented by these discontinuities, however, is ill-defined, and their significance is very much open to question given the possibility that cultural practices continued in the area of the earlier monuments but left no material trace. It is certainly apparent that both the causewayed enclosure and oval barrow remained visible and attracted later activity during the third millennium cal BC. Grooved Ware and associated flintwork deposits, for example, were found in the later ditch silts at the causewayed enclosure site, and Beaker material and flintwork was recovered from the oval barrow ditch. Both Barclay and Bradley (1993, 107–8) regard the causewayed enclosure as the focus (or 'founder monument') for the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age ritual-funerary complex, a view which may be borne out, in qualified terms, with regard to the spatial organisation of the round barrow

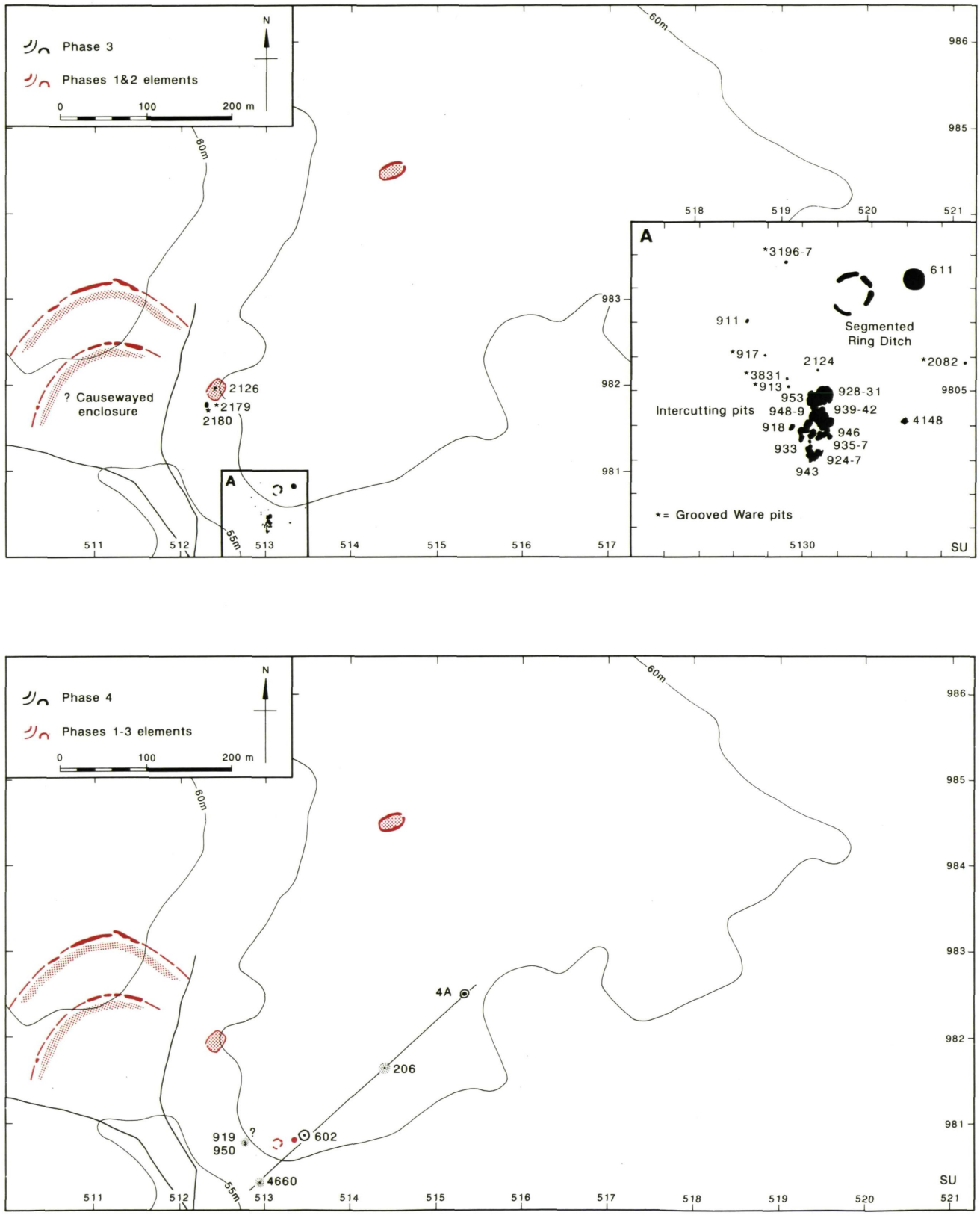


Figure 9.7 Interpretative phase plans showing spatial distribution of monuments and ritual-funerary deposits in later Neolithic phase 3 and early Bronze Age phase 4

group (see below). It is also possible that the central burial at the oval barrow, the ambiguous dating of which is discussed above, marks the first significant reuse of the area of the earlier Neolithic complex. One of the two radiocarbon dates from the burials, and the nature of the grave goods, would support a date in the first half of the third millennium cal BC.

The phasing of the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age complex is extremely difficult as most of the changes in activity and monument construction could have taken place in a period of less than 700 years (*c.* 2400–1700 cal BC): this is too short a period to divide in any precise way on the basis of radiocarbon age ranges alone. The phasing sequence proposed here, therefore, depends more on spatial relationships and artefact associations, using radiocarbon dates only as a guide to chronological limits. The division of phase 5 into two parts, in particular, relates mainly to spatial patterns among the round barrow alignments and grave assemblages.

The relative and absolute dating of a number of probable late Neolithic monuments and deposits, considered here to belong to phase 3, are especially ill-defined. The intercutting pits in the southern corner of the excavated area were badly disturbed, though they did contain some later Neolithic flintwork. Grave 942 in the same area produced a radiocarbon measurement suggesting a mid-third millennium date, though the deposit was again disturbed. The purpose of the intercutting pits and their relationship to the other late Neolithic monuments and pit deposits remains unclear. The segmented ring ditch to the N of the intercutting pits produced no reliable dating evidence from primary deposits at all. In addition, only two of the pits with Grooved Ware deposits from the vicinity of the segmented ring ditch produced radiocarbon dates. This phase is probably the least well-dated and the least well-understood in cultural terms in the Radley sequence. This is partly reflected in the especially wide time span suggested for it (*c.* 2900–2200 cal BC).

The coherence of the Beaker grave contexts as a single temporal category in this scheme (phase 4) is also open to question. The status of the earliest Beaker grave 919 and that of the spatially-related but apparently later grave 950 (immediately adjacent), are especially uncertain in terms of their positioning and radiocarbon dates. These graves are shown on the plan for phase 4 in relation to the wider spatial arrangement of Beaker and Beaker-related graves (though this association should perhaps raise doubts about the very early radiocarbon age ranges for 919). In contrast, there is no doubt that Beaker grave 203 (ring ditch 201) is especially late and quite distinct from the earlier Beaker graves (on the basis of the grave assemblage and radiocarbon date). It clearly belongs to the monumentalised landscape of phase 5, though its precise chronological relationship to the development of the main linear barrow alignment is unclear, largely because of its off-line position and grave form; it is therefore shown on the plans for both sub-phases (5a and 5b).

The chronological divisions suggested for the final Neolithic and early Bronze Age development of the round barrow group are based almost entirely on the relative spatial arrangement of monuments and associated grave assemblages. These divisions are therefore to some extent fairly arbitrary, especially as a certain degree of continuity in burial practices and round barrow monumentalism is evident during the period: two of the phase 4 funerary monuments, for example, were enlarged in the early Bronze Age and incorporated into the Wessex-type linear barrow group. Nonetheless, the new alignments of round barrow monuments in the early Bronze Age (phase 5), built on a far larger scale than before, clearly represent a significant reordering of the monumental landscape at Radley.

The full temporal span of the development of the round barrow group in phase 5 is uncertain, as so few of the barrows from the eastern half of the site produced diagnostic artefacts from primary contexts, or usable radiocarbon dates (barrows 8, 9 and 10 were unexcavated). Considering the available range of radiocarbon dates, the grave assemblages from barrows 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 14, 16, 201, 801, and pond barrow 4866, and the spatial positioning of the round barrows, there is nothing that indicates an especially extended period for monument construction. An age span of 500 to 600 years (*c.* 21/2000–1500 cal BC) may well be appropriate for the phase 5 round barrow group, which suggests the construction of an average of three or four round barrow monuments each century.

Phase 3 (c. 2900–2200 cal BC) *Fig. 9.7; Table 9.13.* The evidence for monument construction and material deposition in the mid- to late third millennium cal BC in the vicinity of the earlier Neolithic ritual-funerary complex is limited, though it clearly indicates a concentration of activity in a small area *c.* 120 m to the S of the oval barrow. This phase of activity is represented by the segmented ring ditch, ring ditch 611, several pits with Grooved Ware deposits (913, 917, 2082, 2180, 3196, 3831) or flint and bone assemblages (eg pit 911), and the group of intercutting pits and grave 942 further S. It is possible that the segmented ring ditch, ring ditch 611 and pit 911, together with the phase 4 ring ditch 601, form a short alignment running roughly E–W (Fig. 1.10). Two Beaker graves, 919 and 950, may also belong to this phase, though it is thought more likely that they belong to phase 4 alongside other Beaker graves.

Apart from this concentration of late Neolithic activity, there is some evidence for the deposition of Grooved Ware in pits close to the oval barrow, and in the uppermost ditch fills of the causewayed enclosure. The central burial at the oval barrow site may also be early or mid-third millennium in date. In general, however, the existing ancient monuments of the earlier Neolithic appear to have been avoided with regard to new monument construction or intrusive material deposition. This spatial separation may indicate a long-lived respect for the earlier monuments, and perhaps continuing activity at these sites from the earlier Neolithic that involved little or no material deposition. Alternatively, we may be seeing a reinterpretation and new use of

Table 9.13. Phase 3. HB = *unburnt human bone,* Ant = *red deer antler,* AB = *unburnt animal bone*

	Context	Lab. no.	Sample	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence
Oval barrow, grave 2126	Burial of adult male crouched on floor of pit at centre of barrow, with jet/shale belt slider	BM-2707	HB	4120±60	2780–2600 (50%)	2890–2570 (91%)
Pit 942	Disarticulated remains of young adult male in fill of pit ?disturbed in antiquity, in area of intercutting pits, possibly with 24 unretouched flint blades and flakes	BM-2711	HB	4020±60	2620–2470 (58%)	2700–2450 (77%)
Ring ditch 611	Deliberate deposits of antlers (with articulated cattle limbs) in primary fills	BM-2712	Ant	3860±80	2470–2270 (58%)	2600–2000 (95%)
		BM-2713	Ant	3950±80	2580–2340 (68%)	2900–2200 (95%)
Grooved Ware Pits	Pit 3196. Mixed deposit of animal bone and charred plant remains in the primary fill of recut pit, with sherds of three Grooved Ware vessels, flint assemblage and utilised antler	BM-2706	AB	3830±90	2460–2190 (66%)	2600–2000 (95%)
	Pit 917. Large quantity of animal bone, antler fragments, charred plant and wood remains in lower fill of pit with Grooved Ware sherds, retouched flint flake and a serrated flake	BM-2715	AB	3940±60	2510–2350 (54%)	2700–2200 (95%)

ancient monuments that had again become relevant to ritual-funerary practices in the third millennium cal BC.

Phase 4 (c. 2400–1900 cal BC) *Fig. 9.7; Table 9.14.* The Beaker and Beaker-related graves of phase 4 seem to mark a new, predominantly funerary emphasis in the use of the complex. The most distinctive monumental feature, which effectively defines this phase, is a NE–SW alignment of four graves spaced at intervals of *c.* 70–120 m. Two of these were central to small ring ditches (barrow 4A, grave 607/ring-ditch 602) while the other two survived as flat graves (graves 206 and 4660), though, given their alignment, it is likely that they were all covered by earth or turf mounds. Two other Beaker graves (919 and 950), located *c.* 40 m to the N of the SW end of this alignment, may also belong to this phase, though there are problems in correlating the radiocarbon dates (see below). These graves were perhaps also marked in some way, as their adjacent positions suggest, possibly by low mounds.

The dating of phase 4 is in some senses ambiguous, and is certainly imprecise. The alignment of four graves, which were very similar in terms of grave rite, sex of the individual buried, grave orientation, and location of grave goods, suggests the creation of a linear monumental arrangement with reference to a clearly memorized ritual-funerary tradition, in a relatively short space of time (a few generations perhaps). Three of the graves have radiocarbon dates that overlap almost exactly, the exception being the date for barrow 4A. One of the two graves offset from the alignment also has a date that accords with the three consistent dates (grave 950), while the other grave appears to be exceptionally early (919). The calibrated age ranges are too broad for close definition of the dating of phase 4, though at two standard deviations the dates relating to the grave alignment all overlap within the period *c.* 2250–2000 cal BC.

Phase 5 (c. 2100–1500 cal BC) *Fig. 9.8, Tables 9.15–16.* The development of the ritual-funerary complex in phase 5 is shown in two stages (phases 5a and 5b) to illustrate the spatial aggregation of the round barrow group over time (though this was probably an occasional and episodic process). The proposed *sequence* of round barrow construction is based on the assumption that round barrow groups of the early Bronze Age developed according to explicit rules for the siting of new monuments in relation to others and a customary understanding of the spatial relationships of monuments. In particular, it may be the case that spatial associations between new barrows and existing mounds were deliberately manipulated to affirm social or mytho-historical relationships between the present and the past, expressed in terms of the spatial proximity and ordering of monuments. In this regard linear sequence was perhaps the most fundamental structuring principle (Garwood 1991, 15–17, fig. 1; cf Green 1974; R Bradley 1984b, 86). This kind of sequence is undeniable in the case of barrows 4A, 3, 2 and 1, supported by the evidence from both radiocarbon dates and grave assemblage types. This is the first time that such a construction sequence, for the round barrows of one segment of a linear barrow group, has been defined with any degree of certainty.

Whether this kind of linear ordering was always the result of such siting decisions, however, is open to question. It is possible, for example, that widely-spaced barrow alignments were in some cases progressively filled in over time. It is interesting, in this context, that the Beaker grave alignment of phase 4 was widely-spaced, as were the barrows to the S of the main

Table 9.14. Phase 4. HB = *unburnt human bone*

	Context	Lab. no.	Sample	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence
Beaker grave, barrow 4A	Burial of young adult male crouched on the floor of grave near the centre of Barrow 4A, with a European Beaker and a pair of gold 'earrings', three barbed and tanged arrowheads in grave fill	OxA-4356	HB	3880±90	2500–2270 (61%)	2650-2000 (95%)
Beaker grave 206	Incomplete burial in disturbed context in lowest fill of a pit at the inner edge of ring ditch 201. Upright AOC Beaker placed in one of two hollows in the base of the pit	BM-2520	HB	3630±60	2050–1930 (48%)	2200–1870 (95%)
Barrow 12	Grave 607. Burial of adult male crouched on floor of pit at the centre of ring ditch 601, with a bronze awl and flint flake at feet	BM-2699	HB	3720±60	2210–2030 (63%)	2330–1950 (95%)
Beaker grave 4660	Burial of adult male crouched on floor of pit with rich grave assemblage: European Beaker, tanged copper knife-dagger, winged-headed bone pin, antler spatula, two barbed and tanged arrowheads, flint blade and unretouched flake	BM-2704	HB	3650±50	2140–2070 (31%); 2050–1960 (37%)	2190–1890 (95%)
Beaker grave 919	Burial of child aged 4 to 5 years on floor of pit, together with the burial of a neonate and the cremated remains of a 2–3 year-old inside a second Beaker. Grave assemblage of small BW(?) Beaker, two copper wire rings, sheet copper ring, bone disc, four flint flakes, and a W/MR (or E) Beaker containing the neonate remains	OxA-1874 (child)	HB	3930±80	2510–2310 (58%)	2700–2100 (93%)
		OxA-1875 (neonate)	HB	3990±80	2620–2450 (52%)	2900–2250 (95%)
Beaker grave 950	Skeletal material from all 3 levels of gravel fill in large pit, within the area of a probable timber coffin. Burial disturbed in antiquity. Fill contained a W/MR Beaker and barbed and tanged arrowhead possibly associated with the skeletal material	BM-2703	HB	3720±50	2200–2030 (68%)	2300–1970 (95%)

linear group in phase 5 (barrows 13, 14, 15 and 16). Unfortunately, the phase 5 development of the eastern half of the main Radley round barrow alignment is not clearly defined because of the lack of radiocarbon dates and diagnostic grave assemblages, though it is possible that a filling-in process occurred given the uneven spacing of the round barrows, and their very varied sizes.

The linear arrangements of round barrows at Radley can be divided into several groups on the basis of their central positions on shared axes. The main northern alignment appears to be made up of three segments, comprising barrows 1 to 4A, barrows 4 to 7, and barrows 8 to 11. The southern alignment consists of the pond barrow 4866 and barrows 12 to 16, the last being a probable double bell or disc barrow with two 'central' burials, the southern of which (pit E) was positioned on the alignment axis. Three round barrows were located off-line in relation to these alignments: barrow 17 (the exact location of which is unknown), ring ditch 201 (possibly sited on or beside a low ditchless mound covering the earlier Beaker grave 206), and ring-ditch 801. The chronological relationships of these alignments and non-aligned barrows are tentatively suggested in the two-stage division of phase 5 summarised below and illustrated in Figure 9.8.

The spatial structure of the linear round barrow group *(Fig. 9.9).* Although the barrow alignments at Radley were undoubtedly built up gradually over time, there appears to be an underlying structure to the monumental arrangement that was consistent and increasingly emphasised during the early Bronze Age. The westernmost segment of the main barrow alignment (barrows 1 to 4A) is parallel to the southern alignment (barrows 12 to 16): these alignments thus define an open 'avenue'. Both ring ditches 201 and 801 were positioned on the central axis of this avenue: 801 being beside a line of cremation pits (1063, 1064, 1067, 1060, 1101) which also appear to have been roughly aligned on the avenue axis. The eastern part of the northern main alignment, in contrast, diverges at an angle northwards from the line of barrows 1–4A, creating a gradually widening space between the two main lines of barrows from SW to NE. At the eastern end of the southern alignment barrow 16 constricts the open end of the avenue by extending as far N as its central axis. At the western end, the small barrow 201 was positioned in the middle of the avenue, beyond which there appears to have been an entirely open space

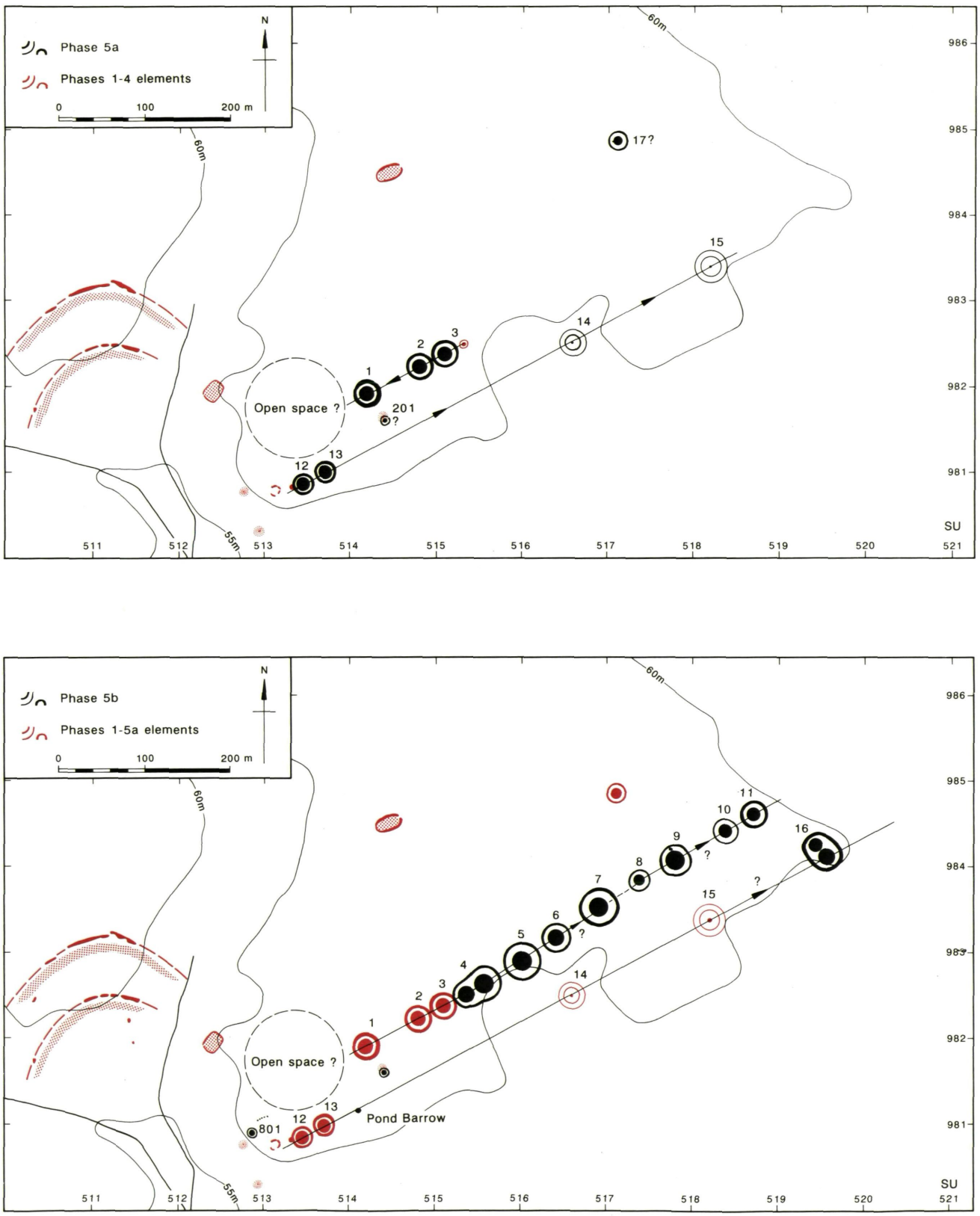


Figure 9.8 Interpretative phase plans showing spatial distribution of monuments and ritual-funerary deposits in early Bronze Age phases 5a and 5b

Table 9.15. Phase 5a. HB = *unburnt human bone,* Ch = *charcoal. N alignment: barrows 4A to 1 (construction sequence E to W). S alignment: barrows 12 to 15 (construction sequence probably W to E). Possible construction of ring ditch 201 and barrow 17, funerary deposit in silted ring ditch 611*

	Context	Lab. no.	Sample	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence
Barrow 4A	Central inhumation grave with European Beaker and gold 'earrings'	OxA-4356	HB	3880±90	2500–2270 (61%)	2650–2000 (95%)
Barrow 3	Barrow 3. Burial of old adult male(?) crouched on floor of pit at centre of Barrow 3, with a bronze three-rivetted dagger of Gerloff's Milston type (East Kennet variant)	OxA-4355	HB	3785±90	2360–2130 (57%)	2500–1950 (95%)
Barrow 2	Cremation on a wooden bier, with gold bead covers and a bronze awl (Wessex I ?)	No radiocarbon dates, though form of grave similar to the primary burial in barrow 12				
Barrow 1	Possible pyre debris at base of grave pit (11) at centre of barrow 1. Cremation deposit (adult male) at same level accompanied by a Wessex I/II type dagger with an organic hilt in a leather container with pointillé decoration, bone tweezers and a ring-headed pin	OxA-1886	Ch	3520±70	1940–1750 (68%)	2040–1680 (95%)
Barrow 12	Primary cremation of a young adult (605/2) on a partly carbonized wooden bier on floor of pit 605 at centre of enlarged barrow 12 (ring ditch 601), immediately beneath inhumation of an infant. Form of burial similar to the central burial in barrow 2	OxA-1887	Ch	3830±70	2400–2200 (59%)	2500–2130 (93%)
Barrow 13	No grave deposits, no radiocarbon dates	Form and location suggest a close relationship with barrow 12. Straightening of SW arc of ditch suggests construction after bank of barrow 12 already built (Fig. 1.9)				
Barrow 14	Double ring ditch. Central cremation (barrow phase uncertain), with a Biconical Urn, and bronze knife-dagger or razor. No radiocarbon dates	Form of double ring-ditch similar to barrow 15 on the same alignment, which may suggest a parallel construction sequence				
Barrow 15	Disarticulated remains of an adult male in one of two pits (pit 1) at the centre of two concentric ring-ditches, unaccompanied	OxA-4357	HB	3660±80	2140–1930 (64%)	2300–1750 (95%)
Barrow 17	Burial of old adult male crouched on floor of pit within west side of ring ditch	OxA-4358	HB	3660±90	2200–1920 (68%)	2350–1750 (95%)
Ring ditch 201	Central burial of young adult male (203) crouched on floor of pit at centre of ring-ditch, with a late Southern Beaker, bronze awl, bone awl, antler spatula, two scrapers, six barbed/tanged arrowheads, two piercers, eight flint flakes	BM-2700	HB	3360±50	1740–1610 (67%)	1770–1520 (93%)

in the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age (the area having been completely excavated), defined by the limit of the main barrow alignment to the E (barrow 1), an array of barrows and other ancient monuments to the S (barrows 12 and 13, the segmented ring ditch, etc.), and the oval barrow to the NW. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the linear barrow group at Radley constituted a processional way of some kind leading to an open space at the western end.

The organisation and dramatic spatial setting of the linear round barrow group give the impression that complex visual and spatial codes were being drawn upon for the structuring of monumental space. A person approaching the barrow group from the NW would have found an alignment of monuments, at its fullest extent, extending for over 700 m towards the SW, with a close-set series of often extremely large round barrows on the N side and a more widely-spaced alignment of smaller barrows to the S, defining an open avenue in between. The nearer (eastern) end of the avenue would have appeared slightly constricted by barrow 16 on the left hand side (possibly creating a kind of 'portal'). Beyond this, the open avenue would have become gradually narrower along its 550 m course, with a series of massive mounds to the N dominating the monumental setting. The visual effect of the round barrow alignment is likely to have been extremely impressive, not only in terms of scale, but probably also in the way that the visibility of monuments was controlled. Although reconstruction is difficult, it is clear that the large mounds on the right hand side, possibly aligned at an angle to the avenue axis so that all the mounds would have been visible simultaneously, would also have effectively obscured any view of the open space and earlier Neolithic monuments beyond the end of the avenue to the W. It can hardly be a coincidence that, proceeding down the defined route, the very first *unobscured* view of the open space, oval barrow and

Table 9.16. Phase 5b. HB = *human bone,* Ch = *charcoal, Ant = red deer antler. N alignment: barrows 4 to 11 (construction sequence possibly W to E). S alignment: barrows 16 and pond barrow 4866. Ring ditch 801, construction of ring ditch 201, possible deposition of cremations in a line near ring ditch 801*

	Context	Lab. no.	Sample	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence
Barrow 4	Double bell barrow. W mound: central unaccompanied inhumation. E mound: central cremation with a bronze knife-dagger	No radiocarbon dates				
Barrow 5	Possible cremation deposits in off-centre pits	No radiocarbon dates				
Barrow 6	No grave deposits excavated	No radiocarbon dates				
Barrow 7	Central unaccompanied cremation and possible pyre debris	No radiocarbon dates				
Barrow 8	Unexcavated					
Barrow 9	Unexcavated					
Barrow 10	Unexcavated					
Barrow 11	Central unaccompanied cremation. Possible pyre debris	No radiocarbon dates				
Barrow 16	Probable double bell or double disc barrow. N mound: central unaccompanied cremation (pit C). S mound: central cremation with a knife-dagger, bronze awl, and necklace of jet, amber and faience beads (pit E) - Wessex I/II grave. Nine further cremation deposits in the area of barrow, including one with a Collared Urn (in pit D)	No radiocarbon dates				
Pond barrow 4866	Primary cremation deposit. Surrounded by eight burial deposits (six inhumations, two cremations), five of which were accompanied (two with flintwork, three with Food Vessels)					
	Grave 5274. Burial of child (4-6 years) crouched on floor of pit to NW of pond barrow, with chisel arrowhead, two backed flint knives, three flint flakes, ?in wooden coffin	OxA-1903	HB	3480±80	1910–1690 (68%)	2040–1610 (95%)
	Grave 4969. Burial of subadult crouched on floor of pit to S of pond barrow, in coffin, with flint piercer. Deposit of six antlers above top of coffin in the grave fill	OxA-1880	Ant	3490±80	1930–1700 (68%)	2040–1620 (95%)
	Grave 4906. Burial of old adult female crouched on floor of pit to SE of pond barrow, sealed beneath grave backfill (sandy gravel), with antler placed near head	BM-2696	HB	3380±50	1750–1610 (68%)	1780–1520 (88%)
	Grave 4968. Burial of adult female crouched on floor of pit to SE of pond barrow, beneath a child burial, both probably within a coffin	BM-2697	HB	3320±50	1680–1590 (46%)	1740–1510 (95%)
	Grave 4970. Burial of adult, possibly female, crouched on floor of pit to E of pond barrow with Food Vessel in front of chest, probably within wooden container	BM-2698	HB	3500±50	1890–1750 (68%)	1970–1690 (95%)
Ring ditch 201	Central burial of young adult male (203) crouched on floor of grave at centre of ring ditch, with a Late Southern Beaker, bronze awl, bone awl, antler spatula, two scrapers, six barbed and tanged arrowheads, two piercers, eight flint flakes	BM-2700	HB	3360±50	1740–1610 (67%)	1770–1520 (93%)
Ring ditch 801	Central cremation of an adult (802) with a bronze awl, fired clay bead	OxA-1888	Ch	3450±70	1880–1690 (68%)	1970-1600 (94%)
Line of cremation pits	Line of five pits to the NE of ring-ditch 801, roughly aligned on the central axis of the round barrow avenue. Four contained cremation deposits (1063, 1064, 1067, 1101), one also contained a Collared Urn (1064)	No radiocarbon dates				

causewayed enclosure, all in one direct line of sight, would have been from the location of ring ditch 201. This small barrow, which at first appears to be strangely located in the middle of the western end of the avenue, can be explained in this context as a further control on movement and as a marker defining the way into the open space beyond.

The presence of open spaces associated with early Bronze Age round barrow groups, physically defined by the spatial arrangement of monuments, has not previously been recognised. The excavation of the area between barrow 1 and the oval barrow was extremely useful as a means of demonstrating the complete absence of final Neolithic and Bronze Age material deposits in this area. The identification of such an open space certainly helps make more sense of large linear barrow groups in general: it may be possible to regard them as monument aggregations defining or marking processional ways leading *to* particular locations, in many cases with an ancient monumental focus to which the round barrow arrangement referred. This can be seen, for example, at the Winterbourne Stoke Crossroads group, Wiltshire (two main parallel barrow alignments, one aligned on a long barrow), and at Normanton Down, Wiltshire, and Broadmayne, Dorset (also incorporating long barrow sites; Garwood 1991, fig. 1). In these three cases, as with many others, it may also be possible to suggest the presence of open spaces partly delimited by round barrows, although there is no strong archaeological evidence as yet to support such an argument for sites other than Barrow Hills.

The entire form of the Radley round barrow group becomes comprehensible, therefore, if it is understood as a monument arrangement that was created cumulatively over time, in ways which ensured that the physical experience of the barrow group was tightly controlled and spatially ordered to create as powerful a visual effect as possible, constituting an ever more elaborate monumentalised setting from one barrow building episode to the next. Specific social and historical 'readings' of this monumental arrangement may well have changed over time, as could locational rules for the positioning of individual monuments, but it is possible to recognise a consistent set of principles underlying the creation of this monumental setting and other ritual-funerary complexes of the early Bronze Age. These not only depended on the use of linear sequence and ordered adjacency to express relationships between monuments, and between the present and the past, but, as now seems very likely, also incorporated avenues and ceremonial spaces in a wider design that engaged the participant in controlled *movement* through monumentalised spatial structures to reach particular places.

Later Bronze Age (phase 6)

Discussion. There is some evidence for occasional reuse of the area of the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age ritual-funerary complex for secondary human and animal burials in the late Bronze Age. These burials seem to have avoided the round barrows, though it is possible that other burials inserted into the mounds have since been destroyed by ploughing. Even so, there is very little evidence at Radley for any kind of late Bronze Age activity in the immediate vicinity of any of the round barrows, which may suggest a pattern of deliberate avoidance. It is possible that these sites were still imbued with a continuing mytho-historical and perhaps social significance long after the tradition of monumentalism to which they belonged had faded away. The ritual-funerary context of the late burials is therefore very unclear, especially in relation to the status of the individuals buried and their significance in terms of wider cultural schemes. The small number of grave deposits certainly suggests that very few burial events took place, probably within short episodes of ritual-funerary activity.

Phase 6 (c. 1300–800 cal BC) *Fig 9.10; Table 9.17).* There appear to be three categories of probable later Bronze Age activity at Radley. The best-dated are the inhumation burials in the uppermost silts of pond barrow 4583, consisting of the articulated and disarticulated remains of two individuals, and the calf burial in the uppermost fill of ring ditch 611. It is also possible that some of the secondary cremation deposits around barrow 16 were later Bronze Age in date as at least one was associated with Deverel-Rimbury pottery.

THE MONUMENT COMPLEX: MONUMENT FORMS, FUNCTIONS AND INTERNAL SPATIAL ORGANISATION
by Alistair Barclay

Introduction

The forms of a number of the monuments have already been discussed in the preceding sections relating to the considerations of the chronology of the major monuments. In the following section other elements of the cemetery that have not already been discussed will receive attention prior to the presentation of evidence that places the complex in its regional and national setting.

The monument complex contains a variety of barrow forms, some of which are of types local to the Upper Thames region, while others have more in common with monuments in Wessex. The complex comprises the causewayed enclosure and 24 barrows, most of which are of early Bronze Age date. With the exception of the causewayed enclosure, all of the monuments are quite small and would have required relatively little labour to construct (cf Startin 1982, table 42). The linear development of the barrow cemetery, noted by Bradley (1986c, 39) and Riley (1982, 76), appears to have been deliberate (see Garwood above), as does its siting, although the orientation and extent may have been partly determined by the topography.

The linear cremation cemetery (Fig. 9.11)

The cremation pits (4700, 1063–4, 1067, 1060, 1101, 4623, 4321, 4405 and 4245) all lay in a WSW–ENE band N of

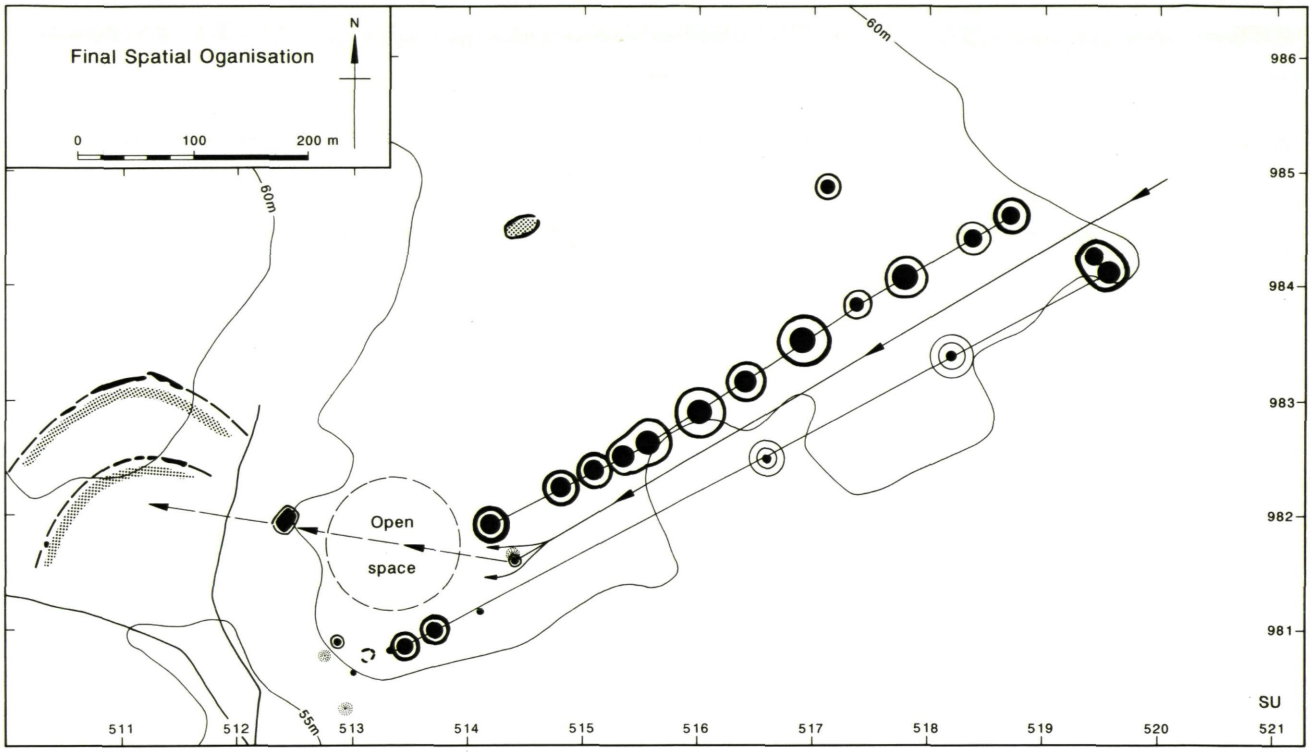


Figure 9.9 The spatial organisation of the cemetery in its final form

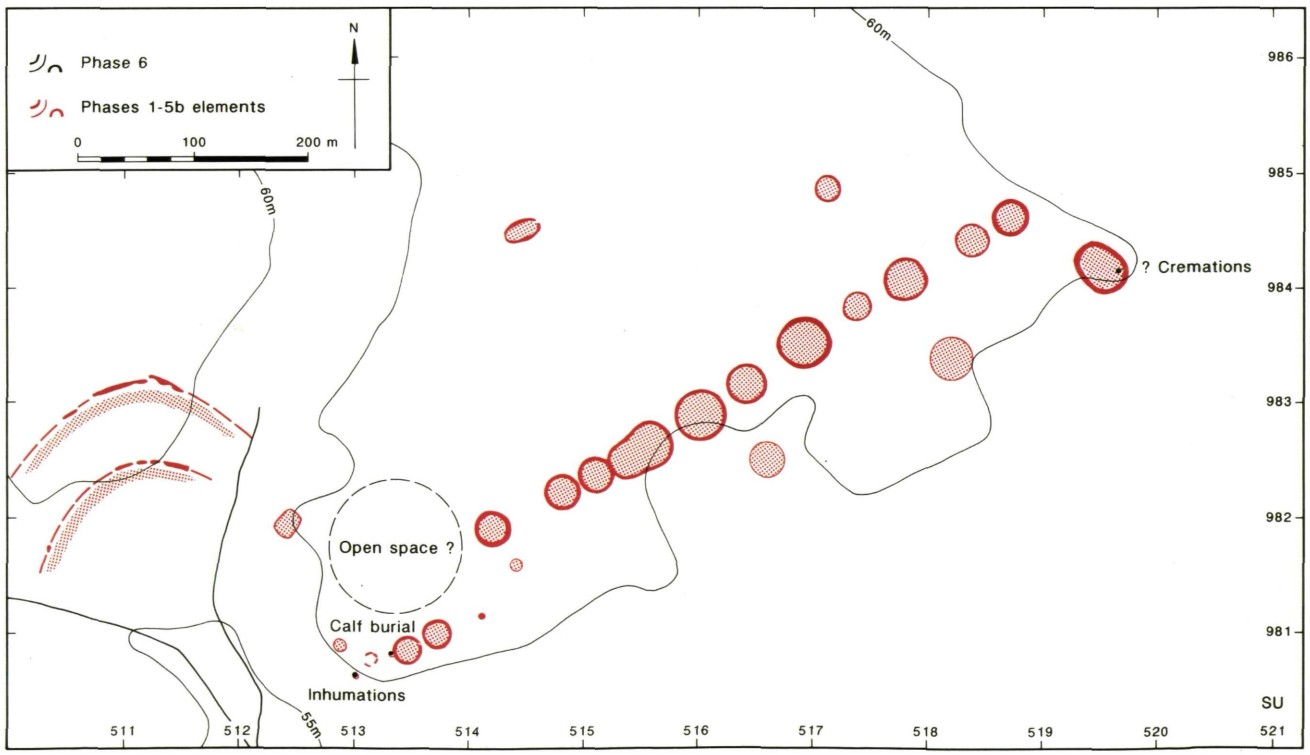


Figure 9.10 Interpretative phase plan of later Bronze Age phase 6

Table 9.17. Phase 6. HB = *unburnt human bone,* AB = *unburnt animal bone*

	Context	Lab. no.	Sample	BP	cal BC up to 68% confidence	cal BC up to 95% confidence
Pond barrow 4583	Burial A/B. Incomplete, partly disarticulated remains of adult male in two deposits in upper fill of silted hollow	BM-2701	HB	2930±150	1220–1060 (63%)	1310–1000 (95%)
	Burial C. Articulated, crouched burial of subadult, probably cut into upper fill of silted hollow	BM-2702	HB	2760±50	940–840 (55%)	1020–810 (95%)
Ring ditch 611	Calf burial in upper fill, probably cut through bank of barrow 12	BM-2896	AB	2820±40	1020–920 (68%)	1100–890 (94%)

the barrows and corresponded with their general linear arrangement (Fig. 9.11). The ten pits appear to have been placed in four groups, one pit in each of which contained at least one Collared Urn. If the urns are ranked in Burgess' (1986) scheme, the typologically earliest vessel, P69 (Fig. 4.65), characterised by short line motifs repeated on collar and neck, whipped cord decoration extending below the shoulder and a narrow neck, occurs at the SW end of the cemetery; while the typologically latest, P72 (Fig. 4.70), characterised by the restriction of decoration to the collar, a continuous internal profile and a bipartite form, lies towards the NE end. This may reflect the sequence of deposition, even within the short episode inferred by Cleal (Ch. 7). The five Collared Urns, which are classified as large for this vessel type (Barclay in prep.), range in height from 0.18 m to 0.35 m, three vessels being around 0.25 m high (1064 and 4245).

Elsewhere in the Upper Thames region large Collared Urns tend to be recovered from pits rather than barrows (Case 1982b, 109). At Foxley Farm, Eynsham, a pit containing a cremation in a Collared Urn was found amongst the Beaker 'flat' grave cemetery (Leeds 1938b, 20, fig. 5, pl. VA). At Vicarage Field, Stanton Harcourt, pit D, which contained a cremation in a large Collared Urn, and pit E, which contained a large subbiconical urn with another cremation, likewise recall the positions of the Barrow Hills cremation pits adjacent to the barrows (Case 1982b, 108–11). The linear cremation cemetery can perhaps be paralleled at Cassington, where a row of three cremation pits, one containing a Collared Urn, were found within a ?middle Neolithic ring ditch (Atkinson 1946–7, 5–27).

The way in which the row of Collared Urn-associated pits at Radley respected and continued the alignment of the barrow cemetery is paralleled at Down Farm on Cranborne Chase, where cremation deposits aligned on the centre of a pond barrow incorporated the alignment of the adjacent Dorset cursus (Barrett *et al.* 1991a, 129–32).

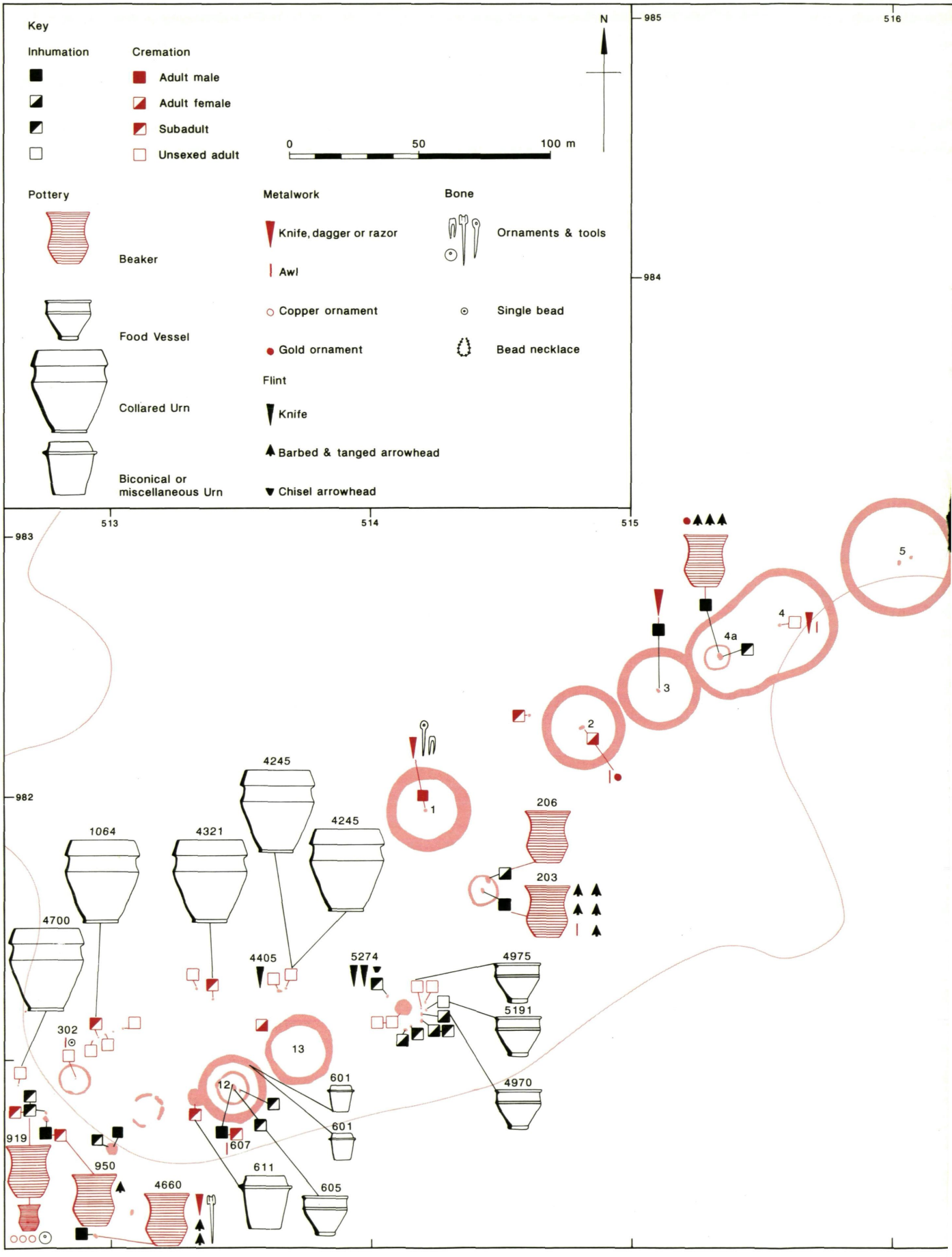
Most if not all of these cremations could post-date the main period of round barrow construction. Alternatively, they could represent separate and contemporary use of the cemetery. The absence from them of any pyre debris could indicate that they had been transported as urned deposits to the cemetery from elsewhere.

Structured deposition and ditch deposits

It is possible to differentiate two types of deposit in the barrow ditches: formal deposits which appear to have a structured pattern and those resulting from contemporary domestic activity. Most of the material in the ditches is, however, likely to pre-date the monuments in which it was found and to have been redeposited. It could have accumulated on the ground surface or in natural hollows, or could have been placed in pits. As monuments were constructed, some features could have been destroyed, and finds along with surface material would have become incorporated into earthworks. Natural weathering and anthropogenic disturbance of earthworks would lead to the re-deposition of already disturbed material, whilst surface material may have accumulated in open ditches and the tops of pits.

There is good evidence for the spatial patterning of material at the front end of the oval barrow and, as Bradley has pointed out, these deposits mirror those found in the adjacent causewayed enclosure (R Bradley 1986a, 186). This observation is compelling because it provides a spatial and temporal link between the two monuments, and indicates that similar practices were undertaken both in- and outside the causewayed enclosure. At the front end of the oval barrow different kinds of cultural material were loosely segregated, with antler and human crania towards the NW and pottery and flint towards the SE (Fig. 3.2). Thomas, in discussing similar deposits from Wessex long barrows, suggests that material may have been deliberately segregated (1991b, 68–9). To extend this argument, the material deposited at the oval barrow may have been categorised as symbolising the wild or dangerous (antler and human bone), and the tame or domestic (pottery and worked flint) and deliberately kept apart.

The most interesting deposits were found in late Neolithic ring ditch 611. Two phases of deposition are present: the primary fill contained a ring of shed antlers


Key
Inhumation
Cremation
Adult male
Adult female
Subadult
Unsexed adult
0
50
100 m
N
Pottery
Beaker
Food Vessel
Collared Urn
Biconical or miscellaneous Urn
Metalwork
Knife, dagger or razor
Awl
Copper ornament
Gold ornament
Flint
Knife
Barbed & tanged arrowhead
Chisel arrowhead
Bone
Ornaments & tools
Single bead
Bead necklace
985
516
984
983
982
513
514
515
1
2
3
4
4a
5
206
203
4245
4245
1064
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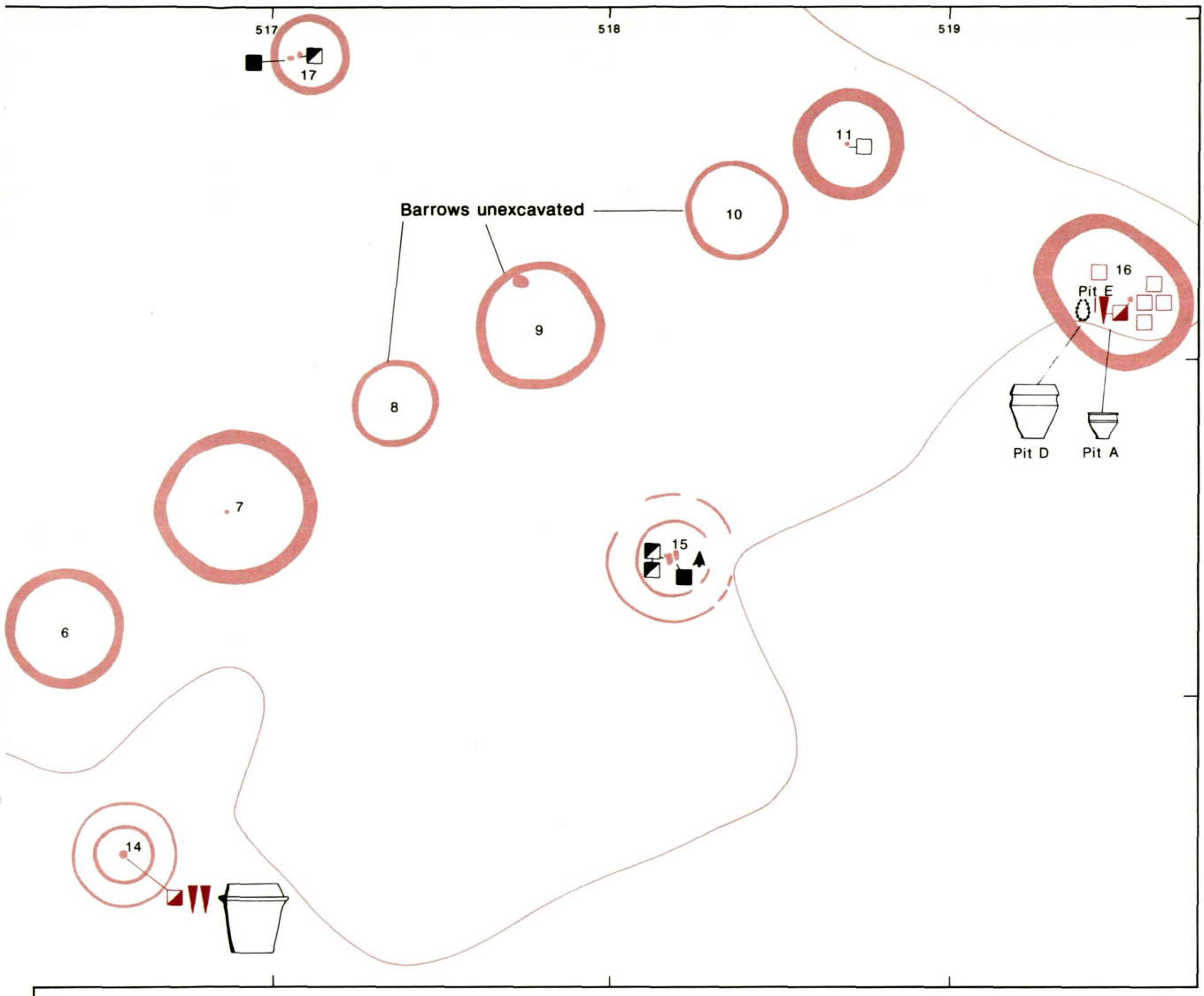

Figure 9.11 The distribution of final Neolithic and Bronze Age mortuary deposits

and two diametrically opposed cattle limbs (Fig. 4.1) and the secondary fill a 'smashed' Grooved Ware bowl, an axe fragment and flintwork. Again, the placing of the animal deposits may express concerns with the wild and domestic. The two groups of deposits are very different in character. Elsewhere, structured patterning of deposits has been noted in the Wyke Down and Durrington Walls henge monuments (Barrett *et al.* 1991a, figs 3.20, 3.22; Richards and Thomas 1984). At Wyke Down the character of the deposits changed over time, and as in Radley 611, Grooved Ware occurred only in the secondary fill.

It can be stressed that the deposits in 611 are unusual and are not matched in many of the excavated hengiform monuments within the Upper Thames. At City Farm, Hanborough, the secondary ditch fill contained the partial skeleton of a calf (Case *et al.* 1964–5, 89–90) and Grooved Ware came from a secondary level in the ditch fill at Corporation Farm, Abingdon (Shand unpub.).

In contrast to 611, the segmented ring ditch contained no primary formal deposits. There is a dichotomy between those monuments which received complex deposits and others (the majority) which appear to have been kept clean (cf R Bradley 1984b, 77). However, the upper ditch fills of the segmented ring ditch contained a small quantity of Beaker domestic material, similar to that which occurred around the oval barrow. Whilst this material could have been redeposited, it could just as well indicate that some monuments became foci for domestic activity.

Whilst formal deposits at Neolithic monuments have been much studied, similar deposits at early Bronze Age round barrows have received little notice. At Radley the ditches of barrows 12 and 4A both contained formal deposits. Dale Serjeantson has pointed

out that the outer ditch of barrow 12 contained an unusual collection of animal bone including a number of wild species. The cattle bones from barrow 4A, interpreted as a possible 'head and hooves' deposit, recall the deposit from the Beaker burial at Hemp Knoll, Avebury (Grigson 1980).

Post structures and related deposits

The two post pits at the front end of the oval barrow recall the so-called long barrow forestructures. At Radley this involved a relatively simple structure, whilst more elaborate avenues occur elsewhere (Kinnes 1992, 91–2). At Wayland's Smithy and Street House, Cleveland, more elaborate post avenues run towards mortuary structures (Vyner 1984, 156; Whittle 1991, 71). At Radley it is possible that the posts defined a formal entrance for the U-shaped enclosure. Their purpose may have been to guide people entering the enclosure and restrict their number.

Pits and postholes in and around barrows 12 and 13 formed no coherent pattern (Figs 4.48, 4.53, 4.56, 4.58), and most of them remain undated. One, 624, clearly pre-dated the second phase of barrow 12, since it was cut by the outer ditch (Figs 4.48, 4.53). Another, 614, contained an unaccompanied, possibly female, cremation. Others cut the ditch of barrow 13 (Fig. 4.58) and contained small quantities of Saxon artefacts. Pit 411, to the SE of barrow 13, was radiocarbon-dated to the Roman period, cal AD 130–460 (93% confidence)(1710±70BP; OxA-1885). The coincidence of the undated majority of pits and postholes with barrow mounds or banks suggests that they either pre-dated the earthworks or post-dated their levelling.

Numerous stakeholes located in Leeds' excavations of barrows 11 and 14 may provide evidence of concentric stake circles like those identified under barrows elsewhere (Figs 5.7–8).

Pyres

The 1983–5 area excavation strategy had the potential to locate pyres set away from the barrows, in the event no contemporary ground surfaces had survived. Likewise, barrow interiors in the 1983–5 area had been truncated, with modern ploughsoil covering natural gravel. The only evidence for *in situ* pyres comes from the earlier barrow excavations where contemporary ground surfaces had survived. The lack of evidence for cremation pyres under some mounds suggests that the place of cremation and final interment may sometimes have been spatially segregated. Only barrows 7, 14 and 16 had evidence for *in situ* burning.

Graves and grave structures

Earlier Neolithic

The linear form of mortuary structure 5352 and the underlying pit (Fig. 3.5–8) recall grave structures found beneath some long mounds and related monuments (Kinnes 1992, 85–6). However, the sunken nature of this grave sets it apart from the long barrow tradition. It is more likely to be an elaborate version of the pit graves, which are more common on the gravel terraces.

Beaker Grave Forms

The four Beaker 'flat' graves (206, 919, 950 and 4660) lay in two separate areas, spaced over a distance of 200 m. They did not form an organised cemetery, like those at Cassington and Foxley Farm, Eynsham (Case 1977, fig. 4:5), although some may have formed part of alignments with other types of Beaker graves (see Garwood above). The close spacing of graves 919 and 950 in the SW of the 1983–5 area (Fig. 4.30) and of ring ditch 201 and grave 206 in the E (Fig. 4.71) indicates that the burials were not covered by substantial earthworks. In each case the later grave, 201 or 950, was positioned to the SW of the earlier one, 206 or 919; a similar relationship can be noted between Beaker grave 4660 and the late Neolithic pit grave 942, with its disarticulated burial (Fig. 4.40). Three of the graves were in an area with Neolithic pits, including 942. Beaker 'flat' graves have been found in the same areas as late Neolithic pits at a number of sites on the gravel terraces of the Upper Thames (Barclay 1995, 115). At the Hamel in Oxford a pit contained sherds of fine and rusticated Beaker pottery, struck flint, animal bone and a human burial (Palmer 1980, 128–33).

Barrow Forms

The majority of the larger barrows (1, 2, 3, 5–11, 13 and 17) ranged in internal diameter from 17.5 m to 40 m and were enclosed by single ditches. Barrows 5 and 7 were only slightly smaller than the Stanton Harcourt barrow (Harden and Treweeks 1945). Mound size can perhaps be tentatively inferred from the preserved ground surfaces and mound material recorded in barrows 2–6 and the extent of the ironpan deposit recorded in barrrow 7 (Figs 5.1, 5.7). It is likely that the areas defined by the remains of gravel capping represent collapsed mound and material spread out by ploughing and therefore probably exaggerate the original size of the mounds. However, they do perhaps reflect the diversity of both size and form. Therefore in terms of conventional barrow typology, 3 could have been a bowl barrow, 2, 4 and 6 could have been bell barrows and 5 and 7 could have been disc barrows.

Barrows 4, 12, 14 and 15 were all multi-phased or double-ditched. The first phase of barrow 4 was a typical Beaker barrow (4A), subsequently incorporated in one end of a twin barrow. The twin barrow phase covered two contemporary burial deposits probably of unequal status. Similarly, barrow 16 is perhaps best interpreted as a twin barrow covering two cremation burials of differing status (Fig. 5.11). Both barrows 12 and 15 represent enlargements of smaller Beaker barrows (Figs 4.48, 5.10). Barrows with more complex structural histories thus appear to occur in the more southerly side of the 'avenue'. Multi-phased barrows are uncommon in the Upper Thames region, with the notable exception of the North Stoke cemetery (Case 1982d, 62, fig. 33) and a number of excavated double-ditched barrows have proved to be of middle Neolithic date or to enclose non-funerary monuments.

The unusual narrow segmented ditches of barrow 15 are more typical of certain Neolithic ring ditches and hengiform enclosures. The radiocarbon determination of 2300–1750 cal BC (95% confidence) (3660±80 BP; OxA-4357) indicates, however, that at least one of the enclosed burials was of early Bronze Age date.

Beaker and Earlier Bronze Age Inhumations

The form of Beaker grave 206, with pits set into the grave bottom, is a unique feature in the cemetery (Fig. 4.73–4). The two pits appear to have functioned as containers for funerary deposits.

Coffins

A number of graves contained coffins or biers. The disturbed burials in 'flat' grave 950 and pit 1 of barrow 15 were probably both originally placed in coffins. At least four of the burials placed around pond barrow 4886 were in coffins. One of them, 4969, was also framed with butchered antler (Fig. 4.62). Possible biers were associated with cremation deposits in barrows 2 and 12. It is possible that some if not all the coffins and biers were used to transport the corpse or cremation to the cemetery.

The Distribution of Grave Goods *(Fig. 9.11)*

There are a number of patterns in the distribution of grave goods which may reflect chronological trends and selective deposition.

Copper, copper alloy and gold occur in ten of the barrows and two of the 'flat' graves. Where metalwork occurs in barrows it is always associated with the primary grave. In four graves (4A, 203, 919 and 4660) it was found with Beakers and in one, barrow 14, with a Biconical Urn. The remaining seven graves have no ceramic associations, although vessels were still being deposited in other graves.

Flint arrowheads occur predominantly with adult male inhumations; a leaf arrowhead may have been associated with the male burial in the central grave of the oval barrow, and barbed and tanged arrowheads were found with adult males in barrow 4A, central grave 203 of ring ditch 201, 'flat' graves 950 and 4660, and barrow 15. Where they are found in barrows they always accompany the primary burial. The only chisel arrowhead from a grave accompanied a child burial in grave 5274 of pond barrow 4886.

Beads occurred with a female cremation and an awl in grave 802 of ring ditch 801 (Fig. 4.9), and again with metalwork, this time an awl and a knife-dagger, and a possibly female cremation in pit E of barrow 16 (Fig. 5.11–2).

Food Vessels were associated with central, satellite and exterior secondary barrow burials and were found with both cremations and inhumations. Like Collared Urns, they were rarely found with other artefacts.

Large Collared Urns were restricted to the linear cremation cemetery (Fig. 9.11) and were not found with other artefacts. Artefacts of other material from this row of cremations, for example the burnt flint knife from cremation pit 4405 (Fig. 4.69), had no ceramic associations.

Selective Deposition and Spatial Organisation

Despite the limitations imposed by lack of mound deposits and limited excavation, it is possible to see a degree of spatial organisation and / or sequence in three barrows, 12, 16 and 4866.

Barrow 12 had a sequence of central burial deposits (Figs 4.48–52) of which the primary burial was an adult male associated with metalwork. Successive burials included unaccompanied cremations and a child buried with a Food Vessel. Two further deposits, inhumation 604 and Food Vessel cremation 609, were placed to the SE, two miniature biconical vessels with cremations were placed in the ENE section of the outer ditch, and a mallard carcass and a pair of pike jaws were placed in the NW section.

Pond barrow 4866 contained two primary cremation deposits and a series of satellite burials, predominantly of children and adult females, placed outside the enclosing bank (Figs 4.60–64). Two child burials, 5274 and 4969, were diametrically opposed on either side of the two cremation deposits in the 'pond'. There was only one burial, 5274, on the NW side, and seven on the SE side. The two most southerly graves 4906 (adult) and 4969 (child) both contained antler, the latter containing quite complex deposits of animal bone but only one worked flint artefact. Towards the SE, grave 4968 contained the remains of an adult female and a child but no grave goods, and on the E side graves 4970, 4975 and 5191 all contained Food Vessels.

Barrow 16 (Fig. 5.11) may have been a twin barrow with two primary cremation deposits, pits C and E, the second of which was probably the principal burial and contained metalwork and beads. N of pit E was a pit containing charcoal (pyre debris) and a miniature Food Vessel; although separate, this could have formed part of the same funerary deposit (cf the Stanton Harcourt barrow; Harden and Treweeks 1945, 30). Pit D, to the W of pit E, contained a miniature Collared Urn. There was a series of cremations to the SE of pit E near the ditch edge, some of which were associated with Deverel-Rimbury urns.

Antlers appear to have been an important addition to graves and mortuary features throughout the Neolithic and Bronze Age. Antler was found in a pit beneath middle Neolithic linear mortuary structure 5352, with the late Neolithic disarticulated burial in pit 942 and in two of the early Bronze Age burials around pond barrow 4866 (4906 and 4969). In grave 4969 the corpse of a child had been placed in an alder tree trunk coffin and a series of six unshed red deer antlers had been placed to the sides with part of a cattle skull (Fig. 4.62). The antler and cattle skull obviously had symbolic meaning to those participating in the funeral. Deposits of antler are known from a number of Beaker graves, including Gravelly Guy, Stanton Harcourt, (Lambrick *et al.* in prep.) and Hemp Knoll, Avebury (Robertson-Mackay 1980, 140). At Durrington Down barrow, Wiltshire, an early Bronze Age inhumation had antler and cattle bones placed near the feet (Richards 1990, 176–7) and at Mildenhall, Suffolk, an inhumation burial with a Food Vessel was covered by a 'cairn' of red deer antlers (Martin 1981, 88).

Social differentiation: grave assemblages and mortuary rituals

Earlier Neolithic Graves

These exhibit a variety of forms. The eight burials involving individual inhumation in either single or communal graves present a sequence of deposits which span the 4th millennium cal BC (Fig. 9.12). Although single inhumations are known from some causewayed enclosures, including Abingdon itself, the Radley graves some 200 m away from the monument remain unique in that they seem to form a small organised cemetery. They may provide evidence that single burial at least sometimes pre-dated multiple burial. At Windmill Hill a single inhumation grave pre-dated the enclosure (Whittle 1990), and in the Cotswolds some single graves were replaced by linear burial zones and multiple burials (Darvill 1987, 33–65; Whittle 1991).

All three burials in graves 5354–6 were crouched, in different orientations and positions (Figs. 3.9–10). The graves were also of different sizes and depths, with the child occupying the largest grave. The adult male (5356) was placed on the left side, like 2127, with the head towards the E. The child and adult female graves were parallel to and some way N of 5356. Both corpses were placed on the right side, the child oriented ESE and the adult female oriented NNE. The simple flakes placed with the child and the adult male contrast with the finely finished objects placed in the central grave of the oval barrow.

Communal grave 5352 was placed over a large pit which contained antler fragments in backfilled gravel. The significance of the pit is not known, although reference can be made to pits found beneath long mounds associated with linear graves and facades (cf Kinnes 1992, 82). No distinction, apart from grave position, was made between the burials, although animal bones were placed with burial A. Similarities can be noted between the treatment of human remains in 5352 and in long barrows (Kinnes 1992, 98–107).

5352 has its closest affinities with the multiple grave at Fengate, Cambridgeshire (Pryor 1984, 19–27). Both contained an articulated male inhumation buried with the disarticulated bones of other individuals. If the disarticulated individuals were exposed before burial, then it is tempting to link the grave with the rectilinear enclosure which formed the early phases of the oval barrow. Kinnes (1993) has put forward a similar suggestion for a rectilinear enclosure at Fengate. It can be noted that human bone was found at both of the nearby Dorchester-on-Thames long enclosures (sites I and VIII), though only at site I were the bones from a secure context. Although there is nothing to link the two sites at Barrow Hills, or indeed at Fengate, the evidence from Dorchester-on-Thames and Drayton-Sutton Courtenay is persuasive. At Dorchester sites I and VIII not only shared the same alignment but were later linked by the construction of a cursus monument. Similarly at Drayton-Sutton Courtenay a grave (pit F) similar in character to 5352 occurred near the centre of the cursus. The northern section of the cursus appears to end near a long enclosure (Wallis *et al.* 1992, fig 1; Brereton unpublished).

Double grave 2126 at the centre of the oval barrow contained two adult burials of probably equal status. The positioning of the corpses was symmetrical. The female was buried first, head to the SSW, placed on the left side and towards the ?front of the barrow. The male was buried second, head to the ENE, placed on the left side and towards the back of the barrow. Prestige objects, possibly referring to both status and gender, were placed with the two corpses (Fig. 3.3). The grave was marked by a ?timber-revetted mound. Proximity to the causewayed enclosure may reflect the importance or status of the burials. No further middle Neolithic burials were added to the barrow, although it was modified on a number of occasions.

Beaker and Related Inhumations

Beakers were deposited in seven graves and, although some were close together, all the pots express individuality in design, in contrast to the two Food Vessels found in graves 4975 and 5191 of pond barrow 4886, which were quite similar and probably made by the same group of potters (Fig. 4.63; Cleal, Ch. 7).

The following comments can be made about the relationship between individuals and Beaker vessels. The smallest vessel (Figs 4.14, 4.17, P24) was placed near the hand of the child in grave 919. Two large, fine Beakers with complex decoration (Fig. 4.23, P27, Fig. 5.2, P76) were found with rich adult male burials in barrow 4A and 'flat' grave 4660. The only long-necked Beaker, with geometric decoration (Fig. 4.78, P75), was found with a male adult, and a Beaker with simple decoration (Fig. 4.75, P74) was found with an adult ?female. A rather fine slender Beaker (Fig. 4.21, P26) was found with an adult male and the remaining fine Beaker (Fig. 4.14, P25) contained the unburnt bones of an infant.

To some extent these associations follow the trends outlined by Gibbs (1989), in that the only female grave contained a Beaker with simple decoration. Likewise, adult male burials contained large or slender Beakers with complex or geometric decoration. The Beaker found with the child (Fig. 4.17, P24) is not only much smaller, it is also 'cruder' than some of the Beakers associated with adults. Very fine European or Wessex/Middle Rhine Beakers have been recorded with adult males at Stanton Harcourt and Dorchester-on-Thames (Hamlin 1963, 21; Whittle *et al.* 1992, 180).

Grave 919 was unusually 'rich' for a child burial (Figs 4.14–5) and can be compared with the 'rich' early Bronze Age child burial 5274 (Fig. 4.61). In the Upper Thames valley child burials, unaccompanied or with only Beakers, have been recorded at Stanton Harcourt, North Stoke and the 'flat' grave cemeteries of Eynsham and Cassington (Barclay 1995; Catling 1959; Case 1977, 98). The three other rich graves, 4A, 203 and 4660, can be compared with the small number of 'rich' adult male burials excavated from Lambourn, Berkshire; Stanton Harcourt and Dorchester-on-Thames (Case 1956–7; Barclay 1995, 175-84; Whittle *et al.* 1992). Four of the adult male graves (4A, 203, 950 and 4660) contained

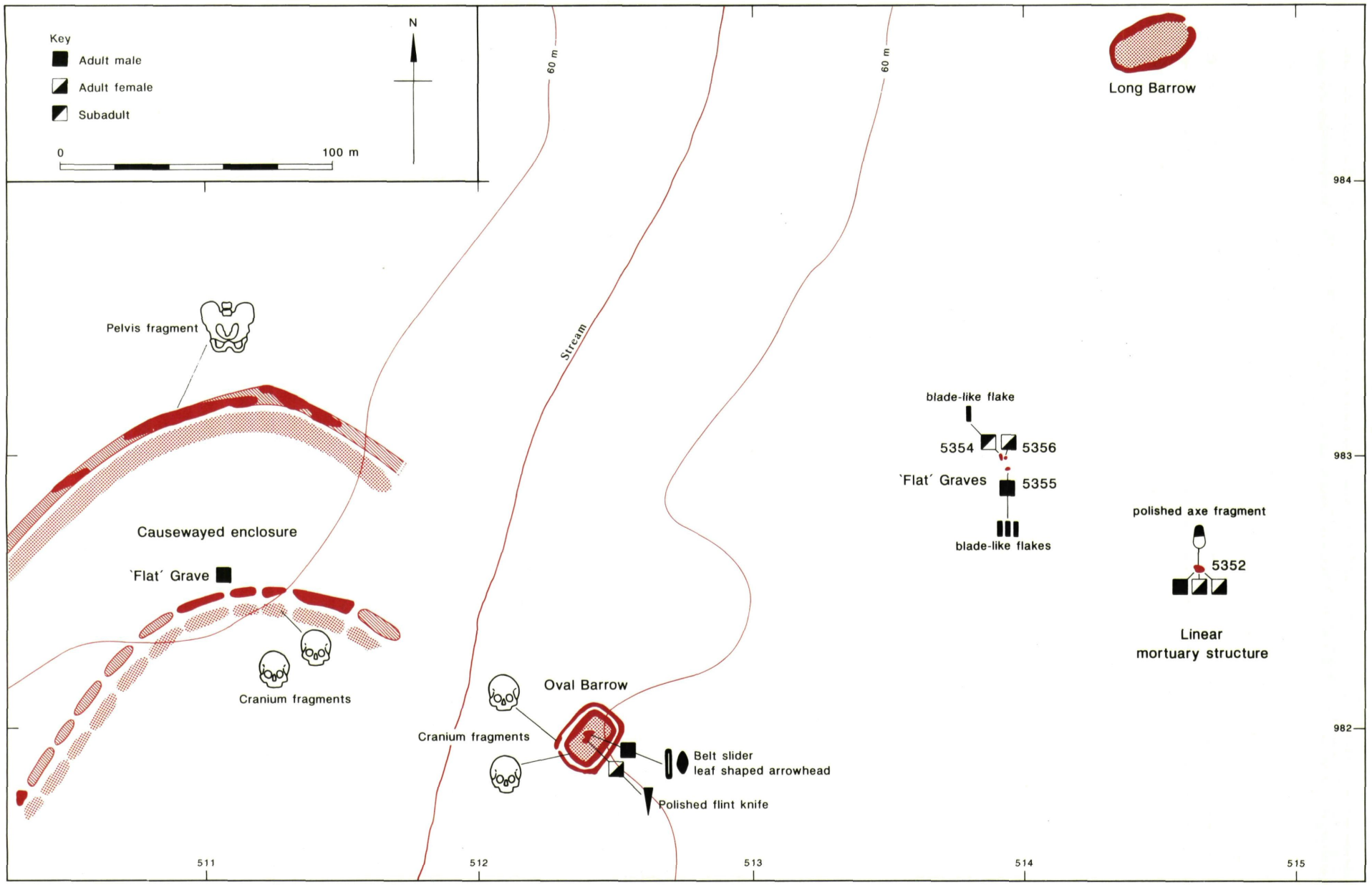

Figure 9.12 The distribution of earlier Neolithic monuments and mortuary deposits

barbed and tanged arrowheads, some of which were unused grave goods while others had been 'thrown' into the grave. This item has strong male associations that could be linked to hunting and warfare (Gibbs 1989, 173–4; Thomas 1991b, 38). If the adult male in grave 203 was indeed killed by a barbed and tanged arrowhead, as seems almost certain (Fig. 4.77), this could provide direct evidence for combat or sacrifice as well as more mundane possibilities. Graves 919, 4660 and 4A contained 'exotic' or unusual dress ornaments and/or display items. The gold earrings or hair rings from barrow 4A (Fig. 5.4) and the daggers from grave 4660 and barrow 3 (Figs 4.23, 5.2) are forms found only with male burials, and the wing-headed pin is probably of individual design (Fig. 4.23; Needham, Ch. 7). These items are exclusively male and are linked to display, competition and exchange (Gibbs 1989, 174). The copper rings found with the child burial in grave 919 (Fig. 4.16) would indicate that graves were differentiated by status as well as gender and age.

A comparison can be made between grave 4660 and the central burial of barrow 4A (Figs 4.22–3, 5.1–2, 5.4). Both contained adult male burials crouched on the left side and oriented NNW. In both cases a very fine European style Beaker had been placed near the feet. Exotic ornaments accompanied both corpses and both graves contained barbed and tanged arrowheads. Interestingly, with the exception of one (F27 from 4660), the arrowheads all came from the grave fill and therefore may not strictly have been intended as grave goods. They could instead have been included in a later stage of the grave ritual. Grave 4660 was next to the intercutting later Neolithic pits, 15 m from pit 942 with its disarticulated burial (Fig. 4.40), whereas grave 4A was positioned away from the Neolithic pits and close to middle Neolithic grave 5352. Grave 4A was marked by a small barrow and ditch in which a deposit of cattle bones was placed, whereas 4660 could have been a 'flat' grave, perhaps covered by a small turf mound. Not all graves were marked by barrows and barrows did not necessarily always cover the 'richer' graves.

Two further burials, primary grave 607 in the first phase of barrow 12 and the central burial of ring ditch 201, together perhaps with the central burial of ring ditch 802, were covered by small barrows similar in size to 4A. Although no Beaker was placed in grave 607, it had many similarities with adult burials with Beaker assemblages (Fig. 4.50). Presumed 'Beaker' burials without vessels have been recorded in the 'flat' grave cemeteries at Eynsham and Cassington (Case 1977, 98) and in barrow 17 at Lambourn (Case 1956–7, 23).

A number of the Beaker burials had signs of secondary disturbance. One reason for this may have been a need to locate and identify the previous corpse (ancestor). It has been postulated that the 'memory' of the previous burial may have played an active part in successive mortuary rituals (Mizoguchi 1993, 231), a point which has implications for the organisation of the whole cemetery. At Barrow Hills there is strong evidence for the disturbance of burials prior to a second interment. The intervals between the two events may have varied from a year to several centuries. The child burial 919 was disturbed by the insertion of a second Beaker when the corpse had rotted enough for the femur to be displaced (Boyle, Ch. 7). The radiocarbon determinations (OxA-1874 and OxA-1875) for the two burials are statistically inseparable (T'=0.3; T'(5%)=3.8; v=1; Ward and Wilson 1978) and suggest that the grave was reopened after only a short time. A second Beaker grave, 950, was located next to 919, probably after a much longer period. The corpse in this grave was exhumed in antiquity and the bones were found distributed in the grave backfill. The disturbance appears to have happened before a deposit of cremated bone was placed into a pit dug into the backfilled grave (Figs 4.18–20). Similarly, Beaker 'flat' grave 206, with only a token deposit of bone, could have been disturbed or reopened prior to the construction of a secondary barrow (201). In addition, the primary graves in both barrows 15 and 17 contained disarticulated remains; the disturbance to pit 1 in barrow 15 was particularly similar to that of grave 950.

Early Bronze Age Burials

These included a variety of cremation and inhumation deposits in both 'flat' graves and barrows. Barrett (1988b, 31–3) has drawn attention to the different stages of funerary rituals, in particular to the potentially distinct symbolic connotations of the successive steps involved in inhumation and cremation, as well as to their differential visibility in the archaeological record. Social distinctions such as those expressed in the treatment and preparation of the corpse prior to burial or cremation can never be known or recovered (Clarke *et al.* 1985, 151). Further, status symbols may have been destroyed on the cremation pyre, removed from the corpse or not collected for burial.

The cremation deposits associated with large Collared Urns in the linear cremation cemetery contained no pyre material. This suggests that the bone was carefully collected and cleaned before being brought to the place of burial. A burnt flint knife from 4405 could suggest that in some cases symbols marking social status were destroyed on the pyre. In addition the gold cones from barrow 2 and the two miniature vessels from barrow 16 had all been fire-damaged.

The central cremations of barrows 1, 2 and 16 were very different, complex deposits of cremated bone, pyre debris and artefacts, placed not in simple pits but in quite large graves (Figs 4.82, 5.11; Atkinson 1952–3, fig. 11). In addition, whereas the inhumation graves of barrows 3 and 4A were aligned NNW, the cremation pits of barrows 1 and 2 were aligned along the axis of the linear barrow group. Bone and pyre debris were separated in the cremation deposits of barrows 1 and 2 and pit E in barrow 16. 'Wessex' grave assemblages were placed with the cremated bone in all three. The cremation in barrow 2 had been placed on a wooden bier or tray which had presumably acted as a container in the funerary procession. A similar bier or tray containing cremated bone and ash was found in grave 605 in barrow 12 (Fig. 4.50).

Pits and pit digging

Over 50 Neolithic and early Bronze Age pits were recorded, the majority being of later Neolithic date. Only one Beaker and three earlier Neolithic pits were identified. The pits were mostly concentrated towards the SW corner of the 1983-5 area (Fig. 1.10), and it is likely that they extend beyond this limit. Some were concentrated around existing funerary monuments and, in the case of the oval barrow, at what had been the facade end of the monument (Fig. 4.24). In addition, there were pits between the ditches and in the central area of the causewayed enclosure (Avery 1982, figs 3–4) and a small pit scatter was recorded at nearby Barton Court Farm (Miles 1986, fig. 4).

The Barrow Hills pits can be divided into those with regular, steep-sided profiles (mostly associated with Grooved Ware), irregular scoops, which could also include some natural hollows, and a series of intercutting pits with irregular profiles (Ch. 4).

Earlier Neolithic

Three earlier Neolithic pits were recognised, although material redeposited in barrow ditches indicates that others could originally have existed. Whilst pit 2144 may have been placed outside the rectilinear enclosure which preceded the oval barrow (Fig. 4.24), pits 910 and 912 were more isolated. They could relate to redeposited material, including refitting flint and Abingdon Ware pottery, recovered from the ditches of barrow 12.

Later Neolithic

Radiocarbon dates were obtained for just three pits, 942, 917 and 3196 (Table 9.13). The earliest is for the burial in pit 942, in the middle of the intercutting pits and pit scatter (Fig. 4.41). The extent and nature of these pits suggest more than a single episode of activity, unfortunately it is not possible to determine its overall duration. The two dates from Grooved Ware pits 917 and 3196 are somewhat later, the latest date coming from 3196, the furthest from the pit scatter.

The seven Grooved Ware pits (913, 917, 2082, 2180, 3196 and 3831; Figs 4.25, 4.32–9, 4.46) contrast with the intercutting and scattered pits. Five had cylindrical profiles. Pits 917 and 3196 were relatively larger and deeper than the others and both appeared to have been recut. The pits were probably only half backfilled and could therefore have been relocated as shallow depressions. Pits 913 and 3831, with similar fills and profiles and spaced less than 2 m apart, may originally have been paired (Fig. 4.30).

The animal bone from the Grooved Ware pits is characterised by a high proportion of pig (Table 7.24). The charred plant remains included a range of plant foods, dominated by wild rather than domestic species (Table 7.28).

Finds were to some extent unevenly distributed between the layers of these pits. In pit 3196 there was no pottery in layer 4, which contained, amongst a variety of material, an eagle bone awl, struck flint and a small amount of animal bone. All the Grooved Ware was in layer 3, with large quantities of other artefacts and food remains. Similarly, in 913 bone pins were found in layer 3, a bone awl was found in layer 2 and Grooved Ware came from layers 1 and 3; and in 917 almost all of the Grooved Ware and flint were in layer 2 while a broken stone axe came from layer 1 (Tables 4.13, 4.15, 4.17–18). These patterns suggest that deposition of material in these pits was neither a single nor possibly a simple event.

The pits contained a range of materials, including used and broken artefacts, food remains, and burnt, organic-rich soil. The contents can be seen as the residues generated by a series of activities which could have included feasting, flint knapping, food preparation, cooking and hide-working.

Although the pits contained a wide range of flint artefacts, there was only one arrowhead, F52 from pit 2082 (Fig. 4.46), and likewise there were no flint knives. There are, however, several transverse arrowheads from other pits, fieldwalking and barrow ditches. The difference between the abundant flint industries from Grooved Ware pits 3196, 917, 3831, 913 and 2082 has been highlighted, with a mean of over 250 pieces each, and the far sparser lithics from the many times more numerous intercutting pits and pit scatter, where the total from a single pit rarely reaches 20 (P Bradley, Ch. 7). Also notable are the contrasts in the composition of the flint assemblages from the two groups of pits: struck flint from Grooved Ware pits is more often burnt (17% overall against 9% overall from other pits); unworked burnt flint from the Grooved Ware pits amounts to almost half the total from the site; cores from the Grooved Ware pits seem to have been less extensively worked than those from the intercutting pits; and retouched forms and breakage are both less frequent in the Grooved Ware pits than in others (Ch. 4; Ch. 7; Tables 4.18–24, 7.12).

Attention can be drawn to the wide range of wood species among the charcoal from pits with Grooved Ware, in contrast to single taxa from most other kinds of context (Thompson, Ch. 7; Figs 7.6–7), including even pit 911 (Fig. 4.31) which, although it lacked Grooved Ware, was comparable with the Grooved Ware pits in its burnt fill, the technology of its lithics and its polished bone point. Charred plant remains from 911 are also less diverse and less numerous than those from most of the pits with Grooved Ware (Table 7.28) and there was no pig among the relatively small quantity of animal bone. There is almost the impression of a linkage between the pottery style, the composition of food remains and the composition of the firewood.

There is a noticeable difference between the pottery from different pits in decoration, sherd size, number of vessels and overall quantity. If 3196 was the latest of these deposits, then there may have been a trend towards the use of more complex and plastic decoration over time. Pit 3196 contained not only a very large vessel (Fig. 4.33, P39), but also the rims of two miniature ones (Fig. 4.32, P34 and 36).

The function of these pits was primarily the burial of refuse or material which is not necessarily of a domestic nature, although some objects had been used,

broken or reworked. It is possible that the material was buried to prevent its further use (cf Thomas 1991b, 62). These pits appear to occur in places of significance and, assuming that they were not all of one phase, then deposition of material was a recurrent event at a number of these places and the act of deposition could have been a way of marking the landscape.

Within the Upper Thames region pits containing Woodlands substyle Grooved Ware have been excavated at Barton Court Farm (Miles 1986, microfiche 3:A1–4), Sutton Courtenay (Leeds 1940), Roughground Farm, Lechlade (Darvill 1993, 10), and Cassington (Case 1982a, 121–9). Radiocarbon determinations from two of these sites place the pits around the mid 3rd millennium cal BC (Garwood, this chapter 'Grooved Ware pits').

The intercutting pits had very irregular profiles and fills (Figs 4.40–5) and contained some worked flint with little or no pottery, animal bone or charred plant material. The flintwork was late Neolithic in character and, in contrast to the much larger collection from the Grooved Ware pits, included a number of arrowheads (Table 4.24). One pit (942) contained a disarticulated human burial.

The absence of pottery from later Neolithic pits is not that unusual, as many of the pits at Sutton Courtenay and Gravelly Guy contained worked flint and no pottery (Holgate 1988, 260; Barclay 1995, table 20). Other pits in the region contain almost exclusively pottery, especially Peterborough Ware, and to a lesser extent Grooved Ware. One pit at Gravelly Guy contained more than 24 sherds/600 g of Peterborough Ware and 11 sherds/114 g of Grooved Ware, with only four pieces of struck flint and four fragments of animal bone (Lambrick *et al.* in prep.), and a pit at Worton Rectory Farm, Yarnton, contained fragments of several Peterborough Ware vessels but only one piece of struck flint (Hey in prep.). Pits with Grooved Ware vessels and very little else have been found at Abingdon Common (Balkwill 1978, 31–3) and in the Vicarage Field at Stanton Harcourt (Thomas 1955). In the later Neolithic there may be some evidence for the separate burial of particular categories of material.

Beaker

The only Beaker pit in the excavated area was at the SW end of the oval barrow, Beaker pottery was also found in the oval barrow ditches and other secondary contexts. The pit contained a fill of burnt soil, similar perhaps to those of the Grooved Ware pits, but unfortunately this soil was not sampled for environmental evidence.

THE MONUMENT COMPLEX IN ITS REGIONAL CONTEXT

by Alistair Barclay

The Radley monument complex developed over a period of nearly 3000 years, from the early Neolithic through to the middle Bronze Age. Its history can be divided into four overlapping stages: earlier Neolithic monument construction, pit digging and later Neolithic domestic activity, the construction of the round barrow cemetery, and secondary use and abandonment. These stages are taken as themes and discussed in their wider regional context.

The Neolithic monuments

The area between Abingdon and Goring, along a 40 km stretch of the river Thames, contains a high concentration of monument complexes (Holgate 1988, map 52; Thomas 1991b). Most of the known cursus monuments in the region and many of the recorded Neolithic ring ditches, lithic scatters and mortuary-related enclosures occur here (Bradley and Holgate 1984; Thomas 1991b). Plain Neolithic Bowl pottery is distributed across this area and has been found at Goring (Cleal 1995b), North Stoke (Case 1982d), Dorchester-on-Thames (Atkinson *et al.* 1951b), Mount Farm (Lambrick and Barclay in prep.) and Corporation Farm (Shand unpublished). There are two monuments of exotic character, the Drayton long barrow and the North Stoke bank barrow (Case 1986, 25; Case 1982d).

Three causewayed enclosures occur towards the limits of this core area, to the N is Abingdon and towards the S are Blewburton Hill (Holgate 1988, 340) and the possible site at Goring (Allen 1995). Decorated Bowl pottery occurs only in the peripheral areas, at Abingdon, within and outside the enclosure, and at Pangbourne associated with a human burial (Avery 1982; Piggott 1928).

The Abingdon-Radley monument complex is sited on the second gravel terrace N of a point where the Thames skirts round a sandstone ridge. The possible causewayed enclosure at Goring, 40 km to the S, is sited at a point were the Thames cuts through the Chalk Downs. Between these two enclosures are the monument complexes of Drayton-Sutton Courtenay, Dorchester-on-Thames, Benson, and North Stoke, all sited on the relatively low-lying, flat expanses of the gravel terraces. In addition, the monument complexes of Drayton St Leonard and Stadhampton lie in the Thame valley, which joins the Thames just S of Dorchester-on-Thames.

The intervals between these monument complexes vary between 5 and 10 km. To the N of this concentration the next known complex is at Yarnton, approximately 25 km upstream from Abingdon (Hey 1993a; 1994). To the S of Goring there is a gap of 20 km before the Sonning cursus complex (Gates 1975; Slade 1963–4). If this distribution represents real settlement patterns, then the two causewayed enclosures were peripheral to the main focus of earlier Neolithic settlement and monuments.

The initial phases of the Abingdon causewayed enclosure, the two long enclosures, the Neolithic 'flat' grave cemetery and the linear mortuary structure may have been of only local significance, representing small-scale, episodic activity. The enclosure, like many others, appears to have been placed at the edge of domestic settlement, with the area immediately outside it used

primarily as a place for the dead and perhaps to some extent it may have been reserved as a ritual landscape. Contemporary domestic activity outside the enclosure, although present, was on a much smaller scale and tended to be away from the burials. Location away from the area of everyday life and routine could have increased the enclosure's atmosphere as a place of special significance where certain dangerous practices, such as the treatment of the dead, were undertaken (Edmonds 1993, 116).

In its more developed form, when the causewayed enclosure was transformed into a defended and perhaps high status settlement (Thomas 1991b, 153), it may have attained regional importance, and activity within and outside it may have changed from largely ceremonial to domestic. The causewayed enclosure is one of at least 13 in the region (Holgate 1988, table 25). Little is known about the others on the Upper Thames gravel terraces, although the cropmark evidence would indicate that none of them were developed as 'defended' settlements.

The oval barrow grave assemblage has affinities with artefacts from a number of oval and round barrows in the region, notably Mount Farm, Berinsfield, Linch Hill, Stanton Harcourt and Newnham Murren, Wallingford. The burial at Mount Farm is dated to 3500–2850 cal BC (95% confidence) (4450±100 BP; HAR-4673; Table 9.18). The transformation of the original rectilinear monument at Barrow Hills into an oval barrow reflects wider trends around the end of the 4th millennium cal BC. A new tradition of oval and round barrows with single graves emerged at this time, whilst a number of earlier Neolithic monuments were redesigned. At Lower Horton, Berkshire, a U-shaped enclosure was replaced by an oval barrow, and at Dorchester-on-Thames an oval barrow was replaced by a ring ditch (Ford forthcoming; Thomas 1991b, 159).

The Upper Thames, like the 'core areas' of the Peak District and the Yorkshire Wolds, has an early tradition of Neolithic individual burial complemented by a general lack of collective funerary monuments. Where these occur, for example in the long cairns of the Cotswold-Severn group, there is also some evidence for individual grave goods and burial (Saville 1990, 105). The 'flint knapper' burial from the Hazleton North long cairn is perhaps one of the earliest individual burials in this region (Saville 1990, 262–4) with a combined date of 3660–3370 cal BC (95% confidence)(4770±60 BP; OxA-643/902). Similarly, on the Berkshire Downs towards the southern edge of the region three artic-ulated burials were found beneath a possible cairn, with middle Neolithic dates of 3950-3350 cal BC (95% confidence) (4870±70 BP; HAR-3883), 3700-3370 cal BC (95% confidence) (4780±70 BP; HAR-

Table 9.18 Selected Middle Neolithic barrow burials with grave associations

Site	Monument and context	Burial	Associations	Radiocarbon dates	Publication
Barrow Hills, Radley, Oxfordshire	Oval barrow, ?primary burial	Adult female Adult male	Polished knife Jet slider and ?leaf arrowhead	2890–2570 cal BC (91% confidence) (4120±60 BP; BM-2707) 2490-2190 cal BC (94% confidence) (3860±50 BP; BM-2708)	R Bradley 1992a
Mount Farm, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire	Oval barrow, primary burial	Adult male	Unpolished knife	3500–2850 cal BC (95% confidence) (4450±100 BP; HAR-4673)	Lambrick and Barclay in prep.
Linch Hill, Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire	Round barrow, primary burial	Adult female	Jet slider and edge-polished knife	-	Grimes 1960
Newnham Murren, Wallingford, Oxfordshire	Round barrow, primary burial	Adult female	Plain Bowl sherd, serrated flake and flint flake	-	Moorey 1982
Five Knolls, Buckinghamshire	Round barrow, primary burial	Adult female	Edge-polished knife	-	Dunning and Wheeler 1931
Whitegrounds, Burythorpe, Yorkshire	Round barrow, primary burial	Adult male	Jet slider and Seamer axe	3500–2900 cal BC (95% confidence) (4520±90 BP; HAR-5587)	Brewster 1984
Liffs Low, Derbyshire	Round barrow, primary burial over earlier Neolithic cairn in octagonal stone cist	Adult male	Jet slider, serrated and polished blade, 2 edge-polished flint axes, edge-polished knife, 2 lozenge arrowheads, decorated antler macehead, 2 boar tusk blades, 2 spearheads, 3 ochre fragments and Peterborough Ware flask	-	Bateman 1848, 1861

3884) and 3780-3370 cal BC (95% confidence) (4800±90 BP; HAR-3998; Richards 1986–90, 23–7). Within the region, middle Neolithic 'flat' graves have been recorded to the N at Cassington and to the S at Drayton, as well as at Pangbourne (Kinnes 1979, 126–7).

At Radley there is a hiatus in monument building during the later Neolithic (*c.* 3000–2600 cal BC; Garwood, above). Contemporary lulls in construction may also be detectable at a number of other monument complexes, where it was replaced by pit digging and domestic occupation. This may, for example, have been the sequence at Sutton Courtenay (Bradley and Holgate 1984). In contrast, at Dorchester-on-Thames old monuments were transformed and many new ones were constructed during this period (Fig. 9.5).

The scarcity of Peterborough Ware at Radley would coincide with this episode. The small amount of Peterborough Ware present is in the Fengate substyle, as are the few sherds from the causewayed enclosure (Case 1956a, fig. 4, 35–7) and a rim from Eight Acre Field, Radley (Mudd 1995). Radiocarbon determinations of 3500-2900 cal BC (95% confidence)(4520±80 BP; OxA-3578) and 3340-2920 cal BC (95% confidence) (4440±70 BP; OxA-4409) on organic residues adhering to Peterborough Ware sherds from Manor Farm, Lower Horton, Berkshire and Abermule, Powys, respectively, combine with other dates to indicate that this style had developed by the end of the 4th millennium cal BC (Gibson 1994, 175). Mortlake Ware is absent from the monument complex at Radley, although one or more bowls were found in a pit at Barton Court Farm (Miles 1986, microfiche 3:A9). At Worton Rectory Farm, Yarnton, Mortlake Ware was found in a pit with charred hazelnut shell dated to 3300–2600 cal BC (95% confidence) (4310±80 BP; OxA-4661) and oak charcoal dated to 3650-3000 cal BC (95% confidence)(4605±80 BP; OxA-4662; Hey in prep.). Determinations obtained for other sites (Gibson 1994, 175) indicate the use of this style between *c.* 3000–2500 cal BC.

Peterborough Ware is more common downstream from Radley, occurring in the cursus-dominated monument complexes of Drayton-Sutton Courtenay and Dorchester-on-Thames (Atkinson *et al.* 1951b, 66–7; Whittle *et al.* 1992, 196). In addition, Mortlake Ware was found in a pit at Corporation Farm, Abingdon and from the Thames at Crowmarsh near the Benson cursus (Shand unpublished; Holgate 1988, 283).

Radley has many similarities to the other monument foci downstream. Of all the known cursus-dominated monument complexes only Dorchester-on-Thames has been extensively excavated (Whittle *et al.* 1992). Although the comparative evidence is largely based on what is known from aerial photography, it is Dorchester which appears to contain the greatest number of later Neolithic monuments. Many of the ring ditches were rebuilt and/or transformed during this period. In contrast, hengiform ring ditch 611 and the segmented ring ditch at Radley represent renewed monument construction after a period when the immediate landscape had perhaps been used for domestic settlement as evidenced by sporadic pit digging.

The small-scale, segregated pattern of Neolithic settlement and multiplicity of monument complexes between Abingdon and Goring contrast with other areas of southern England, and while this pattern can be paralleled in the Lechlade-Buscot area of the Upper Thames, the Severn-Avon valley and, perhaps the Nene valley, it is very different from those of the Middle Thames valley and certain areas of Wessex. In the Middle Thames there are far more enclosures than cursus-type monuments. In Wessex Neolithic monuments tend to be larger and more centralised, the Avebury monument complex being the much-quoted example (Thomas 1991b, 162–75).

The domestic landscape

Pits were dug and pit deposits were made throughout the development of the Barrow Hills monument complex, pit digging reaching a peak towards the end of the hiatus in monumental and funerary activity in the period 3000–2600 cal BC. Much of the lithic scatter may have accumulated during this phase and the area outside the causewayed enclosure may essentially have been a domestic landscape. Perhaps the earlier transformation of the causewayed enclosure from ritual centre to a possibly defended high status settlement reflected wider changes in settlement organisation. The occurrence of different substyles of later Neolithic pottery at Barton Court Farm (Mortlake substyle Peterborough Ware and Durrington Walls substyle Grooved Ware) and Radley (Fengate substyle Peterborough Ware and Woodlands substyle Grooved Ware) may indicate shifts in settlement in the immediate area (Cleal, Ch. 7; Whittle 1986, microfiche 3:A14–3, B2).

The radiocarbon determinations suggest that the phase of pit digging ended around 2500 cal BC with a series of deposits incorporating Grooved Ware in the Woodlands substyle. Pit 3196, possibly the last of these, was the most spectacular, being the largest and containing the greatest quantity and variety of material. Pits with similar pottery and complex deposits occur either near major earlier Neolithic monuments, like the Lechlade and Drayton cursuses, or, as at Cassington, near probably middle Neolithic funerary monuments (Darvill 1993; Case 1982a).

The exceptional decorated Grooved Ware from pit 3196 (Figs 4.32–3) is discussed by Rosamund Cleal in Chapter 7. The parallels which she highlights between the decoration on these vessels and aspects of passage grave art are reinforced by similarities with the connected spirals on a standing stone from Temple Wood, Argyll, and a stone slab from Pierowall Quarry, Orkney (Clarke *et al.* 1985, 258; Scott 1988-9, 73–6, fig. 12). Much of the monumental passage grave art belongs to an earlier phase of the Neolithic, although the art itself would have remained visible and open to reinterpretation.

The Barrow Cemetery

The concentration of ring ditches on the gravels of the Upper Thames is well known. At least ten groups

representing the denuded remnants of barrow cemeteries occur along a 50 km stretch of the river, approximately between Standlake and North Stoke. Many smaller groups and single ring ditches have also been recorded (Benson and Miles 1974). The large cemeteries occur at irregular intervals, between 5 and 10 km apart, some but certainly not all of them near river confluences.

The best known are the cemeteries of Standlake, Stanton Harcourt, Foxley Farm in Eynsham, Cassington, North Stoke and Barrow Hills, each of which comprises more than 20 monuments. Nearly all lie on the second gravel terrace and have suffered partial or complete destruction from quarrying. The cemeteries at Standlake, Stanton Harcourt and Cassington have been all but destroyed, archaeological response having been both varied and piecemeal. At Standlake gravel extraction, which began before 1857, prompted the pioneering work of Stephen Stone in the ring ditch cemetery on Standlake Down (Brown 1973, 233). The evidence for and history of the cemetery around the Devil's Quoits, Stanton Harcourt have been reviewed (Barclay 1995). The Cassington cemetery, part of a multi-period cropmark complex, was largely destroyed with little archaeological investigation (Benson and Miles 1974, fig. 14). The two cemeteries at Foxley Farm in Eynsham and North Stoke survive largely intact and have suffered only minimal damage from gravel extraction.

These cemeteries are all very different in layout, and only Radley with its avenue of barrows has an overall linear design. Small linear groups occur at Stanton Harcourt (Barclay 1995, fig. 39), part of the Standlake cemetery forms an avenue (Brown 1973, pl. XVII A and B), and part of a possible linear cemetery has been recorded under the city of Oxford in the University Parks (Hassall 1986, fig. 12). Radley not only differs from the other cemeteries in its layout, it also includes a greater range of barrow types. The cemeteries at Standlake, Stanton Harcourt, Foxley Farm and Cassington mostly consist of simple ring ditches, with few barrows of complex form. The exception is the North Stoke cemetery of at least 25 ring ditches which form an array of multi-ditched monuments including twin barrows and barrows with interrupted ditches. Unlike Radley, this cemetery is a cluster of short alignments, grouped around a Neolithic bank barrow with an enclosure at each terminal. Some of the barrows appear to be aligned on the terminal enclosures (Case 1982d, fig. 33; Benson and Miles 1974, map 43).

It is perhaps significant that the two more unusual cemeteries, Radley and North Stoke, are situated towards the S of the overall distribution. Radley is most unlike the other cemeteries on the Upper Thames gravels and has more in common with the great linear barrow cemeteries of the Wessex chalk. The nearest parallel for Radley is the site of the Lambourn 'Seven' Barrows, 25 km away on the edge of the chalk downs. At Lambourn an avenue of at least 11 barrows was aligned on a long barrow. The cemetery is very similar to Barrow Hills, including both complex burials and a variety of barrow forms (Case 1956–7).

The barrow cemeteries on Salisbury Plain are as diverse as those of the Upper Thames and include linear, dispersed and nucleated groups. Only a few are linear, notably the Normanton Down, Winterbourne Stoke Crossroads and Cursus groups (Ashbee 1960, fig. 6). The Winterbourne Stoke Crossroads group includes some 23 barrows of bell, bowl, disc, saucer and pond forms (Grinsell 1953, fig. 5, pl. II). Like Radley and Lambourn, the cemetery appears to have been aligned on a Neolithic monument, in this case the Stonehenge Cursus.

The juxtaposition of Neolithic pits, especially those containing Grooved Ware and the barrow alignment at Radley is matched on Salisbury Plain. Neolithic pits, including the chalk plaque pit, have been found towards the S end and the centre of the linear cemetery on King Barrow Ridge, which extends from the E end of the Stonehenge cursus to the Coneybury henge and is the site of an extensive, predominantly later Neolithic, artefact scatter (Harding 1988; Richards 1990, 109–23; Thomas 1991b, 148–50; Cleal and Allen 1994). At Ratfyn, near Amesbury, Grooved Ware pits were found at the S end of a small linear cemetery that extends N to the Neolithic sites of Woodhenge and Durrington Walls. A flint cairn covering one of the Ratfyn pits suggests that some if not all of these pits were visibly marked (Stone and Young 1948, 280). At Barrow Hills and on Salisbury Plain pit deposits and barrow burials appear to have been used to mark places in the landscape, and the pits and their related 'domestic area' seem to form a link between the veneration of Neolithic monuments and the siting of a major linear barrow cemetery. In the absence of more extensive excavation, it is impossible to tell if pits were present throughout the areas subsequently occupied by these cemeteries, including the E part of Barrow Hills.

The funerary development of Barrow Hills was similar to that of the Devil's Quoits monument complex at Stanton Harcourt (Barclay 1995). 'Flat' graves (mostly Beaker), pits and small ceremonial monuments (like ring ditch 611) were placed in a landscape with middle Neolithic funerary monuments. Small Beaker barrows were constructed, and the dominant burial rite was inhumation. In the early Bronze Age some of the small barrows were enlarged and considerably larger barrows were built. Cremation was preferred to inhumation and the symbolic role of pottery in the grave ritual was taken over by metalwork. After the end of the early Bronze Age existing monuments were reused for burial and social differentiation became less marked.

The Radley cemetery appears to contain a high percentage of 'rich' burials from both 'flat' graves and barrows; over half the barrows contained primary grave assemblages and ten contained objects of copper alloy or gold. The incomplete excavation and relatively poor preservation of other barrow cemeteries makes comparisons difficult. However, a comparison with the barrows and 'flat' graves around the Devils Quoits, Stanton Harcourt (Barclay 1995) would suggest that the Radley burials were of a higher status and reflected greater access to exotic goods. At Stanton Harcourt only two out of 11 recorded Beaker burials, both from the same barrow at Gravelly Guy, contained metalwork. This barrow belonged to a destroyed linear group which

could have contained similarly 'rich' interments (Barclay 1995, fig. 47).

Beaker burials

The Upper Thames gravels are well known for their concentration of Beaker burials (Case 1956b; 1986), but their relatively high number contrasts with the small number of Beaker domestic sites (Case 1986, 32–4). This pattern is, however, artificial and reflects traditional, monument-based excavation strategies. In the last 15 years a number of Beaker pits have been found, mainly in the course of excavating more visible sites of later periods (Darvill 1993; Lambrick *et al.* in prep.). The emerging pattern for the early Bronze Age is one in which pit sites and burials were segregated. Whereas burials might be placed near or in monuments, pit deposits tended to be placed further away and are therefore more difficult to detect. At Radley the lack of evidence for Beaker-associated occupation could be explained in this way, especially given the recovery of Beaker sherds from non-funerary contexts in the surrounding area (P. Bradley, Ch. 1). Excavations by OAU in 1995 at Wyndyke Furlong, Abingdon, a continuation of Ashville Trading Estate (Parrington 1978), uncovered a further feature containing Beaker sherds. Sites and finds at the edge of the alluvium (Fig. 1.11) suggest that early Bronze Age and older settlement may be preserved on the present floodplain, as at Yarnton, where an off-site excavation strategy has produced a number of settlement features (Hey 1994).

Within the region there is a tradition of Beaker 'flat' graves, sometimes grouped in cemeteries. At Radley at least four of the burials may have been in 'flat' graves. Whether these graves were ever covered by substantial mounds is debatable, archaeologically they are less visible and in some cases more numerous than Beaker barrows. At Barrow Hills there are more burials in 'flat' graves than barrows, as there are at Stanton Harcourt (Barclay 1995, table 21). At Dorchester-on-Thames the monument-oriented approach produced one Beaker burial in a barrow, although a second burial, possibly in a 'flat' grave, possibly in a ring ditch, was subsequently located (Simpson and Case 1963).

At Radley the close spacing of graves 919 and 950 in the SW of the 1983–5 area and of ring ditch 201 and grave 206 in the E (Figs 4.30, 4.71) may indicate that mounds were small and perhaps only heaped over the grave. Noticeably, very few of these graves received subsequent deposits and they may always have been inconspicuous. In contrast the only Beaker burial marked by a barrow, 4A, became the founder monument for a linear group of barrows. The overall wealth of the Radley burials is difficult to parallel in the region, where other rich burials tend to be isolated. It is more usual for the majority of burials to contain only a Beaker vessel, while at Radley nearly every grave contained two or more artefacts.

The radiocarbon-based chronological sequence of the burials (Figs 9.1–2) is reflected in the range of grave goods and funerary contexts. Associated with these graves are a number of exotic and unusual artefacts of metal and worked bone. The copper rings from 919, the winged-headed pin from 4660 and the gold earrings from 4A are all rare or unique items. In addition, some of the Beakers are amongst the finest in the region. Interestingly, in the total range of Beaker-associated grave items at Radley there are no objects of jet and no stone wristguards, although these items are quite common in the region, especially in the Cassington-Eynsham-Stanton Harcourt area (Barclay 1995; Case 1986).

Grave 4660 is one of five Beaker dagger burials located between Dorchester-on-Thames and Stanton Harcourt (Clarke 1970, figs 128, 137, 1038; Barclay 1995, fig. 48). These burials seem to be evenly distributed throughout the monument complexes. The three typologically early daggers occur to the S, at Radley, Sutton Courtenay and Dorchester, and the two late ones occur to the N at Eynsham and Stanton Harcourt. Flint daggers have not been found in this area, neither have copper alloy armlets, bracelets and 'earrings'. Yet further W in the region, a flint dagger and a bronze bracelet were found in separate Beaker burials at Shorncote (Barclay and Glass 1995), and a flint dagger at Lambourn (Case 1956–7, 23). This regionalisation of grave items may be the result of funerary choice or may represent access to different networks (cf Needham 1988, 233). The three Beaker burials recorded within 5 km of the cemetery contained no other grave goods. Similarly, burials in barrows at North Stoke and Cassington were accompanied only by Beaker vessels (Catling 1959; Bradford 1951). At Cassington there is evidence that at least some 'rich' Beaker burials may have been destroyed (Case and Sturdy 1959, 98).

The 'rich' child burial, 919, is unusual, as such graves tend to be under-represented in the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age. The location of this burial with its rare and early copper rings at the 'front' end of what was to become an avenue of barrows and near to the avenue's axis hardly seems a coincidence.

There are few 'Wessex Culture' burials among the many excavated early Bronze Age round barrows in the Upper Thames. What was probably the largest barrow constructed at Stanton Harcourt contained a 'Wessex II' assemblage and stood in relative isolation from the surrounding barrow groups (Barclay 1995). Similarly, an isolated pair of barrows at Ashville contained 'Wessex' grave assemblages (Balkwill 1978, 27). In addition early Bronze Age metalwork, including daggers of comparable date, has been recorded from the Thames near Radley (R Bradley 1986c, 39). Equally, only a few 'Wessex' burials have been recorded from Gloucestershire (Darvill 1987, 99–103). 'Wessex' graves from the Upper Thames and the Berkshire Downs are briefly discussed by Bradley (1986c, 38–9). There is slightly more evidence from the Berkshire Downs, where upstanding barrows have survived. Within the Lambourn 'Seven' barrows, only one of the excavated mounds, barrow 1, contained a 'Wessex' grave assemblage (Case 1956–7, 16–20). Little is known about the other barrows, apart from barrow 9 which contained a cremation with a Collared Urn (Case 1956–7, 21).

Secondary cremation cemeteries have been recorded at a number of barrow sites in the region. At Merton Borrow Pit (OAU in prep.), City Farm, Hanborough (Case *et al.* 1964–5) and Ashville Trading Estate (Balkwill 1978) there were cremation deposits in association with a variety of Collared and Biconical Urns, Food Vessels and miniature vessels. At all three sites there was a preference for the SE quarter of the ring ditch. Similarly the Deverel-Rimbury cremation cemeteries at Standlake, Stanton Harcourt and Shorncote were concentrated towards the southern halves of the interiors. At Mount Farm, on the other hand, there was a preference for placing secondary inhumations and cremations in the N area of the interior (Lambrick and Barclay in prep.).

After the Barrow Cemetery

The earlier barrows were reused in the later Bronze Age with burials placed in barrow 16 and pond barrow 4583. Deverel-Rimbury pottery recovered from a number of barrow ditches may have derived from cremations inserted into the mounds and subsequently ploughed out. Some of the redeposited material from across the site could also indicate contemporary settlement, although the evidence for this is slight in the immediate vicinity. At Eight Acre Field, Radley, 2 km to the SE, a later Bronze Age waterhole and a small quantity of contemporary pottery were found within a system of ditched fields and tracks which remained in use into the Iron Age (Mudd 1995), and a small enclosed settlement was excavated at Corporation Farm, Abingdon, some 3 km to the SW (Barrett and Bradley 1980, fig. 4; Shand unpublished). The evidence for later Bronze Age settlement and burial in the Upper Thames is less extensive than the Middle or Lower Thames valley (R Bradley 1986c, 38–49).

Deverel-Rimbury cremation cemeteries are relatively rare in the region, occurring at Stanton Harcourt, Mount Farm, Standlake and Shorncote (Barclay 1995, 112). The tightly crouched late Bronze Age inhumations inserted into pond barrow 4583 (Fig. 4.12) are typical of the period. The two Radley burials can be added to a growing corpus of late Bronze Age inhumations, including those at Mount Farm (Lambrick and Barclay in prep.), Roughground Farm, Lechlade (Allen *et al.* 1993, 45, Shorncote (Barclay and Glass 1995) and probably in the ditch of the barrow containing the 'Wessex' burial at Stanton Harcourt (Sturdy and Case 1961–2, 338).

Iron Age activity is noticeably absent from around the barrows with the earthworks surviving into the Saxon period (Ch. 6). The area appears to have been avoided in the Roman period with settlement and a trackway skirting the periphery of the monument complex. The location of two late Roman cemeteries near to the upstanding barrows may suggest a certain degree of respect and deliberate avoidance (Fig. 1.9).

A Saxon settlement developed near the SW area of the barrow complex and on the whole respected the upstanding earthworks and a number of monuments (barrows 2 and 5 and pond barrow 4866) were reused for burial.

THE COMPLEX IN ITS WIDER CONTEXT
by Frances Healy

Affinities and contacts: Britain

The Neolithic and early Bronze Age of the whole of Britain exhibit far more uniformity than regional variation, surely a reflection of the potential for intergroup contact of the relatively mobile settlement style of the period. Against this background, there remains some scope for assessing the affinities of various aspects of Barrow Hills, within the limitations of the low incidence of cemetery, as distinct from barrow, excavation.

The river valleys of the Midlands have been unevenly investigated. Air photographs show numerous barrows and ring ditches, sometimes clustered into cemeteries, primarily on the gravel terraces, but also on ridges (Whimster 1989; Thomas 1974, fig. 3; Field 1974; Green 1974, fig. 23; Hartley 1989, fig. 6.6; Gibson and McCormick 1985, fig. 26; Pryor and French 1985, figs 1, 15; French 1994, fig. 1). Investigation has generally been piecemeal and reactive, the most notable exception being the Raunds/West Cotton area on the lower Nene (Windell *et al.* 1990). Cemeteries sometimes seem to have developed around Neolithic monuments, with occasional unilinear plans but little trace of the scale or symmetry of the final layout of Barrow Hills. The same holds true in East Anglia (Lawson *et al.* 1981).

The cemeteries of these areas seem, in other words, closer to organisation of the other Upper Thames barrow cemeteries noted by Barclay above than to the elaboration of Barrow Hills in its final form. Sometimes there seems to be little nucleation at all, as in the Trent valley, where 'The ring ditches, though scattered along the length of the western gravel terrace, are not as numerous as in some other southern English river valleys, nor are they grouped in the clusters that often characterise Bronze Age funerary activity in other regions.' (Whimster 1989, 67).

Barclay's recognition of different barrow forms among the ploughed-down ring ditches at Barrow Hills echoes Case's identification of distinct monument types from the ditch sections and mound remnants of other ring ditches in the Oxford region, distinguishing barrows with substantial mounds, without substantial mounds, with bank near the outer edge of the ditch, with bank near the inner edge of the ditch, and with no earthworks near the edges of the ditch (1963, 39–48). On the terraces of the Great Ouse in Bedfordshire, Taylor and Woodward have similarly distinguished saucer and bell or disc barrows (1985, table 1), and Green has inferred berms between mound and ditch (1974, 79, 88).

Whatever the accuracy of individual classifications, the gravels must have carried as diverse a range of barrow forms as the bowl, bell, disc, saucer and pond types of the southern chalk (Colt Hoare 1812, figs opposite pages 21, 22 23). An apparent concentration of 'fancy' barrows in Wessex may simply reflect the survival of many into recent times as earthworks, the forms of which remained identifiable in the field. This is not to say that identical barrow types were built on

the gravels; the geology itself is highly likely to have made for different methods of construction. Taylor's and Woodward's suggestion that most may have been insubstantial (1985, 113) is relevant here. Rather the barrows of the gravels may have stood in the same relation to those of the southern chalk as the latter did to the diversely and differently constructed earthen round barrows of Yorkshire (Spratt 1992, table 22) or to the varied cairn forms of upland areas.

The absence of 'flat' graves cannot be assumed in areas where none have been found. It may, however, be significant that in two cases where areas around barrows and/or other monuments in the Midlands were stripped, no Neolithic or Bronze Age 'flat' inhumations were found: the line of the Norwich Southern Bypass (Ashwin in prep.), and the Raunds/West Cotton area, where large-scale stripping revealed only a gully, a few pits and three isolated unurned cremations (Windell *et al.* 1990, 13).

In Wales, the ring ditches and barrows of the central marches are often clustered but rarely form coherent layouts other than single rows (Whimster 1989, 58–9), and even the clusters may be relatively dispersed (Warrilow *et al.* 1986, 80–1; Gibson 1994, 143–6; Gibson 1995, 53–5). Upland Welsh barrow groups tend to be dispersed, with layouts closely related to topography (Lynch 1993, 144–6).

As regards the north of England, the Yorkshire and Peak District affinities of both the polished flint blade and the jet or shale belt slider from the central grave of the oval barrow are noted (Fig. 3.3; P Bradley, Barclay and Wallis Ch. 7). These may reflect the measure of shared tradition suggested by the frequency of Neolithic single burial in the Upper Thames, Peak District and Yorkshire Wolds Neolithic core areas compared with other parts of Britain (R Bradley 1984b, 45–6) Table 9.18. On the Wolds, Neolithic pits, some with elaborate deposits, were dug in already monumentalised areas later to become early Bronze Age barrow cemeteries, in a manner strongly reminiscent of Barrow Hills or Stanton Harcourt (Manby 1974, figs 2, 4; 1975, fig. 1). Beaker 'flat' graves, such as those found during area excavation at West Heslerton (Powlesland 1986, 110, 113) and Garton and Wetwang Slacks (Brewster 1980, 18), recall the practices of the Upper Thames as well as the prevalence of 'flat' burials among contemporary interments in the northernmost counties of England (Annable 1987, tables 12 and 15) and in Scotland.

Barrow cemetery layout in north-east Yorkshire tends to clusters and single rows, the latter often on crests (Spratt 1992, 93). The (curvi)linear alignments on the Wolds around Fimber mapped by Mortimer hug the topography (1905, map facing page 1). In the Peaks, the vast Stanton Moor complex of more than 70 cairns with ring banks, standing stones and stone circles shows a fairly haphazard layout with clusters, gaps and short rows (Hart 1981, 57, fig. 6:4). At Barbrook, above Swine Sty, an almost equally large complex has a total plan in some ways reminiscent of Barrow Hills, but lacking its regularity, in which two curvilinear bands of cairns, each more than one monument wide and with internal gaps and clusters, run roughly parallel along the 290 m and 305 m contours for some 350 m to converge on a stone circle (Hart 1981, 57–63, fig. 6:5).

The foregoing text emphasises the affinities of both the Barrow Hills complex and its individual monuments with Wessex. This region, in the sense employed by Piggott (1938, 53) of an area of the southern chalk encompassing Dorset, Wiltshire and the Berkshire Downs, borders the Upper Thames. The Lambourn 'Seven' Barrows lie only 25 km from Barrow Hills, and the Thames, the Kennet and their tributaries provide an obvious means of communication between the two areas. As Barclay points out, the final 'avenue' of two straight, parallel rows of monuments, including bell, disc and double barrows, at Barrow Hills, finds its best parallel at Lambourn and in some of the barrow cemeteries around Stonehenge, where the diverse forms of the extant earthworks give some impression of what Barrow Hills must have looked like. In some ways these are perhaps best seen in antiquarian records made in an era of better preservation than the present, like Colt Hoare's perspectives of the Winterbourne Stoke Crossroads and Wilsford and Lake groups (1812, figures opposite pages 121 and 207). These settings, apparently owing something to geometry and alignment as well as to topography, are exceptional. There is a measure of contrast between these 'avenues' and some of the other linear cemeteries on Salisbury Plain, notably the King Barrows, the Cursus Barrows and the Nomanton Down group, which are positioned on ridges, like many linear cemeteries elsewhere (Richards 1990, fig. 2). The contrast with the major barrow concentrations of the South Dorset Ridgeway and the Marlborough Downs around Avebury is even more marked. In both areas, on similar terrain to that of Salisbury Plain, the barrows regularly follow ridges and crests as over much of Britain (Woodward 1991, fig. 2; Malone 1989, fig. 5). The sustained choice and execution of closely comparable and exceptional layouts over as much as a thousand years on Salisbury Plain, at Lambourn and at Barrow Hills argues sustained and significant community of concept.

The other principal link with Wessex lies in the specific rites and furnishings of a few of the Barrow Hills burials and in the quantity and quality of artefacts deposited in them as a group. The Upper Thames 'Wessex culture' burials lie towards the northern extremity of the distribution. It is surely significant that Barrow Hills, Stanton Harcourt and Ashville Trading Estate are all close to the Thames or one of its tributaries.

The exotic, finely-worked weapons and ornaments from Barrow Hills reflect participation in exchange networks reaching to the Atlantic seaboard, the Baltic, central Europe, the Alps and beyond, with a concomitant pool of skills and stylistic traditions. It is self-evident, however, that the frequency of particular artefacts or materials in burials may reflect local practice as much as availability, especially in the case of materials as completely recyclable as metals. This makes it easier to describe inter-regional or inter-cemetery differences in the 'richness' of graves than to interpret them, and may invalidate much of the following text. For whatever reasons, early Bronze Age graves with exotic,

exceptional or simply numerous artefacts tend to be rarer outside Wessex, where grave furnishings accord more with Barclay's summary of the other Upper Thames cemeteries (Burgess 1980, 100–3).

Examples from contrasting regions serve to illustrate this point in relation to Barrow Hills where, of 18 excavated barrows or ring ditches and three 'flat' graves of Beaker or early Bronze Age date (counting pond barrow 4866 and its surrounding burials as one), two contained gold and 11 copper or copper alloy. The picture in other regions is different: of the 375 barrows and ring ditches excavated in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire up to the 1980s only 15 contained early or middle Bronze Age metalwork (Lawson *et al.* 1981, 3, 40, 70, 97, 113–6 — this total excludes the two socketed axes listed with the Norfolk finds (*ibid.* 40) and includes the gold-covered beads found with a Biconical Urn at Great Bircham (*ibid.* 63), which are not listed with them); and of the 175 Bronze Age barrows in north-east Yorkshire listed by Spratt (1992, table 22) only 10 contained metalwork. Turning to individual cemeteries, of the 20 excavated cairns on Stanton Moor, Derbyshire, for which finds or records of them could be identified, only four contained Bronze Age metalwork (Vine 1982, 225–38); and there was no metalwork at all in the 11 monuments excavated at the Brenig in north Wales (Lynch 1993, 154–5), or the 11 monuments excavated by Croft Andrew on Davidstow Moor, Cornwall (Christie 1988).

Wider contacts: Early metalworking and its implications

If they are accepted, the two radiocarbon determinations for the burials in Beaker 'flat' grave 919 (see table, appendix 1) make the copper rings placed with the child burial dated by OxA–1874 (Figs 4.14, 4.16, M2–4) the earliest known metalwork in Britain and the two pots in the grave (Fig. 4.14, P24–5) among the earliest Beakers in Britain (Kinnes *et al.* 1991, fig. 4). Reasons for accepting the measurements include their comparability with early Beaker dates from the Low Countries and France (van der Waals 1984, 7; L'Helgouach 1984, 69) and the consideration that the difficulty of classifying the two Beakers in any British scheme may spring from their pre-dating the development of insular Beaker styles. The crudity of P24 (Fig. 4.17) could represent an attempt to produce a pot in an unfamiliar tradition. They are generically 'early' by the standards of any of the current classifications.

The primacy of this find may be illusory; if others of the earliest Beaker burials in Britain were 'flat' graves they are likely to be under-represented in the excavated record. This consideration may go some way to explain the location of such an early find, away from the east coast and Wessex which are traditionally seen as areas of early Beaker uptake. The find may, however, illustrate the importance of the Thames as a means of communication, not only with adjacent regions, such as Wessex, but with the other side of the North Sea. Grave 919, furnished with new and unfamiliar objects produced by new and unfamiliar skills, was dug in a long-established ceremonial centre, alongside monuments in the indigenous tradition, possibly while pit deposits in that tradition were still being made. Bradley's late Neolithic Upper Thames core area, with its own developed monumental and funerary traditions, would have been a social, ritual (and political?) focus for people from an extensive catchment, promoting exchange of ideas and information and the uptake of new ways and equipment. Contact, direct or indirect, with the Low Countries and the European hinterland would be plausible in such a context. Northover finds the composition of the copper difficult to parallel, and suggests that the metal had been carried a long way by the time it was buried (Ch. 7). The 'barbed wire' decoration, if such it is, of the smaller vessel (Fig. 4.17, P24) is in a technique widely used on and around the North European Plain (Clarke 1970, 136–45, fig. X), but apparently at a later date (Lanting and van der Waals 1972, 34; 1976, 41).

The importance of the Thames as a route to and from the Continent in the middle and late Bronze Age is emphasised by Needham and Burgess (1980, 465–6). In the different world of the immediately pre-Roman Iron Age, communication along the river seems to have permitted the incorporation of the Upper Thames in an increasingly unified and dominant polity focused on the estuary, the power of which was based on control of the import of 'Roman' goods from the Rhineland and Low Countries, which were already incorporated into the Empire (Haselgrove 1982, 82–6). There was also rapid Saxon penetration of the Upper Thames valley, with 5th-century AD settlement in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire as early as any in East Anglia (Blair 1994, 6–14).

Some of the later Beaker-associated artefacts from Barrow Hills do little to confirm or disprove the notion of north and central European contacts. The gold ear- or hair-rings from barrow 4A (Fig. 5.4) seem to belong to an insular tradition developed from continental prototypes (Taylor 1980, 22–4), at an early stage in the Beaker presence on the evidence of the radiocarbon dates from Barrow Hills and Chilbolton (Table 7.8). The barbed and tanged arrowheads from graves 950, 4660 and 203 are of forms ubiquitous in the western Beaker province.

Where origins seem more specific, however, they tend to lie across the North Sea rather than across the Channel. The wing-headed bone pin from 'flat' grave 4660 (Fig. 4.23, WB4), associated with a skeleton dated to 2190–1890 cal BC (95% confidence)(3650±50 BP; BM-2704), is compared by Needham to an example from Lower Saxony, and Northover considers that the copper knife-dagger from the same grave (Fig. 4.23, M5) was made of metal from the Continent (Ch. 7). The fragment from a polypod Beaker bowl found in the area of the oval barrow (Fig. 3.4, P7) is of a form rare in England, as are Beaker bowls in general. Cleal points out that, apart from Dorset handled bowls, the few known English Beaker bowls, including polypod forms, tend to concentrate in and near the Middle and Upper Thames and to be associated with Wessex/Middle Rhine Beakers (Ch. 7). The predominantly central and

eastern and to some extent north-western European distribution of polypod bowls is made clear by her and by Clarke (1970, 90) and underscored by the vessels illustrated by Sangmeister (1984, abb. 6) and Harrison (1980, fig. 8).

There is thus something of a case for contact between the Upper Thames and NW and central Europe via the Thames and the North Sea, by which there could have been particularly early exposure to and uptake of elements of Beaker practice and equipment. The case is weakened by an absence, so far, of comparably early dates for Beaker material from further downstream. Given the inconspicuous character of grave 919 at Barrow Hills, however, contemporary features could have gone unrecognised or undiscovered, and there is no typological reason why equally early material from the Middle and Lower Thames should not already be present in existing collections.

The 'Wessex Culture'

The funerary distributions of jet or shale and amber in Britain differ markedly. Both were made into ornaments, often the same kinds of ornament, displaying a high level of craftsmanship (Shepherd 1985, 205–13). Both occur in burials in Wessex (Annable and Simpson 1964, 98–112), as they do among the beads from barrow 16 at Barrow Hills (Fig. 5.12). Jet is particularly frequent in early Bronze Age burials close to its source in the Whitby area (Elgee 1930, fig. 40; Kinnes and Longworth 1985), with further concentrations in parts of Scotland and other areas of England (Shepherd 1985, 213–6). Amber, however, is concentrated in Wessex, despite the relative proximity of the British east coast to its Baltic sources and the possibility of collection from beaches there (Beck and Shennan 1991, 77–85, fig. 6.1). Jet and shale seem to have circulated within insular networks. The pan-European dispersal of amber, on the other hand, transcended individual societies and value systems, meshed into a complex of luxury artefacts, materials and fashions (Beck and Shennan 1991, 133–42). Beck and Shennan paint a vivid picture of a Wessex élite retaining pre-eminence by the fusion of an early Bronze Age prestige goods system onto the exceptional ritual developments of the later Neolithic and attracting exotic goods, perhaps with the craftsmen that produced them, as much by the value put on the esoteric properties of the place and the knowledge of its inhabitants as of any material goods available there (1991, 140–2).

Whatever the processes entailed, Wessex at this time participated in a pool of funerary practices, skills, stylistic traditions and exotic materials common to most of temperate Europe. Discussion of the shifting balances between Breton, central European, north Alpine, Rhenish and other influences by, among many others, Gerloff (1975, 244–6) emphasises the scale and complexity of the web. Shennan's view (1986) of Wessex as one of many linked power centres, locked into a system in which prestige was defined in terms of the control of material goods and in which competition prompted the acquisition of objects from distant sources, goes some way to account for the remoteness of some of the contacts.

Material reflections of this larger province at Barrow Hills include the gold bead covers from barrow 2 (Fig. 5.3), a class of artefact typically found in Wessex burials (eg Clarke *et al.* 1985, ills 4.32, 4.55, 4.57). Barfield suggests that comparable objects may have been transported from Wessex as far as the Alps (1991). Needham and Northover suggest that the copper knife-dagger from pit E of barrow 16 (Fig. 5.11, M15) may have been made of metal from a continental source (Ch. 7). Parallels for the bone tweezers and ring-headed bone pin from cremation 11 in barrow 1 (Fig. 4.82, WB14–15) seem to lie almost entirely in Wessex. The single segmented faience bead among the amber and jet examples from barrow 16 (Fig. 5.12) is of a material and a form found from Egypt to Scotland. It remains uncertain whether the beads, the technique of their manufacture, or both were transmitted to Britain. Biconical Urns like P77 from barrow 14 (Fig. 5.9) belong to a class of pottery for which Breton and Alpine origins and a Wessex zone of entry have been suggested by Tomalin (1988, 212–219), while Briard sees Breton parallels as originating in England or the Low Countries (1981, 41–6; 1993, 187), and Gerloff sees Biconical Urns as part of a more general west European stylistic trend extending to the Alps, southern Germany and the Rhineland (1975, 233–43). It is no surprise that a style of cinerary urn which came into use towards the end of the early Bronze Age should have continental affinities, whether specific or generic.

Maintenance of earlier lines of communication between the Upper Thames and lands across the North Sea into the full early Bronze Age could have contribu ted to the volume of central European, especially Únětice, elements in Wessex. The precise and specific links between the Barrow Hills cemetery and those of the province to the south could reflect a double route into Wessex for continental ideas, skills and artefacts, via the Thames from north-west and central Europe and via the Channel from Armorica and southern Europe.

POSTSCRIPT
by Alistair Barclay

Implications

The implications of the excavations are numerous. Features including pits, cremations and flat graves can occur outside barrows and in relative isolation, and with hindsight many of the features were clearly visible as cropmarks (Fig. 1.8). Some kinds of feature were not, however, readily identifiable from the air photographs: large circular cropmarks, for example, were not instantly recognisable as pond barrows. The main contrast between the barrows excavated in 1983–5 and those excavated previously is the obvious destruction of mounds and pre-barrow land surfaces. There was no chance of finding features cut only into the pre-barrow soil, as Leeds did in barrow 16 (1938a, 33), or the upper parts of those that extended into the gravel.

Total or extensive excavation of ring ditch 611 and the ditches of the oval barrow and barrow 12 revealed interesting patterns of deposition, and demonstrated the need for methods geared to their recognition and recovery. There is a strong case for either excavating barrow interiors before total destruction or switching attention to the ditch deposits, with the emphasis on greater control of finds recovery, both artefactual and environmental. In the case of barrows 12 and 4A deposits of animal bone in the ditches were products of the same funerary rituals as the central burials. Ditches are not just quarries; they can also contain post structures, as in the oval barrow, and act as traps for the subsequent record.

There is a lack of contemporary domestic settlement in the immediate area and this is a good reason to prioritise adjoining areas between the terrace and the river Thames, as the evidence would serve to complement the complex funerary activity at Barrow Hills. Further, opportunities for systematic field survey within the immediate environs should be considered if the wider issues of landscape history are to be understood.

The Neolithic 'flat' grave cemetery at the edge of the excavated area (Figs 1.10, 3.9–10) raises the possibility that more graves could exist. The grouping of three single graves of this period so far remains unique in Britain. Two points can be stressed: there is probably a greater need for an off-site or landscape approach and there is a case for acquiring radiocarbon determinations for unaccompanied burials.

The current and future threat

The surviving part of the barrow cemetery, including unexcavated barrows 8–10, is gradually being destroyed through ploughing. It is possible that any burial deposits and mounds have already been largely destroyed. Similarly, less visible features between the barrows are also likely to have been destroyed. In 1994 the cropmarks of two possible pit circles were observed between barrows 14 and 15. There is a need to assess the potential of the surviving archaeological deposits and prevent the further erosion of the site by instigating a management agreement.