THE
EMERGENT
PAST

A Relational Realist Archaeology of Early
Bronze Age Mortuary Practices

CHRIS FOWLER

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Introduction

In this book I develop a new interpretative basis for archaeological synthesis and apply this in an archaeological exploration of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary evidence from North-East England. I argue that in carrying out regional synthesis archaeologists are involved in an assemblage or entanglement along with prehistoric bones, objects, materials, and structures, and also with practices, materials, technologies, people, and ideas generated in subsequent periods. I argue that it is a vital part of the process of synthesis to understand the roles played by each of these differing features in the overall assemblage. The book explores a 'relational realist' interpretative method through a 'ground up' reading of the archaeological remains, in which real things are understood in terms of the relationships that compose, maintain, and reshape them. In this introductory chapter I explain the value of a relational realist interpretation and of producing a synthesis of the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary evidence from North-East England.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A RELATIONAL REALIST ARCHAEOLOGY?

The starting point for the approach taken in this book is the rejection of a 'correspondence theory of truth'. In a correspondence theory of truth there is a reality which exists independently of any observer. Theories about the nature of that reality can be tested by conducting experiments which should yield identical results even if carried out by different people. The problem with this theoretical position is that we can never directly access any reality without some mediating apparatus such as theories or laboratory equipment. This apparatus is itself already a part of reality, as are we; there can therefore be no separation of the real from the interpreted. Archaeologists attempt to interpret past realities, often perceiving a gap between that past and the present location

of the archaeologist and archaeological theories, methods, techniques, and interpretations. In place of a correspondence theory of truth this book argues that the concepts, terms, theories, typologies, and techniques that we deploy are as much part of the reality we are studying, and studying within, as the material remains of the past. Furthermore, those material remains are clearly also present today: we are not physically separated from the past, but find the effects and legacies of past activity all around us (and indeed within us). I will argue that archaeology *changes* the past as it works on it, changing the assembled evidence, and in so doing it changes the present: it is a transformation of reality. What is at stake when we consider how to study the past is how we think our reality should be reshaped. This is not only a matter of epistemology (how we know what we know about the world) but of ontology (what there is): i.e. archaeology describes *and* transforms what there really is in the world.

I will explain the meaning of relational realism fully in Chapter 2, but in brief the approach developed here is relational in that each phenomenon arises from the relationships comprising it. In a previous book I argued that personhood (the state of being a person) is relational (Fowler 2004). The relational perspective followed in this current book argues that entities of all kinds (persons and otherwise) can be understood as *assemblages*: arrangements or compositions stemming from the interaction of other entities, materials, and various forces. Adopting this perspective means putting relationships first, and thinking about how things, people, places, materials, ideas, properties, and so on *emerge from* those relationships. This is a realist perspective in that it is not concerned only with human experience, but with all of the relationships and media involved in any interaction. It recognizes that the entities and forces involved in any specific event have a history, and that past relationships shaping those entities or forces have an effect in that event. Further, any enduring entities that emerge from the event are legacies of past relationships just as they consist of and are situated within present and ongoing relationships. This offers a different perspective to a relational approach whereby meaning is entirely dependent on the *current* context, the most immediately identifiable *present* relationships. It is also different from the view that entities have an essential nature which is not dependent on relationships. A relational realist archaeology does not divide the world into specific aspects, such as society, culture, nature, material, or ideas. It argues against the view that material things represent ideas, as well as the idea that theories simply represent reality, and in that sense it could be described as a non-representational theory. It argues that while we can study relationships, change, artefacts, bodies, materials, places, and landscapes, it does not make sense to seek singular principles organizing these, such as the presence of a specific culture, belief system, or social structure. As archaeologists, we do not study past societies, but the material remains of past practices and events: the legacies

left by the millions of interactions that comprise realities. If we must use terms like culture, society, or community then these best refer to societies or communities of people, things, plants, animals, minerals, and other substances, places, forces, practices, beliefs, emotions, and ideas. Some of the members of those communities survive, although transformed, in the present, and others have left enduring legacies in the form and matter of yet others. A relational realist archaeology seeks to focus on how relationships arise, persist, and change based on their material legacies, whether those legacies be barrows, walls, pots, bones, photographs, or books.

This relational realist perspective shares some of its foundations with a groundswell of other work which is broadly non-representationalist and this work will be reviewed in Chapter 2, but no other studies have yet attempted a regional synthesis from a similar perspective. On one level, the relational realist approach to archaeology that I set out in this book is a redescription of what archaeologists already do. I argue that it is a more realistic position than one based on a correspondence theory of truth, and that it more accurately describes how archaeological interpretation operates. But on another level, by acknowledging a different basis for how interpretation works, it also presents a distinctive interpretative method. Archaeologists experience the material remains of the past inseparably from the categories and classifications that have emerged from a long history of antiquarian and archaeological involvement with them. Equally, prehistoric activities, events, and relationships gave rise to those artefacts, and the remains of those prehistoric events have been successively transformed by other processes and events over the millennia—ploughing, quarrying, construction, movements of soil down slopes, chemical reactions involving bones, soil, and water, and so on. All of these relations have an effect on the overall assembly of the past in archaeological synthesis. I will argue that it is necessary to map out exactly which relationships have given rise to the configuration of the assemblage, from prehistoric practices to uses of the land in the last few centuries, to the activities of antiquarians and the concepts deployed by archaeologists in shaping the field of study which incorporates those remains. The configurations we see, the patterns in the artefacts or sites we study, have no singular point of origin, then, but arise from the intersection of several such practices, concepts, and forces in specific interactions or events. Archaeological research reconfigures the assemblage: the basis for this reconfiguration or re-articulation will be discussed in coming chapters.

While relational approaches, focusing on the specificity of each piece of evidence, may seem opposed to the use of types, I argue that we have to start by identifying specific types of things, places, and practices in order to unravel the history of relations that produced them, and to understand how each entity is related to others. In short, we need typologies as a starting point from which to explore the relations giving rise to artefacts, places, and practices.

Ingold (2010, 258) has recently argued that archaeologists should be interested in 'the persistence of things' rather than 'their antiquity'—but I am interested in *both*, and particularly the antiquity of when those things became configured and reconfigured in a certain way in relation to other things, people, places, forces, and so on. Typologies and chronologies exist so that we can make effective descriptions of changing communities, worlds, and ultimately understand how reality has unfolded in a very specific way. This is all part of 'arriving at a good description' (Borić and Strathern 2010), one that is well articulated and effective in transforming some other aspects of the world. This requires providing some very detailed description of the phenomena under investigation, but I believe this is a vital part of archaeological synthesis. As a student of archaeology in Britain in the 1990s I was inspired by synthetic accounts of British prehistory that set clear agendas for understanding past phenomena (e.g. Barrett 1994; Bradley 1984; Edmonds 1999; Gosden 1994; Thomas 1996; Tilley 1994). These are all brilliant books (and they were certainly effective), and my next comments refer to only some sections of some them; but sometimes I felt the magic took place off-stage or behind the curtain, and that interpretations were presented without specifying how information had been collected, selected, or processed. I sometimes felt that I did not gain sufficient knowledge of the wider corpus of relevant archaeological remains to make any real assessment of the narratives about specific types of artefacts, sites, or types of sites, landscapes, regions, or periods. Occasionally graphs and charts were produced that did not specify which sites had been examined, making it impossible to work back to the evidence or to assess the reliability of the information as new material was discovered. Some detailed regional studies which set out statistical patterns in the evidence did not provide a way to ascertain precisely which evidence was considered in each analysis (e.g. Pierpoint 1980). This book is part of an attempt to look behind the curtain, and show the working that goes on in the process of synthetic interpretation at a regional scale.

At the same time, the core strength of archaeology as a discipline is that 'it is not a study *of* at all, but a study *with*' (to co-opt a phrase intended for 'anthropology' and 'people' by Ingold 2011, 238, emphases added): archaeology studies *with* the remains of the past which have endured in some form into the present. You might, perhaps, object that we study the remains of the past, we do not study with them. I will argue that as much as we bring various concepts, theories, and techniques to bear on the remains of the past we equally bring archaeological remains to bear on these concepts, theories, and techniques. We engage with the remains of the past in order to consider something *other* than those remains: what they tell us about past subsistence practices or gender relations or change and continuity, or what people did with their dead, or what other archaeological techniques and theories they allow us to develop. We attempt to explore the relations that composed and

transformed past things, bodies, places, and materials. You may say that we should stick to what we can know for sure *directly from the remains themselves*, arguing that this includes where the stone for this axehead was quarried and where it was deposited. You might add that we may make inferences about what kind of motivations or beliefs surrounded its movement from there to here or the social relations involved but never be able to know for certain in the same way we can know directly where the axe was quarried. But, I would reply, everything we know or try to know about that axe is mediated by the other 'things' we work with *as well as* the remains of the past, such as anthropological concepts, trowels, microscopes, and radiocarbon laboratories. Thus, we never know the things of the past *directly* but always in relation to other things. Some mediations are better understood and better articulated than others, and in that respect they are more effective in how they transform reality, but each of these interpretative interactions requires critical reflection and their tenability may be revised over time. You may say, well of course we know this and we accept the past is constructed in the present to some degree, but the evidence resists some interpretations and fits with others. And I would answer that, indeed, most of us accept that this is how archaeology works, but we have not fully explored the relationships among and between 'things', 'practices', and 'interpretations'. I want to push that exploration a little further in this book, and I think a relational realist approach allows us to do so. You may question what constitutes evidence. For me, evidence is the specific configuration of artefact, technique, theory, equipment, and so on in each act of enquiry. But further, archaeological practice engages with the remains of the past in such a way to extend, to draw along, the traces of past relations that endure in the evidence from one configuration to another. Photographs of objects and places, context sheets, site plans, drawings of objects, and writings describing archaeological remains are all translations, transformations, extensions, and transfers of the remains themselves. Some properties of the remains are translated and preserved through the recording process, and through this process some features of the past object survive and become extended. Material things are the enduring legacies of successive past relationships; they extend some features of past relationships through time. From this basis I would argue that we should not see a pot and a photograph of it as entirely distinct entities, with one being real and the other a representation (nor even 'primary' and 'secondary' sources or 'original' and 'copy'). Instead, the photo extends some of the visual properties of the pot to new possibilities of circulation: it literally translates it in time and space, reducing out some features of the vessel and amplifying others. But, surely the pot is original, it came first, you may say. But what came before the pot, what *relations* produced it? Were they not more originary? I would say that the pot is itself a translation of materials, previous pots and practices, and so on. What we can see in the dynamic 'archaeological record', then, is the continual transferral and translation of past relationships.

'You' and 'I' in the latter discussion are two features of the archaeologist within me who struggles on a daily basis to reconcile a hunger to know ever more about archaeological remains, and work with credible facts, with a thirst for understanding what past lives and worlds were like and a need to probe at the effective yet flawed ideas on which much modern knowledge is based. This book is born out of that struggle, and is intended not as a theory demonstrated by a case study, nor as an empirical analysis leading to an interpretation, but as an exploration of what Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England *were* and *are*, and how they *became* and *become* so. It is an attempt to make plain, and critically reflect on, as many of the different factors contributing to the phenomenon discussed in the book as possible. In so doing I am acknowledging that the fine detail of archaeological inquiry is exciting and revealing, and argue that close discussion of the history and detail of inquiry and evidence is vital to producing better-connected, inspiring, and accurate accounts of the past which will be effective in new ways.

WHY STUDY MORTUARY DEPOSITS FROM THE CHALCOLITHIC AND EARLY BRONZE AGE NORTH-EAST ENGLAND (2500–1500 BC[1])?

The period *c.*2500–1500 BC is an important one in understanding the long-term pattern in changing mortuary rituals and ways of being and becoming in British prehistory. There was a great deal of diversity in how the dead were treated from the outset of the earlier Neolithic (*c.*4000 BC) through to the end of the Iron Age, and the vast majority of the population seem not to have been buried at all (e.g. Armit 2012; Armit and Ginn 2007; Brück 1995; 2004*a* and *b*; 2006; 2009; Fowler 2010*a*; Fowler and Scarre in press; Gibson 2004; 2007). This diversity leads us to reflect on *why* some of the dead were buried. To take the earlier Neolithic as an example, some of the dead were buried within stone or wood chambers, or in pits or ditches at causewayed enclosures. The places where these monuments were erected were often historically significant. For instance, many earthen long barrows concealed pairs of standing posts seemingly created by splitting tree trunks in half lengthways, and the mortuary deposits were often placed between these posts, whether in a chamber erected at the site or not. In some cases several people were buried at once and in some cases they had suffered violence surrounding death or their bodies had been scavenged by animals. In at least some cases those buried suffered violent or difficult deaths. Bodies were often laid out in formal ways, even if they were

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[1] All radiocarbon dates referred to in this book are calibrated radiocarbon years (cal. BC).

left to decompose and/or bones were then intermingled, sorted, or relocated. The positioning of the body on one side with the legs drawn up recurred throughout the Neolithic in different regions and periods (e.g. Neolithic single burials in cairns in the Peak District). Cremation was also practised throughout the Neolithic. Most bodies must have been either exposed to the elements or cremated and then so exposed since they were not formally buried, and cremation before deposition seems to have come to the fore at cemeteries and enclosures in the middle and later Neolithic, as at Stonehenge (Parker Pearson et al. 2009) and Forteviot (Noble and Brophy 2011). Throughout the fourth, third, and second millennia BC, there may have been many varied reasons why the selected bodies of the dead were treated in these special ways, but while certain practices occurred rarely yet over large areas, it seems unlikely that these burials denote the 'normal' funerary rite. Relatively few people were buried or placed in chambers after death, and there are very few sites in the North-East of England where any of these practices have been located. Until recently it has often been assumed that the burial of a single intact body in a cist or grave from *c*.2500 BC was a normative burial practice for certain members of society, including those of high status, and indicated a concern with the individual identity of the dead. As we will see in Chapter 3 recent scholarship has undermined some of these assumptions, but we are yet to see the publication of a detailed study at a regional level which explores the detail of these and other burial practices in the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age from a more critical perspective. This books aims to do just that, making sense of the changing significance, legacies, and effects of different mortuary practices throughout the period.

The terms Chalcolithic (2500–2200 BC) and Early Bronze Age (2200–1500 BC) are problematic starting points. They characterize long periods of time on the basis of a technological feature: the presence of copper or bronze. Copper and bronze are very rarely recovered from burials from the period. The term 'Chalcolithic' is particularly contested, with some authors arguing that there are significant continuities from the preceding Neolithic period and others noting distinctive activities emerging during the period (see contributions to Allen et al. 2012). I could equally have referred to the study period as Later Neolithic or Final Neolithic and Early Bronze Age; but this would have a similar result in creating an impression of two monolithic cultural designations. Since the burial practices I examine began only after *c*.2500 BC, a period label starting around that date is a useful shorthand. Nothing more is meant by the terms Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age in this study than to refer to the periods *c*.2500–2200 BC and 2200–1500 BC, and throughout the book I will focus on specific phenomena that occurred in certain centuries, some crossing both periods. Equally, I will treat the region of North-East England (defined as Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, and County Durham) heuristically rather than out of any belief that it has any particular integrity at

any point in the period. As I will explore in Chapter 6, shifting networks of relations between mortuary practices in North-East England and those in Yorkshire, South-East Scotland, and North-East Scotland are all important in understanding the significance of regional and local patterns: from that perspective, the approach taken in this book is also multi-scalar.

The last ten years have seen the emergence of increasingly fine resolution chronological models for the period, providing excellent opportunity for an investigation into changing mortuary practices across the British Isles as a whole. These are a key foundation for this study. Accepting such typo-chronologies without explicitly discussing their inner workings and configur-ations 'black boxes'[2] (or shuts away from inquiry) the techniques involved, such as the selection of material for radiocarbon dating, the development of different radiocarbon dating technologies, and the detailed development of ceramic typologies. Yet it is always necessary to 'black box' some aspect of study, and since my own work provides no reason to question or funda-mentally revise these chronologies and typologies—indeed, it reinforces some of them (see Chapters 4 and 6)—I simply summarize the key strands that will be woven into the evidence from North-East England and act alongside radiocarbon dates and relative sequences from sites in that region.

Paul Garwood (2007) has identified distinct phases of mortuary activity and monument construction throughout the period (Figure 1.1). These phases apply generally to the evidence from North-East England, though some features seen elsewhere in Britain are apparently absent (e.g. stake circles prior to barrow construction) or less common in North-East England (e.g. formal, close-set barrow cemeteries). Across Britain, Chalcolithic mortuary deposits are few in number, usually contain the remains of adults, and are mainly isolated burials with small barrows or cairns or no appreciable mound. During the period *c.*2250–1950 BC some children as well as adults were buried in graves and stone cists, and while most were buried in a crouched position, increasingly both cremated and unburnt bones were deposited. There is significant variation within this period, which close study can tease into a series of overlapping preferences for burial orientation, grave goods, and bodily treatment. Cremation, which had perhaps been practised during the earlier part of the period but not followed by deposition of remains, was increasingly applied to bodies that would then also receive burials in cists with and/or in Vase Food Vessels. Eventually cists were abandoned and urns containing the dead were enlarged (whether Food Vessel Urns, Vase Urns, or

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[2] To 'black box' a phenomenon is to draw a veil over the internal operations that make it what it is in order to deploy it in another relationship and trace the impact it has on the other phenomenon. In this case I am accepting the practices, conventions, and apparatus involved in radiocarbon dating and in producing certain typo-chronologies without critically exploring them at this point. The term is Latour's (1999).
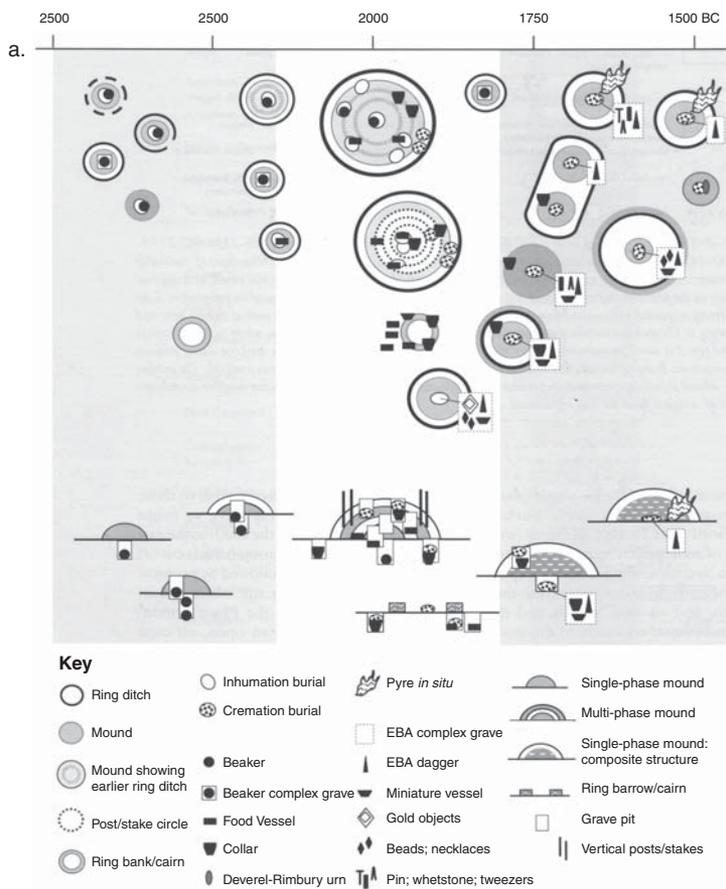
b.

	*c.*2500–2150 BC	*c.*2150–1850 BC	*c.*1850–1500 BC
Mounds	Small, mostly single-phase mounds. Mound elaboration events very rare, and late in this period. Timber structures such as stake circles rare and small in size. Occasional examples of rectangular 'mortuary houses'.	Wide range of mound sizes and forms. Some mounds progressively enlarged as multi-phase monuments, in some cases resulting in massive mound structures. Continuing practice of single-phase mound building. Timber stake or post settings fairly common. Most concentric stake circles erected on top of existing mounds prior to burial events and mound enlargment episodes.	Single-phase mounds predominate, some very large in size. Mound enlargements and other kinds of elaboration rare. In many cases mounds built with carefully shaped external forms, such as 'bell' and 'disc barrows'. Timber stake or post settings less common. Concentric stake circles and other structures usually built as part of burial event followed by single-phase mound construction.
Open arena monuments	Open arena ceremonial monuments such as ring barrows and ring cairns, usually without burials, and spatially separate form funerary mounds	Wide diversity of open arena ceremonial monuments (ring barrows, ring cairns, pond barrows and platform barrows). Earlier dichotomy between mounds and open area monuments dissolved with presence of open arena structures and burials at both.	Rare construction of new open arena monuments, but continuing burials at some existing sites.
Burials	Mostly single inhumation graves in central postions. Some examples of burial sequences in central grave pits. Adult males most common and usually in primary contexts. Beakers and associated artefact types most common as grave goods. Inhumations with Food Vessels appear towards the end of this period. Cremation rare.	Single inhumation graves predominate in both central and peripheral positions. Multiple burials at many mound sites, often with a wide range of age and gender categories. Beakers, Food Vessels, and associated artefacts most common as grave goods. Increasing frequency of cremation burials, especially with Collared Urns.	Except for a few inhumation graves (early Wessex and final Beaker, 1900–1750 BC), cremation burials predominate, many with urns (Collared, Food Vessel, and Cordoned). Multiple central burials rare. Tradition of 'rich' graves defined by large scale and complexity of assemblages ('Wessex graves').

Figure 1.1 a. Schematic chronological and interpretative framework for Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age funerary mounds, open area monuments and structures, burial practices, and grave assemblages, *c.*2500–1500 BC. b. Summary chronological framework for Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial architecture and burial practices

Source: Garwood (2007). Reproduced courtesy of Paul Garwood

Collared or Cordoned Urns), and eventually cremated remains were buried without any enduring container. There is a clear trend towards the nucleation of the dead after 2250 BC and especially after 2100 BC: first at cemeteries, cairns, and barrows, and later by combining the remains of the dead in single features or deposits. The local patterns in and implications of changing mortuary features, monuments, and choices of location for burial in North-East England will be explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

Typo-chronologies of the key artefacts from the period assist in developing an appreciation of changing mortuary practices, and are crucial to the analyses carried out from Chapter 4 onwards. Beaker pottery consists of thin-walled and finely decorated vessels which first appeared in Britain around 2500 BC. Those from the North-East are typically tempered with fine inclusions of sand, stone, and quartz, often with a red surface slip (Millson et al. 2011, 18). Stuart Needham (2005) produced a detailed typology and chronology for different styles of Beaker pottery in Britain, supported by radiocarbon dates from material associated with numerous examples of each type, and this has been expanded on and modified subsequently (Healy 2012; Needham 2012; Sheridan 2007a; Wilkin 2009). The scheme focuses primarily on vessel shape, though Beakers can also be classified according to some decorative styles which indicate cultural affinities during some time periods (Table 1.1; Figure 1.2). Thirty-nine of the mortuary deposits from North-East England contained Beaker pottery, though not all of the vessels from these deposits could be clearly assigned to a type (e.g. if no visual record survives).

Bronze or copper-alloy artefacts can also be used to provide typo-chronologies for mortuary deposits. Flat riveted daggers, of which there are five in North-East England, date to c.2200–1900 BC, while knife-daggers, of which there are three, date to c.2200–1600 BC (Figure 1.3; Sheridan 2007b, 178–9). During the same period beads and buttons made from jet were also buried with some bodies. The sources of copper, tin, and jet are all outside the study area; the implications of the involvement of these exotic materials and artefacts in the assemblage will be explored in Chapters 4 and 6.

Food Vessels were so called by antiquarians in contrast to Beakers, which were presumed to be drinking cups. Generally, Food Vessel fabrics are coarser than Beaker fabrics, and the decorative repertoire favours herringbone patterns and impressions with whipped or twisted cord (Figure 1.4; Figure 1.5). The tops of rims may be decorated and occasionally the bases of vessels are marked with impressions, sometimes arranged into a cross with or without a circle around it. Food Vessels can be divided into three groups based on size and shape. Bowl Food Vessels are differentiated from Vase Food Vessels in that they tend to be roughly as wide at the mouth as they are tall and/or to have distinctly rounded forms. Vases are taller, often having straighter profiles with angular changes at shoulders or cavettos. The term Food Vessel Urn refers to vessels (essentially vases) over c.20cm tall, regardless of whether or
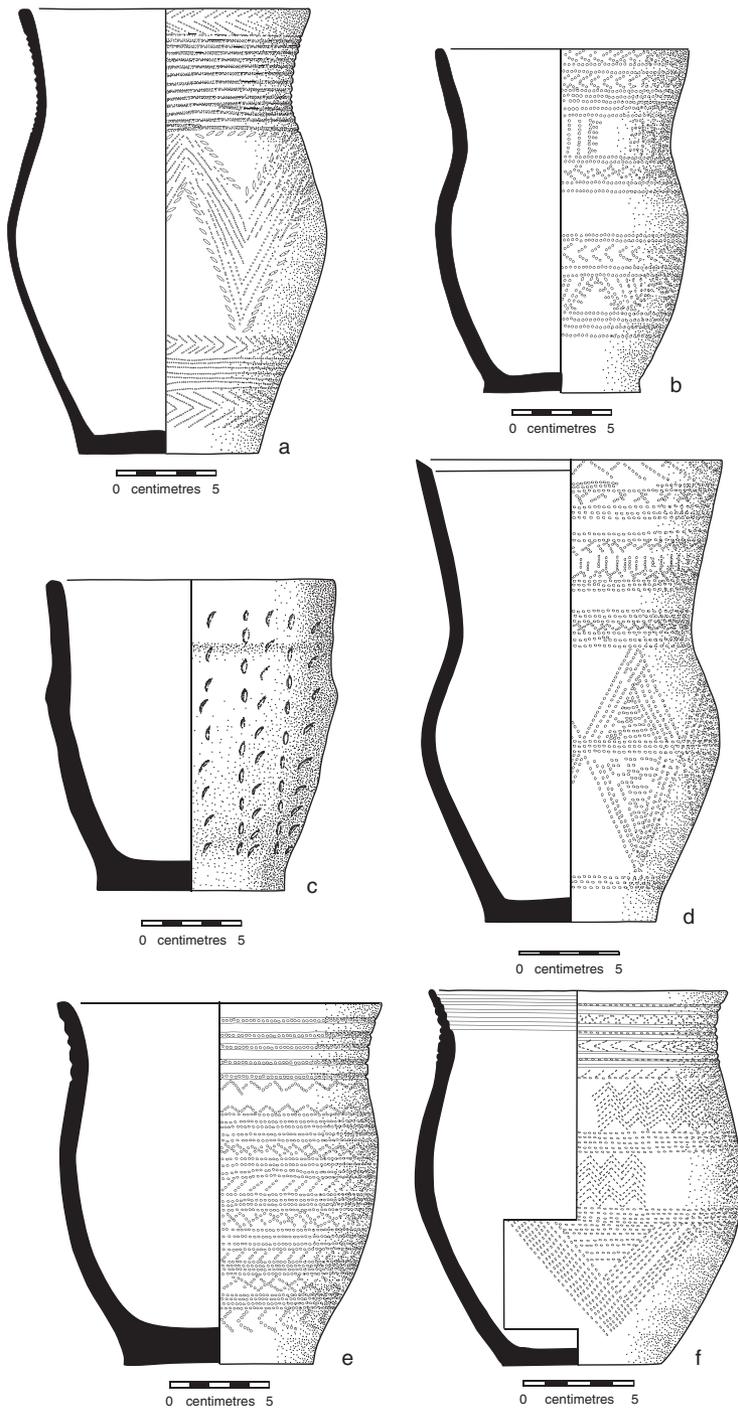
Figure 1.2 Examples of Beaker vessel styles from North-East England: a. Tall Short-Necked (North Hazelrigg); b. Short-Necked (High Buston); c. Weak-Carinated (Hunt-law Quarry); d. Long-Necked (Shipley); e. High-Bellied S-Profile (Summerhill cist 4); and f. Globular S-Profile (Chatton Sandyford grave 1). Drawn by Sheila Severn Newton, after Tait (1965) and Jobey (1968)

Table 1.1 Typo-chronology for Beaker pottery (only styles present in the dataset are listed; date ranges given are based on vessels from across Britain)

Type of Beaker	Chronology	Burials in dataset	Common decorative elements and affinities
Low-Carinated and Mid-Carinated (LC/MC)	*c.*2450–2150 BC	2	All Over Cord, All Over Comb, or horizontal zones of decoration (lattices, diamonds, diagonals, zigzags and chevrons) alternated with plain zones
Tall Short-Necked (TSN)	*c.*2300–2200 BC	3	Horizontal zones including, for instance, zigzags, lines, and herringbone patterns, some plain bands
Short-Necked (SN)	*c.*2300–2100 BC	19	Horizontal zones including, for instance, zigzags, lines, and herringbone patterns, some plain bands
Weak-Carinated, late series (WC)	*c.*2250–1950 BC	3	Various
High-Bellied S-Profile (HBSP)	*c.*2250–1950 BC	2	Incised plain bands around neck, decorated horizontal zones below
Long-Necked, early series (LN)	*c.*2200–2050 BC	3	Wide horizontal zones filled with zigzags, herringbone, chevrons, or saltires, a few narrow plain bands
Tall Mid-Carinated (TMC)	*c.*2200–1900 BC	1	Banded with chevrons
Long-Necked, later series (LN)	*c.*2100–1800 BC	3	See above, Long-Necked, early series
Globular S-Profile Beakers (GSP)	*c.*2050–1850 BC	4	Similar decorative elements deployed across vessel
Mid-Bellied S-Profile (MBSP)	*c.*1950–1800 BC	1	Alternating decorated and plain horizontal zones

not they were used as urns to contain human remains (Gibson 1978, 8–9). Enlarged Food Vessel Urns, are over 30cm in height, and contained cremated remains, often from more than one individual. It has also been suggested that a 'Neolithic-derivative' coarse pottery was contemporary with Beaker pottery (and thus much Food Vessel pottery) but seldom chosen for deposition with the dead (Millson et al. 2011). Much of this corpus of Food Vessels from 88 mortuary deposits in North-East England shares similarities with Scottish vessels that have been dated to *c.*2150–1700 BC (Sheridan 2004, 249; 2007*b*). Bowl Food Vessels, of which there are five within the corpus, date to *c.*2160–1930 BC in Ireland and probably a similar period in Britain, Vase Food Vessels to *c.*2100–1700 BC while Food Vessel Urns and EFVUs are likely to date to *c.*2050–1700 BC (Brindley 2007; Sheridan 2004; 2007*b*, 169).

Figure 1.3 Flat riveted bronze daggers from Allerwash and Reaverhill, flint dagger from Tarset, and flint knife from Bewes Hill (left to right). Photograph by the author

In Chapters 4 and 6 I will explore the relation between these vessel types and the mortuary deposits, arguing that our way through the complexities of Food Vessel typology can be guided by the relational unfolding of this vessel style over time: their uses in the graves provide clues about the extent to which and ways in which the size, shape, and style of Food Vessels were relevant to people in the past.

Collared Urns are thick-walled vessels often of coarse fabric, having a distinctive collar extending from the rim down several centimetres into the body of the pot and sometimes a cavetto zone beneath this collar (Figure 1.6). The collars are usually decorated with patterns, often executed by impressions of twisted or whipped cord. Sometimes decoration extends to the body of the vessel. Collared Urns in the North-East are usually over 15cm tall, though (as with all the ceramic types) there are also miniature examples. The dataset includes 17 Collared Urns which usually contained the cremated remains of the dead—sometimes the bones of a single individual, sometimes more than one individual—*c*.2000 BC to *c*.1550 BC (Sheridan 2007*b*). Only two Cordoned Urns have been identified in the region: these seem to be a development from Collared Urns that took place sometime around 1800 BC and remained in use through to *c*.1550 BC (Sheridan 2007b, 169–70).

The Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age burials from North-East England provide an excellent dataset for exploring how mortuary practices changed over time by attending to the relationships between one burial and others. The dataset is extremely complex, fragmentary, and uneven—but that is the nature of all archaeological evidence. It is the result of the work of many generations of antiquarians and archaeologists working with changing tools, techniques,
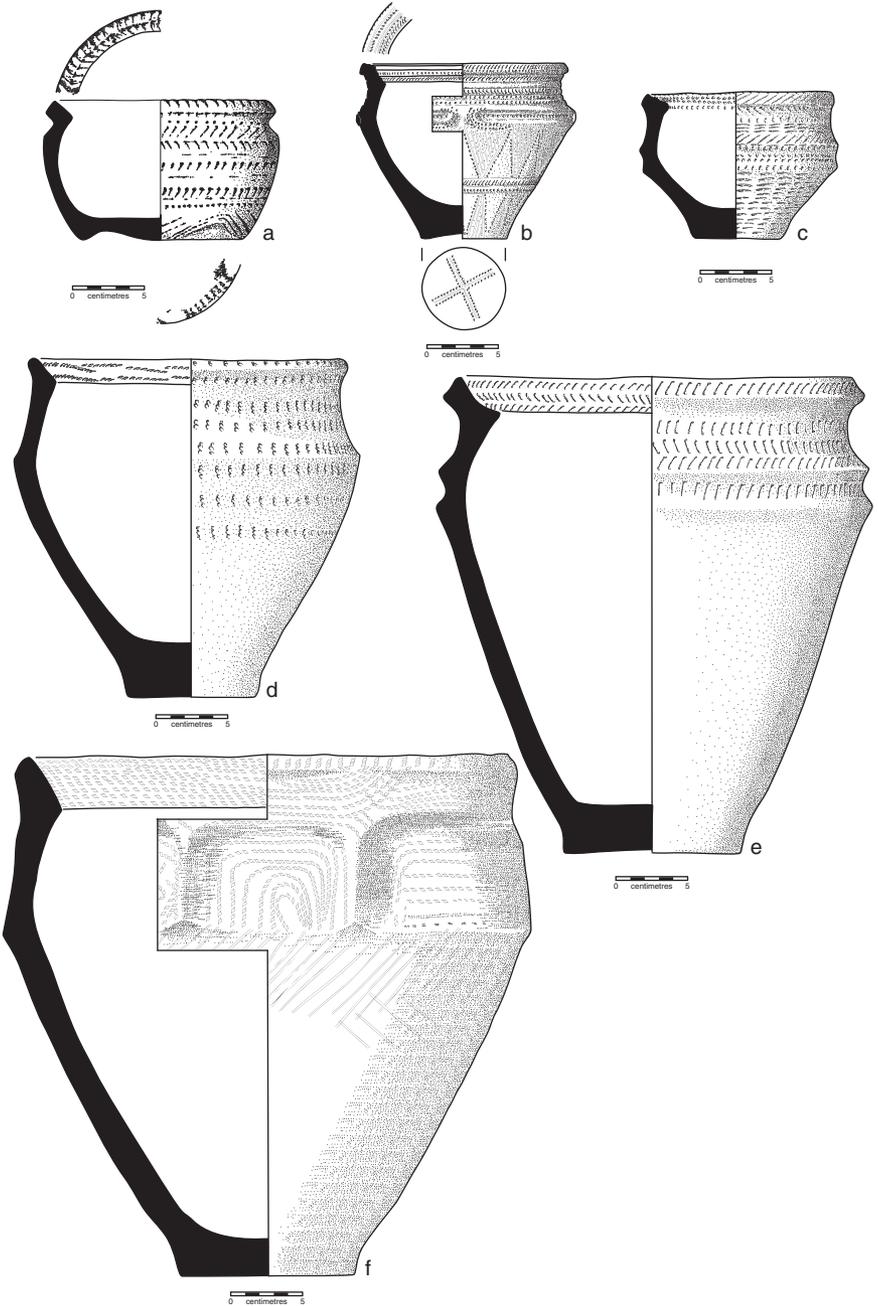
Figure 1.4 Food Vessel pottery from North-East England: a. Bowl Food Vessel (Cheviot Walk Wood); b. Vase Food Vessel (Harbottle Peels, Alwinton, Gw202); c. Vase Food Vessel (Greenhill, Ilderton, GwUn23); d. Food Vessel Urn (Farnham, Alwinton, GwUn10); e. Food Vessel Urn (Copt Hill, GwUn3); f. Enlarged Food Vessel Urn (Goatscrag). Drawn by Sheila Severn Newton, after Stopford et al. (1985), Kinnes and Longworth (1985), and Burgess (1972)

Figure 1.5 Food Vessel pottery from North-East England: Enlarged Food Vessel Urn (centre) with Vases and Bowls. The Enlarged Urn is from Goatscrag, the Bowl on the left from Dour Hill. Photograph courtesy of Andrew Parkin

Figure 1.6 Collared Urns from North-East England. The large vessel is from Birkside Fell. Photograph courtesy of Andrew Parkin

and knowledges. Until now, there has never been a complete synthesis of mortuary deposits or mortuary sites from the period for North-East England. Many hundreds of bodies were buried during the period in this region, possibly thousands. Despite this, the North-East has not featured significantly in national syntheses of these periods since Greenwell's *British Barrows* (Greenwell 1877). One reason for this may be that levels of preservation of human and animal remains (among other organic materials) are not as good as in other regions which occupy a more prominent position in the literature, such as eastern Yorkshire or Wessex. Another reason why North-East England has been overlooked may be that there are fewer impressive or exotic artefacts in the graves compared with these other regions. These perceptions are, to some extent, correct, but the quality of preservation and quantity of the remains are certainly sufficient for analysis, while the fact that there are fewer exotic goods (and some of these are unevenly distributed) should be an impetus for research rather than an impediment: what lies behind this regional picture? What are the implications for understanding local, regional, and long-distance relations in this period? The lack of synthesis is also surprising since there is a long tradition of antiquarian and archaeological investigation (Chart 1.1), including by members of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne which was established in 1813, and since 48 sites from Northumberland (yielding 120 deposits) are included in a corpus of 443 'Greenwell' sites (Kinnes and Longworth 1985). In preparation for this book I drew on the rich resource distributed throughout local journals, antiquarian books, museum archives and stores, and online historic environment records to pull together a dataset of information on 355 mortuary deposits from 151 different mortuary sites (Map 1.1; Appendices A and B). This was a selective process, and many other sites were excluded from the dataset due to poor
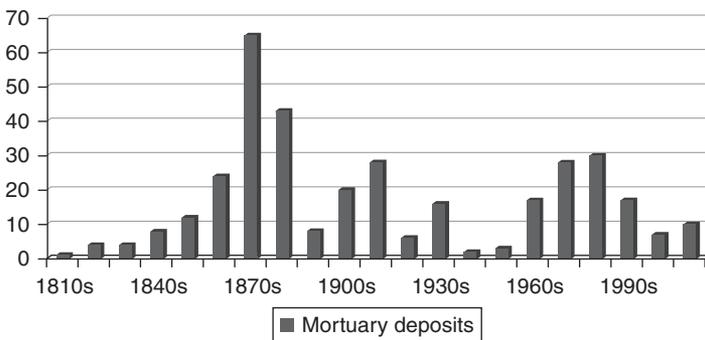
Chart 1.1 Decades in which the mortuary deposits from North-East England used in this study were excavated (or if the date of excavation is not reported, the date of publication). N = 351

preservation, poor recording, or a combination of these factors. Where necessary I will refer to such excluded sites that nonetheless add information to the overall picture.

Categorizing these burials, artefacts, and sites into types with known periods of currency has been vital in exploring how mortuary practices changed in the region in as fine detail as possible. This in turn permits a thorough consideration of changing relations: relations among the recently deceased, long dead, and the living at the mortuary site; relations among different materials, things, and places; relationships between different practices (for instance, what can we say about the general shift from crouched burial to cremation based on a highly detailed analysis of over 350 deposits—indeed, what other treatments emerge as we bore into those categories?). Chapter 2 will set out the theoretical basis of the approach, while Chapter 3 will explore the concepts that archaeologists have introduced in order to make sense of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in Britain to date. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will explore the detail of the mortuary deposits of human remains, materials and artefacts, and the associated features and architecture, focusing on how each changed over time. These chapters examine changes in the treatment of the corpse, the selection of place of deposition, the preparation of the grave, the selection and placement of artefacts and materials around the remains, and the emergence of burial grounds and monuments in order to trace changing forms of relations and changing ways of being and becoming in the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age. Re-articulating this assemblage with contemporary chronological and theoretical frameworks, tools, and techniques, allows a new understanding to emerge not only of this material but of the methods and effects involved in archaeological synthesis.
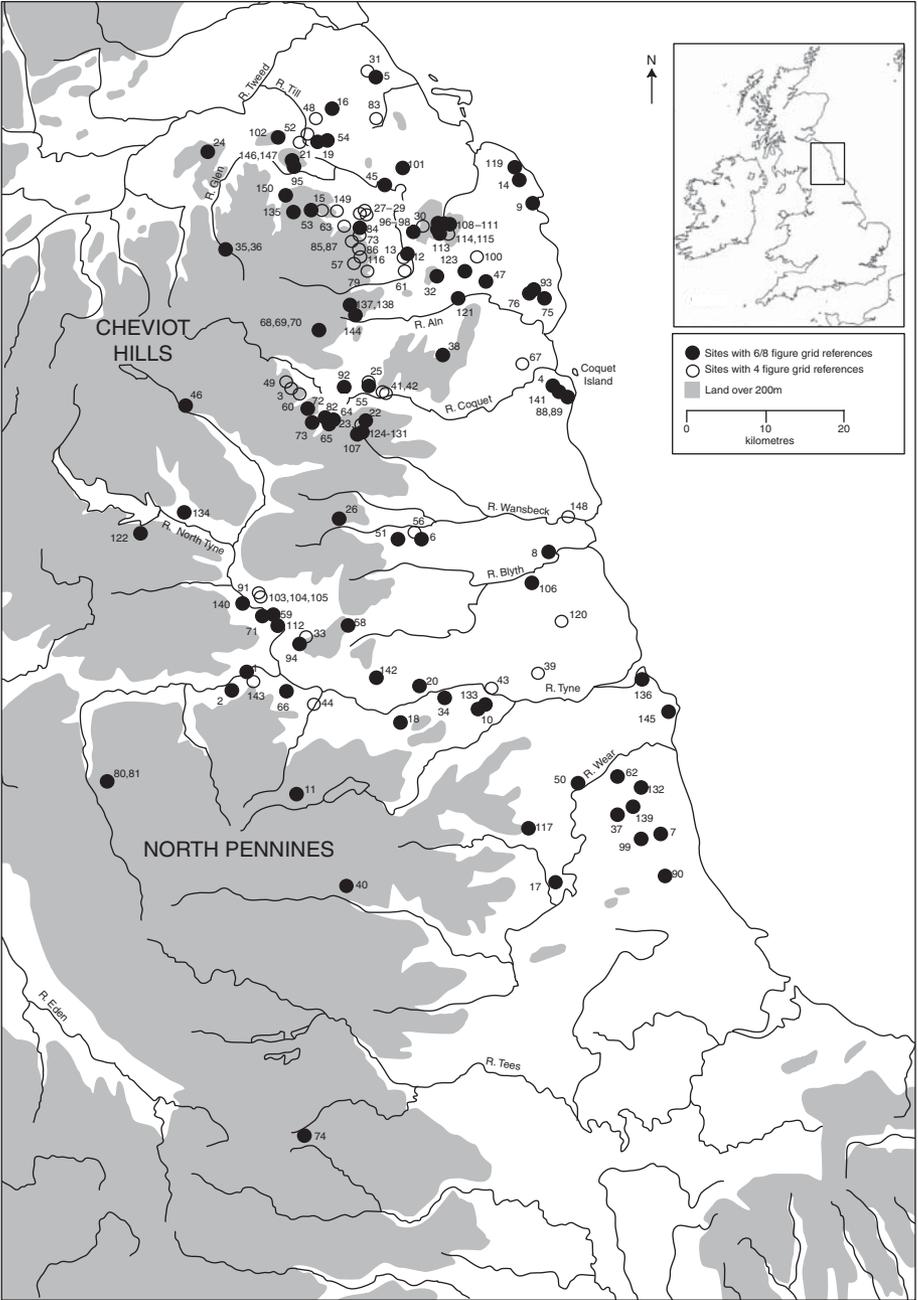
Map 1.1 Map of North-East England locating sites included in the dataset. Drawn by Sheila Severn Newton

Sites listed in Map 1.1

1. Allerwash cist
2. Altonside cist
3. Alwinton cairn (Gw203)
4. Amble
5. Ancroft cist (GwUn11)
6. Angerton cist, Hartburn
7. Batter Law barrow
8. Bedlington cist cemetery
9. Benthall cairn
10. Bewes Hill cist
11. Birkside Fell cairn
12. Blawearie cairn (Eglingham, Gw200)
13. Blawearie Satellite cairn 1
14. Bluebell Inn cist
15. Bowchester cist, Humbleton Farm
16. Bowsden West Farm cist
17. Brandon barrow
18. Broomhill cist, High Mickley
19. Broomhill kerbed cairn (Ford, Gw187)
20. Broomhouses barrow (Ovingham Gw214)
21. Broomridge 2 (GwUn15)
22. Burgh Hill 1 (Gw208, Rothbury)
23. Burgh Hill 2 (Gw209, Rothbury)
24. Carham, Howburn (GwUn30)
25. Cartington Farm
26. Catcherside, Kirk Whelpington (Gw211)
27. Chatton barrow 1 (Gw190)
28. Chatton barrow 2 (Gw191)
29. Chatton barrow 3 (Gw192)
30. Chatton Sandyford cairn 1, Sandyford Moor
31. Cheswick cist (GwUn16)
32. Cheviot Walk Wood cemetery
33. Chollerton barrow (Gw213)
34. Clara Vale cist
35. Coldsmouth Hill south cairn
36. Coldsmouth Hill north cairn
37. Copt Hill Neolithic round barrow (Hougton Le Spring, GwUn3)
38. Corby's Crags rock shelter
39. Crag Hall cists, Jesmond
40. Crawley Edge cairn, Stanhope
41. Debdon Farm cairn 1, Cartington Fell (Gw206)
42. Debdon Farm cairn 2, Cartington Fell (Gw207)
43. Denton cist
44. Dilston Park cists
45. Doddington cist (Gw189)
46. Dour Hill cist, Byrness
47. Ellsnook cist
48. Etal Moor barrow (Ford Gw184)
49. Farnham cist (GwUn10)
50. Fatfield barrow
51. Fawns barrow, Kirkwhelpington (Gw210)
52. Ford barrow (Gw186)
53. Gains Law ring cairn
54. Goatscrag rock shelter
55. Great Tosson Quarry cists (GwUn22)
56. Green Leighton barrow, Hartburn (Gw212)
57. Greenhill cist, Ilderton (GwUn23)
58. Grundstone Law barrow (GwUn24)
59. Gunnerton cist (GwUn25)
60. Harbottle Peels cairn/cist cemetery (Gw202 Alwinton)
61. Harehope Hill cairn, Eglingham (Gw201)
62. Hasting Hill barrow
63. Haugh Head cist, Wooler
64. Hedley Wood cist (GwUn27)
65. Hepple cairn, Rothbury (GwUn29)
66. Hexham Golf Course cist
67. High Buston cist
68. High Knowes Cairnfield A cairn 2
69. High Knowes Cairnfield B ring ditch enclosure
70. High Knowes Cairnfield A small henge/banked enclosure
71. Hollybush Field cist
72. Holystone Common cairn 1 (Gw204)
73. Holystone Common cairn 2 (Gw205)
74. How Tallon cairn, Barningham Moor
75. Howick cist cemetery
76. Howick Heugh ring cairn
77. Humbleton Burn House cist
78. Huntlaw Quarry cist, Belsay
79. Jubilee Wood cist, Roddam
80. Kirkhaugh barrow 1, Alston
81. Kirkhaugh barrow 2, Alston
82. Kirkhill cremation cemetery
83. Kyloe Quarry cist
84. Lilburn Hill Farm (North) cemetery
85. Lilburn Hill Farm (East) cemetery
86. Lilburn South Steads cist, West Lilburn
87. Lilburn Tower Farm cist, West Lilburn
88. Low Hauxley cists
89. Low Hauxley erosion cairn
90. Low Hills barrow
91. Low Shield Green Crag barrow
92. Low Trewhitt barrow
93. Lowstead Ground cist, Howick
94. Middle Gunnar Peak cairn, Barrasford
95. Milfield North henge
96. Millstone Hill kerb cairn 1
97. Millstone Hill kerb cairn 2
98. Millstone Hill kerb cairn 3
99. Murton Moor barrow
100. North Charlton cairn
101. North Hazelrigg cist
102. Pace Hill (Crookham) cemetery
103. Pitland Hills, Birtley, barrow 1
104. Pitland Hills, Birtley, barrow 2
105. Pitland Hills, Birtley, barrow 3
106. Plessy Mill (GwUn36)
107. Ravensheugh cairn (Dixon burial 10)
108. Rayheugh cairn 1, Lucker Moor (Gw193 Bamborough)
109. Rayheugh cairn 2, Lucker Moor (Gw194 Bamborough)
110. Rayheugh cairn 3, Lucker Moor (Gw195 Bamborough)
111. Rayheugh cairn 4, Lucker Moor (Gw196 Bamborough)
112. Reaverhill cist, Barrasford
113. Rosebrough Moor cairn 1 (Gw197 Rosbrough I)
114. Rosebrough Moor cairn 2 (Gw198 Rosbrough II)
115. Rosebrough Moor cairn 3 (Gw199 Bamborough)
116. Roseden Edge (GwUn39, Rosedean)
117. Sacriston cist
118. Sandyford Park cist
119. Seafield Farm cist cemetery
120. Seghill cist (GwUn40)
121. Shipley cist, Alnwick
122. Smalesmouth cist (GwUn41)
123. South Charlton cairn
124. Spital Hill cairn 1
125. Spital Hill cairn 2
126. Spital Hill cairn 3
127. Spital Hill cairn 4
128. Spital Hill cairn 5
129. Spital Hill cairn 6
130. Spital Hill cairn 7
131. Spital Hill cairn 8
132. Steeple Hill cist (GwUn5)
133. Summerhill cist cemetery
134. The Sneep cist
135. Tom Tallon's Grave cairn (Tantallon's Grave) (GwUn43)
136. Trow Rocks barrow (Gw215)
137. Turf Knowe North round cairn
138. Turf Knowe South tri-radial cairn
139. Warden Law cist
140. Warkshaugh Farm barrow (Warkshaugh
141. Warkworth cairn (Gw296)
142. Well House Farm cist
143. West Wharmley cist
144. Wether Hill
145. Wheathall Farm cist
146. Whitton Hill henge 1
147. Whitton Hill henge 2
148. Woodhorn cist (GwUn46)
149. Wooler cist (GwUn47)
150. Yeavering cemetery

Gw = Greenwell site number; GwUn = Greenwell Unnumbered site (numbers from Kinnes and Longworth 1985).

2

Relational realism and the nature of archaeological evidence

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I utilize key concepts from a broad church of relational thinking in order to examine the relational nature of archaeological evidence. I consider different concepts that can be used in constructing a relational yet realist view of the world. This theoretical exegesis explains why the ongoing chain of relationships that have produced both the corpus of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary remains and the interpretations of such remains are an appropriate—indeed vital—target of archaeological analysis. In the course of the chapter important terms used in relational thinking will be defined and their usefulness and limitations explored. The chapter sets out the key tenets of the relational yet realist approach deployed in the book, then discusses the importance of this for archaeological studies of mortuary evidence. While it is a theoretical discussion, it identifies the focal points of re-analyses needed in order to improve our understanding of the Early Bronze Age evidence from North-East England. It is as much about forming a methodology as it is about shaping interpretation.

The theories discussed in this chapter largely reject a classical positivism and a 'correspondence theory of truth'. Almost all of them could be glossed as 'non-representational' approaches in which theories, techniques, technologies, and methodologies are entangled with one another. We cannot directly access any reality without mediating apparatus such as theories or laboratory equipment. This apparatus is itself already a part of reality, as are we: there can therefore be no separation of the real from the interpreted. We are within the phenomena we study, and we extend those phenomena in new directions as we study them. We need to attend to how we are entangled with specific theories, practices, techniques, and technologies as well as the remains of the past, and we need to think simultaneously about the composition of past worlds in the same way.

In this chapter I explore some of the key concepts used in thinking about features of the world as relationally unfolding rather than as self-contained

monadic entities. This is not intended to be a complete review of the many different relational approaches that have been considered in other disciplines (or even in archaeology), but an introduction to the selected concepts that I have found useful in producing a relational but also realist framework for archaeological analysis. I will compare a series of different ways that different authors have visualized what I think is basically the same issue—how we can appreciate the relational nature of entities. The most notable examples are assemblage (e.g. Deleuze and Guattari 2004; Bennett 2005; 2010; Conneller 2011; Lucas 2012), network (e.g. Latour 1999; 2005), meshwork (DeLanda 1997; Ingold 2011; Lefebvre 1991), entanglement (Barad 2003; 2007; Hodder 2011; 2012), and phenomenon (Barad 2003, 2007). Since each metaphor is rooted in a different material source, they have some important differences, so each deserves some detailed examination. Having set out their key features, I will then critically evaluate their relative merits and distil out some of the most relevant points for archaeological research. Gavin Lucas (2012) has also published an exploration of archaeological entities and practices which offers important insight on how we can deploy some of these concepts, and I will consider that work before moving on to outline the key theoretical and practical tenets of an archaeological relational realism.

ASSEMBLAGES

Here we will examine how any entity we study can be seen as an assemblage which emerges from certain relationships, how the properties of entities are relational rather than fixed, and how some features of these assemblages endure even when others change. I will start with a set of concepts that derived from the joint work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (especially Deleuze and Guattari 2004). As their work is directed towards interpreting modern phenomena such as the State, we need to read across this in order to examine not states or even conventional understandings of societies of humans, but a broader understanding of reality as composed of various features (entities, forces, processes, etc.). In this I will be led by those who have already adapted certain features of Deleuze and Guattari's work, such as Jane Bennett (2005; 2010) and Tim Ingold (2009; 2011), or, in archaeology, Chantal Conneller (2011) and, in a later section, Gavin Lucas (2012).

What is an assemblage? How do assemblages emerge?

Assemblage (*agencement*: perhaps more literally translated as 'arrangement') is a key concept in Deleuze's thinking which has a particular resonance with archaeologists because of our long-standing perception of associated artefacts

as assemblages (e.g. Robb 2004; Lucas 2010, 34; 2012; McFadyen 2010, 46–7). For Deleuze an assemblage is 'a composition that acts' (Due 2007, 132), and a composition that has a specific shape and constitution. The contents of an assemblage can be heterogeneous, including humans, animals, plants, things, architecture, etc., and when an assemblage arises its elements are codified through the processes that produce it. As Robb (2004, 134) puts it, in an assemblage:

> Things may occur together because they are functionally linked—the mallet and chisel—or because they are semantically linked—the suit and briefcase. They may presuppose one another—the TV and the VCR—or be hierarchically-additive in a culturally-understood, conventional relation—you start with a standard minimum kitchen provision of stove, sink, counter top and fridge, and add items . . . right through to . . . the electronic olive stoner.

An assemblage is a charged, ordered entity arising from complex histories of interaction. It consists of various relations among its constituents, some of which may be sequential, hierarchical, integral to, or dependent on other relationships. The assemblage is not a complete system and it does not arise out of any *singular* organizing principle or point of origin, but a series of intersecting forces, entities, practices, and/or processes. It does not form a hermetic whole and each assemblage can be part of further assemblages. Parts of an assemblage can endure while the rest of the assemblage changes. The properties and effects of an assemblage emerge from the relationships comprising it, including the relationships between the component parts.

Jane Bennett (2005; 2010, 23–8), explores the agency of assemblages as compared to the agency of a particular species or thing or individual. She has considered the North American electric power grid as an example of an assemblage by analysing the widespread power blackouts across the grid in August 2003. She writes

> Assemblages are *ad hoc* groupings of diverse elements . . . that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within.
>
> (Bennett 2010, 23–4)

In the case of the North American power grid the assemblage consisted of 'a volatile mix of coal, sweat, electromagnetic fields, computer programs, electron streams, profit motives, heat, lifestyles, nuclear fuel, plastic, fantasies of mastery, static, legislation, water, economic theory, wire and wood' (Bennett 2010, 25). The grid failed due to no single cause, but an increased dissonance between various of these elements. The elements entering into the assemblage each have their own force and efficacy, but the assemblage as a whole exhibits *emergent properties* which are not caused by any one of these forces, but out of their specific interaction. Assemblages endure for a time but ultimately

destabilize, their elements passing on into new assemblages: the assemblage that is the current North American power grid contains some elements of the 2003 grid but also many new ones. Thus, assemblages coalesce out of a series of complex relationships, exhibit properties that emerge only from such coalescence, and are continually open to contingent transformations.

One difficulty lies in knowing where an assemblage begins and ends, and how many other assemblages it enfolds—I will offer a response to this later. The advantage of the concept is that we can see that its components (including forces and concepts as well as things, materials, organisms) each have histories before entering the assemblage and that their properties and effects change as the assemblage in which they are involved changes. Many of the elements of an assemblage are materials and artefacts, but assemblages also include elements which are not 'directly' observable as presences among archaeological remains: desires, ideas, etc. (and for the archaeologist, often people and objects shaped by the activities that produced the assemblages we find: McFadyen 2010, 47). Nonetheless, as explored later in this chapter, the past presence of these forces in the formation of the assemblage is undeniable, and we have to face the challenge of accounting for them and their impact in the past despite their 'physical absence'.

Objects are assemblages as much as collections of objects are: each object is an assemblage of properties, materials, and forms. Assemblages can also be nested within one another and overlap with one another. A single Beaker may be part of a burial assemblage, but it is also an assemblage and it belongs to a wider assemblage of Beaker vessels. A burial assemblage including an early Beaker pot is also part of a larger assemblage of other such burials (and has a specific place in the historical unfolding of that assemblage). The degree of variation between Beaker burials may be as great within any particular region as it is at the large scale. Assemblages like this are potentially fractal: we can observe nested replications of certain relationships at various scales, from the organization of the largest entity (e.g. the power grid or the 'Beaker phenomenon'), through the medium scale (city power grids or regional distributions of Beaker pottery), to the smallest (from electronic devices to the electricity itself, or Beaker burials and Beakers themselves)—all the while acknowledging that each scale relies on the distinctive composition of the others for its own efficacy. There may be a kind of self-similarity that transcends scale in how assemblages operate. This *self-similarity* at different scales does *not* mean that the patterning is singular in origin, symmetrical, always *identical* across scales, or replicable in *exactly* the same way—in fact, fractals are irregular and unpredictable. When seen at a certain scale and at a certain stage in their temporal unfolding, some fractal patterns can give the *appearance* of grand design in which a single relation or set of relations can be observed throughout. But these patterns occur without any single organizing force: they unfurl over time out of millions of small events in a way that is not even, predictable,

nor predetermined, and has no single cause. They emerge from the phenomena in question. They are the outcomes of myriad historical interactions. And if this is true of fractal assemblages then it should hold for assemblages that are not so clearly patterned too.

The development of assemblages and changes within assemblages are likewise unpredictable: unlike a 'system', there is no expectation that an assemblage or a network is in a state of equilibrium, but rather that these are turbulent formations which may endure for long or short periods of time and be subject to sudden and unpredictable changes (cf. Buchanan 2001, 16, 18). In fact, assemblages that are self-similar, yet also unique, do not occur in systems that are in equilibrium (as in the processualist cybernetic view of societies): they occur in assemblages that are in what physicists call a 'critical state' (Buchannan 2001, 13–16, cf. 77–100). A critical state is not completely organized and it is not entirely chaotic—it has a particular, unstable, historical form. In a critical state change is ongoing and its direction is unpredictable, but any single event can form 'a frozen accident' (Buchanan 2001, 17)—or, I would prefer, an enduring effect or legacy—which shapes the other events that unfold following it as the unstable phenomenon occurs. Buchanan (2001) gives a whole series of examples of complex fractal patterns that arise without design or single cause, including the frequency and scale of earthquakes, heartbeats in a human being, financial patterns in the stock exchange (which is where Mandelbrot first spotted fractals), the scale and frequency of wars, and the development of networks of cities in the United States. Fractals all exhibit power laws, meaning that the frequency with which a certain feature of the pattern occurs varies according to the size or duration of the pattern in a constant way. Yet while we may be able to identify 'power laws' in the patterning of wars or earthquakes, we are powerless to say when or exactly where the next major one will occur or the effects it will have. Thus, while the idea of fractal patterning may sound like a grand principle structuring everything that transpires, it is actually an argument for the opposite: there are no ideal types that prefigure the historical unfolding of a particular phenomenon. Instead, these unfolding or emergent patterns have *multiple* origins at different points in time and space.

So, even clearly patterned assemblages can occur without any single organizing force. Such a lack of equilibrium, such a range of change and diversity within an assemblage, should alert us to problems with characterizing assemblages as normative types (e.g. types of society) with specific shared properties (e.g. types of social organization). We will return to this and to a more stringent archaeological analysis of assemblages later in the chapter.

Lines of becoming (or lines in becoming) and haecceities

Deleuze and Guattari postulate that aside from assemblages there are also 'multiplicities' or 'indeterminacies' that have the potential to be affected by

processes, forces, events, entities, etc., and in the process become determinable entities within assemblages. They express the presence of these unidentifiable and unstructured multiplicities in the figure of the rhizome: a hypothetical plant with widely spreading roots that has the ability to sprout a new stem or trunk from any point among its roots. Above ground, as it were, we could see only distinct 'arborescences' (or trees) which form components of assemblages (e.g. a landscape forested with these trees, inhabited by birds and animals, showered by rain, etc.), but below ground there is a diversely structured set of relations between the plant and other features of its environment. The rhizome unfolds along what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as 'lines of becoming' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 324). These lines of becoming emerge as entities, feel their way through the world, jostling alongside other entities and forces, and are continually unfolding. The co-evolution of the orchid and the wasp that pollinates it (as 'a liberated piece of the orchid's reproductive system') is Deleuze and Guattari's (2004, 325–6; 604) example of a line of becoming: the line draws the two species into coexistence, though that line does not describe all that they are and they exhibit quite distinct 'arborescences' which classical biology recognizes in classifying their species. While rhizomes or lines of becoming give rise to arborescences and assemblages—entities, in effect—their actions also break down existing assemblages over time: all things and configurations of things, materials, etc. are in the process of becoming something else (presumably as they get caught up in plural other lines of becoming, new emerging relationships which become more enduring or effective than previous ones). From the products of that decay new assemblages are formed.

Indeterminacies immediately become determinate as soon as they are detectable, as soon as they become drawn into any assemblage. I find it hard to conceive of something that is not already part of or emerging from another assemblage. Multiplicities, from my perspective, are entities, forces, or relations that exist in differing assemblages from the ones in which we are currently situated: they have the potential to conjoin with whichever assemblage we (or any entities for which they are previously indeterminate) are involved in, and their multiplicity lies in the fact that any entity can potentially be entangled in many intersecting and overlapping assemblages. Sometimes this entanglement will result in pulling an entity away from one assemblage to another, breaking down the assemblage in question and changing the entity significantly. Any assemblage is interconnected with others in such a way that we could observe a larger, different, assemblage if we attended to phenomena at a greater scale, and as soon as assemblages interact they are immediately intertwined in some way (see under 'Enduring relations and extended assemblages', this chapter).

Lines of becoming do not follow predetermined courses: the whole point is that they are contingently unfolding. From that point of view it might be clearer to refer to them as 'lines that are becoming', or just 'becoming'. Such

becoming is subject to local and pervasive forces, processes, and conditions, all of which emerge from specific interactions. Indeed, we could describe entities as formed out of an ongoing web of becoming, consisting of differing interwoven lines of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari (2004, 287–9) call distinct bundles of lines, or evident emergences of becoming, 'haecceities'. They apply this concept equally to human beings, objects, periods of time, places—in fact, any kind of entity or phenomenon we might identify:

> There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the term haecceity for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or subject. They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected. . . . you will yield nothing to haecceities unless you realize that that is what you are. . . . It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity. . . .

Thus, an entity is an assemblage which is becoming all the time at any scale, though I will argue that as we scale up so different 'regions', different localities, in the assemblage emerge as differing assemblages which are also haecceities (and may also extend across other assemblages).[1] In this proposition, the passage of winding bundled lines of becoming rubbing along one another form entities, including human persons, pots, cairns, and so on. Because assemblages or entities emerge out of other assemblages and are conjoined to them by some shared lines of becoming, we cannot fully extract ourselves from the unfolding lines of relations from which we arise to objectively consider them, although we can change the course of their development. Thus, the unfolding development of 'Early Bronze Age mortuary practices' is something I participate in and I can alter the course of that development by unravelling this line or pulling along that line, bringing new entities into the assemblage, and drawing new entities out of it. My actions may be effective or not, depending on how well the configuration of the assemblage is suited to movement in the direction I am pursuing, how well it facilitates the passage of a specific line of becoming (which in this case incorporates a specific line of inquiry).

How do properties, causes, and effects emerge within assemblages?

In Bennett's example of the power grid, the electricity 'is always going somewhere, though where this will be is not entirely predictable' (Bennett 2010, 28),

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[1] As I will argue below, things, places, and so on, are also events and occurrences; assemblages are haecceities.

as those attempting to rectify small power outages found when their actions exacerbated a bigger problem. There *is* a relationship between cause and effect within an assemblage, but the same cause would not have the same effect in different instances (or different assemblages) where other parties in the interaction differed. This is what Bennett describes as *emergent causality*: effects (including the properties of things, materials, etc.) are caused by the coming together of those different components in an assemblage. She elaborates, with reference to cracks formed in metal as it fatigues:

> The line of travel of these cracks is not deterministic but expressive of an emergent causality, whereby grains respond on the spot and in real time to the idiosyncratic movements of their neighbors, and then to their neighbors' response to their response, and so on.   (Bennett 2010, 59)

The idea that causality is emergent from specific configurations of forces, relations, and entities resonates extremely well with archaeological analyses of trajectories of change. This concept of an emergent causality offers a useful way to think about complex patterns of change such as we see during the uneven spread of the Beaker phenomenon, or the changing distributions of copper and bronze objects, or the uneven distributions of burials in the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age. It does not deny some forces are more powerful than others, but it does expect some agency (or I would prefer, efficacy) on the part of all of the elements in the interaction and it further avoids perceiving a closed and pre-existing system which simply devours new things, practices, and/or people and continues as it did before. It does not presuppose overarching structures to action, but rather expects that properties and structures emerge from the gathering together of a new assemblage. It is not only causes which emerge from the assemblage, but new categories, concepts, and entities. We can therefore discuss the emergence of new materials and things, new practices and experiences, new categories of person or types of object, from a series of intersecting processes, entities, and forces in ways that may be unexpected, unforeseen, and unplanned. And we can appreciate that those phenomena exist only in specific local or regional and temporal assemblages.

So the properties of an entity emerge from the relationships that formed it within particular assemblages, and reform it as the assemblage changes. Thus, as Alberti and Marshall (2009, 348) write of Ingold's observations on the properties of a wet stone left to dry on a table, '[p]roperly speaking, the properties of stone are properties of the larger phenomenon of which the stone and observer are constitutive parts'. In other words, properties emerge from the interaction of entities and forces (including the media water and air, heat, the anthropologist observing, etc.) and that interaction, producing that assemblage, is the true phenomenon rather than any of its component features (such as the stone). The ideas of a larger or *extended phenomenon* and of how

entities are extended through time and space in relation to other entities are paramount features of a relational realist archaeology that we will return to in coming sections.

Chantal Conneller (2011) has recently made an immensely important contribution to archaeological understandings of how not only things but also materials come to be how they are. In an inspiring relational and processual approach to prehistoric materials and technologies, Conneller demonstrates that 'the properties of "the same" materials vary in different situations' (Conneller 2011, 22) so that each instantiation of a material emerges from the particular technologies and other materials producing it. Through this process, and through its deployment alongside other entities, the material thing comes to exhibit certain properties. Conneller advocates understanding each technological process in its historical context as a specific process. This is a vital point for relational approaches: any interaction (and any 'technology') involves a specific unfolding of material, form, and process. Technologies are also emergent. And, as much recent work in archaeology, anthropology, and elsewhere reminds us, we can consider technologies of art, of the person or self, of the body, and of the community, as well as technologies of subsistence, survival, and economy. Conneller's approach is Deleuzian, recognizing that

> Materials can be fluid, transformable, in flux, but also arborescence may re-emerge, matter may solidify, forms may become primary. Following the processes of material interactions enables us to trace these processes.   (Conneller 2011, 20)

and

> Broadly this Deleuzian perspective leads to a focus on matter not in terms of what it *is* (or the forms it is represented as) but in what it *does*, and in particular, what it does in connection with other things.   (Conneller 2011, 19)

A vital component of her analysis is that each instance of a material we might classify as the same is different: for instance, that gold in the pre-Columbian Americas was alloyed with copper and its resulting colour and smell were valued for religious reasons alongside other bright materials, while European gold was valued for its purity and economic transferability (Conneller 2011, 5–6). This is not simply a case of different cultural beliefs about the same substance: certainly, the element gold (Au) is identical in both cases from the point in the assemblage where the chemist is situated, but the technologies involved (including the understandings of what was taking place) and the material 'gold' produced differed in each case. Conneller herself explores how and why certain materials were subjected to certain technological transformations at specific times and regions in Upper Palaeolithic Europe and not others. In discussing the different uses of seashells, fossil shell, sub-fossil ivory, and ivory from extant mammoths, Conneller traces not only

how an appreciation of some shared properties of these differing materials arose locally, but also how the desire to produce some of these properties drove people to new technological endeavours. In so doing she gets to the heart of prehistoric systems of classification as well as practice. For instance, working mammoth ivory required a complex *châine opératoire* rather different to working shell. Developing these techniques was instrumental in producing new kinds of artefacts that could not be produced from shell, such as Swabian figurines which she argues portrayed a range of species that had particular relationships with mammoths (Conneller 2011, 113–18). Thus, mammoth ivory might originally have been worked to emulate shells in regions far from the sea, but became a material that offered new possibilities for expression not only of properties shared with shell but of forms that shell could not obtain.

Conneller's account offers a powerful explanation for how the emergent properties of things relate to the properties of preceding things within the same locality, and a strong appreciation of the embeddedness of materiality, affect, and meaning. Properties emerge from interaction and are historical, so that past relationships (for instance, between certain molecules and forces, certain bodies and tools) produced the material in its current form, and I would suggest that *certain properties instilled in the assemblage during its formation out of these relationships endure as long as it enjoys some of the same relationships with certain forces, substances, entities, and so on as it currently does*. Were one of those forces and media with which it relates to change then *the material would also change* as would one or some of its properties (e.g. in outer space a stone would become lighter as gravity is reduced, but it would not become less dense or have less mass). As Lucas (2010, 34) puts it, 'archaeology can explore the latent forces that bind things into material assemblages'. It follows that when latent forces and relations change the material changes, as do its properties. Yet if we were to argue that the material had dormant properties and what matters most is which of these properties were recognized by human beings then we would fall back on a culturally relative representational reading. In a relational perspective which is also a realist one we could hold that things and materials are *constantly* acting and interacting—gravity is continuously brought to bear on and in objects on earth. Yet the strength of physical forces are not always constant, and changes in ongoing interactions can potentially change the materiality and properties of substances and objects, whether these interactions involve human beings or not. Things are after all always in the process of becoming (Ingold 2007).

In summary, the concepts of assemblages, emergence, and lines of becoming are extremely useful in thinking about the contingent nature of phenomena. They do not rely on identifying an overarching 'context' against which the other features of the phenomenon must be measured, and they do not presume a single set of organizing principles to be in effect, nor that the

same principle or relationship in two different assemblages would produce the same result. They recognize the primacy of past and ongoing relationships in the nature of the emergent phenomenon.

REFERENCE, ACTANTS, AND TRANSLATIONS (IN ASSEMBLAGES OR NETWORKS)

The work of Bruno Latour has been an increasing influence in archaeological research in recent years. Latour is a key figure in the development of science and technology studies, investigating the emergence of scientific ideas, techniques, and products. Latour offers a model of society as a network of actants. An 'actant' is something which has the capacity to act and be effective in a given interaction, whether or not we accept them as agents with intentionality. The term is derived from studies of literature. Anything can potentially be an actant: a human being, an idea, an object, a bacterium, a laboratory, a substance, a bar of music. All that is required for it to be an actant is that it have an effect on something else. These actants associate in networks and, as with the approaches to assemblages discussed earlier, are produced out of existing networks and are themselves assemblages. In fact, Latour shifts between discussing networks and assemblages. For Latour, it is the assemblage that acts, and actants attempt to articulate effective assemblages through specific 'propositions'. A proposition is 'an occasion given to different entities to enter into contact' (Latour 1999, 141), an opportunity for articulation; if the resulting articulation is strong in relation to other actants, other networks, then it will produce change and have a clear and lasting effect. If a proposition is weak, then it will achieve little or not articulate at all. One of the key points of this book is to evaluate existing propositions and to produce new ones in exploring new configurations of the assemblage 'Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England'.

A number of archaeologists have developed a relational approach from a Latourian perspective, some of this couched as a 'symmetrical archaeology' (e.g. Shanks 2007; Webmoor 2007; Witmore 2007; Webmore and Witmore 2008; cf. Jones 2002*b*; Olsen 2003; 2012), and I would refer the reader to those sources for more detailed discussions of the breadth of Latour's approach. The clear central message of a symmetrical archaeology is that things, animals, places, materials, etc. all have lives, affects, and effects of their own. There should be no division between 'the social' and 'the material'—or anything else—as society is composed of actants of all kinds, human and otherwise. Symmetrical archaeology places an important emphasis on archaeological practice and the multiple actants involved in producing any understanding of the past, from picks to trowels to theories and archaeologists. It interrogates

change as a process whereby some components leave and others enter a network, and explores how the effects of past actions ripple through time. Much of the approach developed in this chapter is in alignment with these aims even though I do not find the duality involved in the idea of symmetry particularly helpful. As we will see later, some of the archaeologists who have adopted a relational approach to things do not accept *anything* as an actant, preferring to accord this role *only to material entities*, and most symmetrical archaeology to date focuses on networks of people and things as actants. From my perspective we should also attend to ideas and beliefs as actants.

The notion of a society of actants, a network across which agency is distributed, has been a most influential aspect of Latour's work and it has also been subjected to sustained critique to which I will turn below. But there is one feature of how he understands the interactions between actants which I think is of vital importance to archaeologists. Latour (1999) also frames each entity he wishes to study not only as an actant but as a reference, not in the sense of a symbol that stands for something else, but as something that circulates in a chain of interactions with other actants and becomes translated (as the other actants do) in the process. Translation amplifies some properties of the entity under investigation while reducing others (Latour 1999, 69–76, figures 2.21– 2.24). Latour refers to this repeated translation of actants in the production of scientific knowledge as the 'circulating reference', where 'the word reference designates the quality of the chain in its entirety' (1999, 69). The term does not distinguish a priori between evidence and theory, material and idea (or any other categories) because these are *embedded together within the reference*. For Latour there is no sense in asking whether something is a fact or not because evidently the reference in question exists for us to be able to encounter it. Instead, Latour argues, we should focus on how that reference is fabricated through chains of relations, each of which translates the reference involved: is each fact well articulated or not, is it effectively put together, how has it arisen and out of what relationships, what kinds of care and caution does it foster in those interacting with it (1999, 272–92)? It is central to Latour's approach that we cannot test the validity of our interpretations through a 'correspondence theory of truth' in which our ideas or descriptions need to correspond with a 'reality' that exists (or existed) independently of those ideas, descriptions, and the techniques and technologies that go with them, since we cannot directly access any 'reality' without such mediating apparatus, itself already a part of that reality. Rather, we could say that, for instance, archaeological analysis involves the simultaneous translation of the material media of the past, the techniques of study, and the conceptualization of the past as these are articulated with one another. That is to say, ideas about a Bronze Age pot, practical knowledge about making and using it, any symbolic significance it has, are all real features of the pot in specific interactions or assemblages as much as its

physical fabric. Any of these characteristics may be lost over time and replaced through successive 'translations' to the pot, each of which might affect the physical properties of the pot, the conceptual effect of the pot, etc.

Let us say that a Bronze Age pot was made, buried, discovered, drawn, assigned to a style group or 'type', photographed, subjected to thin-section microscopic fabric analysis, and written about. At each stage in that process the pot is articulated in a different way involving different actants: trowel, pencil and paper, camera, book, cutting implement, transparent slide, microscope, pot typology, etc. The reference changes slightly at each interaction, and while some key properties may endure throughout this process of reference they do so, I would argue, because certain relations endure through the translation—or to put it another way, because some features of the assemblage remain articulated, because some actants in the reference stay engaged, or because certain engagements are reproduced in a similar way (as when the pot is measured at two times by two people using similar devices). A digital photograph of the pot can circulate in a way that the pot made of clay cannot, for instance, thus affecting a new audience in a new way. The photograph translates the pot, extending some but not all of the properties of that pot and introducing new properties (increased mobility for the appearance of the pot, though its mass is not carried over). Equally, drawing the pot transforms it into a new reference which distributes some facets of the clay pot further through time and space as it becomes a component of pot typologies (cf. Jones 2001). It is also no longer sufficient to study the pot by just looking at it, holding, using it; if we are to appreciate what can usefully be known about it as a prehistoric artefact we also need to read the texts and understand the drawings and the significance of its fabric in comparison with other prehistoric pots. Each transformation amplifies certain features of the reference and also reduces other features to the point of absence, such as, in the case of black and white photography, its colour (Latour 1999, 71). Some translations affect the physical properties of the pot more directly (e.g. by taking a thin section of its fabric for analysis) while others affect the pot in other ways that may not leave a physical trace on the material of the pot (e.g. relocating it from one category of pottery to another). Over time a reference is continually transformed as archaeologists come to know that reference in different ways at different times and through new techniques, technologies, conceptual frameworks.

These translations not only transform the reference, they also produce new references emerging from the previously intersecting ones and encapsulating some of their properties (e.g. the development of new pot typologies). These references are materialized just as the pot is, though their materiality is different from the pot. Our statements about the pot only correspond to it at a given moment in its history because of the mediations that have taken place in the past that we can draw on in this latest mediation, including those

by Bronze Age people, antiquarians, and past archaeologists. Various properties of the pot become distributed through time and space, a part of the 'extended phenomenon' that we study. In the case of this book, that extended phenomenon is 'Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England' and includes various conceptual frameworks, disciplinary apparatus, and historical and political circumstances, as well as physical artefacts, bones, and records of archaeological features. As the pot circulates within this assemblage or network, both the assemblage and the properties of the pot are transformed. Both the pot and the wider assemblage are expanded by the interaction: each assemblage is always growing and extending.

Symmetrical archaeology has not yet produced a book-length archaeological study of the past. Andrew Jones (2002*a*) has produced a detailed 'science study' of archaeology, and although he is clearly inspired by Latour in places and focuses on the interface between interpretation and practice, his approach is not avowedly 'symmetrical' or entirely Latourian. By investigating the practices, techniques, and technologies brought to bear in the course of excavation and post-excavation analysis Jones highlights some of the key disconnections that hamper archaeological research and makes recommendations for integrating interpretation and practice. I readily adopt Jones's maxim that we should devise a consistent theoretical framework that is open enough to make sense of past realities and contemporary inquiry in the same way (Jones 2002*a*, 178), though I would not frame this as an exploration of 'material agency' (178). Jones's stance that the material world 'resists' analysis and thereby shapes it (171), and that material things are mediators for *human* agency (177) differs from a Latourian perspective whereby all mediators have agency when interacting with one another—agency does not stem from humans and things do not resist agency but are crucial to it. Jones (2002*a*, 74) also argues that 'while data are transformed through presentation, the artefact remains the same', but this seems to split the reference into a conceptual and a material aspect. Instead, I would argue, with Latour, that the entities we study are transformed by their examination, and that some translations are more effective than others and have greater impact on the humans, things, technologies, etc. involved in the translation than others. Jones (2002*a*) focuses on contemporary fieldwork projects in his analysis, yet much archaeological research is synthetic, drawing on evidence from numerous sites excavated by different people at different times pursuing different agendas. In studying Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age North-East England I must extend the scope of analysis from the excavation and post-excavation process of a twenty-first-century excavation to *all* forms of activity which translate and have translated archaeological remains from antiquarian 'diggings' and collections to changing theories about prehistoric societies to new osteoarchaeological analyses and radiocarbon dating. Archaeologists are connected with the past they study through their engagement with remnants of that past via

various mediating practices, events, techniques, technologies, and ideas. Each
of the referents we investigate are themselves assemblages and components
in greater assemblages—from a Beaker pot to elites to concepts of death and
the person. Latour's concept of the circulating reference provides a concrete
way to identify specific intersecting references within the reference, the
extended and ever-expanding emergent phenomenon, of 'Chalcolithic and
Early Bronze Age mortuary practices from North-East England', scrutinize
the history of their composition, and consider how they articulate with a
range of new references (new techniques, dates, identifications, theoretical
perspectives, etc.).

MESHWORKS, ORGANISMS, MEDIA, AND AGENCY

In critique of Latour's approach, Ingold (2011, 94) argues that all actants are
not equal or similar, and he privileges as the only real agent the skilled
practitioner whose skill has become embodied through attention and inter-
action over time. He objects to Latour's 'flat ontology' in which concepts,
materials, and organisms are treated as equivalent actants, by stressing, for
instance, the differences between enskilled organisms and media. He argues
that it is 'ludicrous' to 'attribute agency to objects that do not grow or develop'
(94). Ingold is certainly correct that not all actants have equal or similar
effects, but Latour's understanding of actants has advantages over Ingold's
more restrictive approach to agency.[2] For one thing, objects *do* develop (both
individually as they are created and used and as a type over the long term as
successive alterations to form and composition are made) and have embodied
within them histories of skill. A flint arrowhead provides an example of the
kind of object that is produced out of the intersection between more than one
kind of skill (flint knapping, hunting) which it comes to embody and then to
exert when fired into an animal. Indeed, Ingold (2011, 57) himself also writes
that '[e]very use of a tool, in short, is a remembering of how to use it, which at
once picks up the strands of past practice and carries them forward in current
contexts ... tools have the same processional character as the activities they
make possible', adding (Ingold 2011, 58) that each tool 'selects from the

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[2] Ingold (2011, 213) also warns that a Latourian perspective 'remain[s] trapped within a
language of causation that is founded on the very same grammatical categories [of subject and
object] and that can conceive of action only as an effect set in train by an agent'. From Ingold's
Deleuzian perspective, the action possesses the entities involved, they do not posses agency
(2011, 214): thus, in his example of the catflap, the repeated action of a cat's ingress and egress is
the cause of the catflap being installed. We could say that the cause is emergent from the
activities of the cat in the assemblage of cat, door, kitchen, yard, owner, etc.; not from the
intentions of the cat's owner to therefore install the catflap.

compendium of the hand the gestures proper to its re-enactment'. These are points Latour might make in explaining why tools are actants. Agency cannot be located 'in' the arrowhead because agency is only interactive—a point which I think is clear in Latour's position as well as Ingold's. I would consider that the arrowhead is an actant, and that while it is not the same kind of actant as the human knapper or the deer it may kill, 'lines of becoming' (which interest Ingold) pass through the flint every bit as much as they do through the flint knapper or the hunter. In actor network theory, it is the network which acts. From my perspective, assemblages act—and they become effective assemblages through their actions (including with and within other assemblages).

Latour is by no means the only relational theorist to posit agency beyond the human being, or organisms that we would commonly recognize as alive and sentient (or at the very least enskilled). Jane Bennett (2010) argues for a 'vital materialism' in which all materials are accredited with a vitality, and her approach brings together features of a Deleuzian and a Latourian perspective with other sources of inspiration. Bennett argues that reality consists of assemblages formed from 'affective bodies'. The term 'affect' refers to any emergent, contingent, relational property of an entity: i.e. any way in which that entity can affect other entities or be affected by them. The potential for an entity to be an effective agent depends on the affects it has in a given situation. Thus, an affect of knapped flint is that it is sharp and hard, and this gives it the ability to cut flesh, which under most conditions is soft by comparison with flint. Because all materials, relating as they do to other materials, have certain affects, Bennett follows Latour in treating them as equivalent 'actants'. Bennet (2010, 34) argues that human intentionality is only one agential factor and that organic and inorganic actants interact in other similar ways. Crucially, she argues that it is mistaken to think of material things as 'dead' in contrast with living organisms. In Bennett's view all entities in the world are alive, but in differing ways, because they each engage in relations and are, on some scale, active.

> Persons, worms, leaves, bacteria, metals, and hurricanes have different types and degrees of power, just as different persons have different types and degrees of power, different worms have different types and degrees of power, and so on, depending on the time, place, composition, and density of the formation.   (Bennett 2010, 109)

Indeed, for Bennett, human history or evolution is part of a processual unfolding of mineral possibilities. She cites DeLanda (1997, 26):

> Soft tissue (gels and aerosols, muscle and nerve) reigned supreme until 5000 million years ago. At that point some of the conglomerations of fleshy matter-energy that made up life underwent a sudden mineralization, and a new material for constructing living creatures emerged: bone

then adds herself

> [in] the long and slow time of evolution, then, mineral material appears as the mover and shaker, the active power, and the human beings, with their much-lauded capacity for self-directed action, appear as its product.

Bennett's approach is novel and interesting, and certainly takes 'the material' seriously, but it divides materials from other actants such as concepts: laws and desires are actants in her analyses but it is never clear how vital they are compared with the materials she studies. Her approach extends *life* as well as the capacity for agency (which only emerges relationally in specific inter-actions) to all material things, all components of material assemblages.

Bennett's approach can be usefully compared with Ingold's recent work on lines and meshworks, media and organisms in order to arrive at a position on the extent to which actants should be appreciated as equivalent to one another, and as 'alive'. Ingold (2011) views materials and objects, media, and places rather differently from organisms. Following Lefebvre (1991, 117–18), Ingold (2011, 84–6) offers the concept of the 'meshwork' in place of the network.

> [T]he trail winds through or amidst like the root of a plant or a stream between its banks. Each such trail is but one strand in a tissue of trails that together comprise the texture of the lifeworld. This texture is what I mean when I speak of organisms being constituted within a relational field. It is a field not of interconnected points but interwoven lines; not a network but a *meshwork*.
>
> (Ingold 2011, 69–70)

It is not clear what Ingold makes of the concept of the assemblage, deployed effectively by Bennett, and it is possible he is quiet about assemblages because of his emphasis on organisms and organic metaphors. As we have seen, Ingold objects to the idea that agency is distributed through the entire material world, and one expects he might object to Bennett's vital materialism because for him only organisms may be agents.

Being Alive (Ingold 2011) is a collection of essays in which Ingold unveils the concept of the meshwork and explains his understanding of a world of enskilled agents inhabiting an active environment or medium. For Ingold organisms give life to their world, and they are emphatically entangled and enfolded into that world, the 'fluid space' (86) of substances, surfaces, and 'the medium' (air, water, moisture, weather, etc.). Yet, taken as a whole, the book is ambiguous about whether materials can be seen as 'alive'. On the one hand, Ingold clearly perceives organisms as lines of becoming—in fact as composed of bundles of lines so that '[e]very species, indeed every individual has its own particular line, or rather bundle of lines' (83). He adds '[i]n a quite material sense, lines are what organisms are made of. Indeed anatomists have always known this as they have spoken of bodily "tissues" . . . a texture formed of a myriad of fine threads tightly interlaced, presenting all the appearance . . . of

a coherent, continuous surface' (86); 'instead of thinking of organisms as entangled in relations, we should regard every living thing as itself an entanglement' (87), and argues that each organism *is* its (bundled) line of becoming, as in Deleuze and Guattari's haecceity. For Ingold, such haecceities or bundled lines of becoming are 'what we perceive *with*' (88), and what allow us to 'join with [things] in the material flows and movements contributing to their—and our—ongoing formation' (87). To Ingold it is organisms who *weave* these lines as skilled agents (89–94). On the other hand one of his examples of a line of becoming is a river (14). Such a river is arguably a meshwork of organic and inorganic entities, but Deleuze and Guattari (2004, 421 cited in Ingold 2011, 88) include as examples of haecceities 'winds, undulations of snow or sand, the song of the sand or the creaking of the ice', which do not necessarily require the presence of organisms but do involve activity. For Ingold materials (which may also be objects) are also in process, do not have agency, but are sometimes described as alive and sometimes only as animated by other media or by organisms. Thus '[s]tones too, have histories, forged in surroundings that may or may not include human beings and much else besides' (31), he aims to return 'persons to where they belong, within the continuum of *organic* life' (my emphasis), but he adds that 'this life itself undergoes continual generation in currents of materials' (31), dead 'wood is alive or "breathes", precisely because of the flux of materials across its surface' (28), and '[b]ringing things to life, then, is a matter not of adding to them a sprinkling of agency but of restoring them to the generative fluxes of the world of materials in which they came into being and continue to subsist' (29). Exactly how two intersecting materials or media become 'alive' is unclear.

Ingold's book both creates a distinction between organisms and media for their becoming and also outlines how life is infused in the world through the inhabitation of organisms and by the forces conveyed through media and materials. His book offers superb inspiration on the relational unfolding of materials, 'the media' or weather-world, places, and organisms; but even though Ingold clearly presents a framework for relational understanding, it is not clear whether he sees things or inorganic media as alive or not. His views on agency and organisms might seem to suggest he does not allow for things or places or astral bodies or weather phenomena to be persons, yet when discussing 'the animic cosmos' he states 'the wind is a being that blows...thunder is a being that claps' (Ingold 2011, 73). While for Ingold (174), as for Deleuze and Guattari, each organism is its way of 'going on', he has little to say about how *things* go on, because for him identifying them as things is an inversion resulting in unhelpful classification (168) since things are temporary arrangements of materials which will continue to unfold: 'things are in life rather than life in things' (29). Yet, if the co-evolution of the wasp and orchid is a line of becoming, then how might we describe

the co-emergence of flint tools and flint-knappers, for instance? Arguably, the practice of flint-knapping is a line of becoming drawing together (or, actually, emerging from the practical entanglement of) flint and human beings, and that line changes over time, becoming bound together with other lines such as the practice of indirect percussion, bringing bone or antler into the relation. It seems that, like Bennett, Ingold considers all emergent phenomena as infused with life, but he also distinguishes organisms from media by locating agency in one and not the other. Yet, as he also acknowledges, organisms cannot live without media (usually having an inorganic component). Indeed, organisms as a whole were historically emergent from other media. Thus it seems futile to differentiate agents or 'sources of agency' from components that are acted on, and preferable to consider the agency evident in specific interactions producing specific assemblages. Yet there is more to be gained by seeking the 'lines of becoming' that Ingold discusses, and which I would reframe as 'lines that are becoming', running through *all* entities and media.

I would draw Ingold and Bennett together. Air and water are not alive in their configurations *in the local world in which I currently live*, but they are certainly not inert and so I see them as active mediators that can interact. The weather is not only a condition for action, but active in the relations that take place within it (cf. Ingold 2011, 130). Such media as air and water transmit forces that are not necessarily or exclusively organic in origin, such as waves we experience as light, pressure, or sound. We cannot deny that immersion in water corrodes iron, and that this is an inorganic transformation which can occur with no organisms involved. Thus, Ingold's media are a kind of actant. If we read Bennett's vital materialism as a manifesto for a way to get on with the world (and thus bring it to life) then we can incorporate that into the view that in *some* local configurations what is in *our* locality lifeless matter may become alive. I would also accept that, following Alberti and Marshall (2009), air and water *may* become alive in certain localities (e.g. in animist relations). Life is an emergent property, life is relational, and the boundaries and definitions of life are contested and contingent. In this book I will use Latour's term 'actants' to refer to entities, media, forces, all of which have affective properties and are drawn along lines of becoming. I am tempted to reserve the term 'agents' to refer to the kind of knowledgeable, attentive, and enskilled organisms that Ingold focuses on—the flint-knapper, the archer drawing the bow to release the arrow. Yet, in affinity with Alberti and Marshall and arguably Bennett, I would accept that in some assemblages the arrow might call the prey (cf. Haber 2009). It may do that *for* the hunter or for the hunter's kin, but the skill in the interaction may be distributed in the form of the arrow as well as in the actions of the hunter or the knapper crafting the arrowhead and the person who hafted it. Arguably the hunter's attention for the deer is mediated by the attentiveness of the flint-knapper, and both of their attentions are made manifest in the arrow which exists to bring down the deer (despite, and thus

in conjunction with, the specific attentiveness of the deer towards danger). Ultimately, however, I do not want to presuppose what might be an agent in Early Bronze Age Britain. I am interested in the agency, the activity, the technology, and the technique, rather than who or what we might designate as the agent in the event or who or what we designate as 'alive' in a Bronze Age world. While knowledgeable organic actants-cum-agents *are* qualitatively different from inorganic actants it is useful to study all actants together in any interaction and focus on the specific properties of each. Furthermore, Bennett's observations that matter is always becoming, always humming with energy and permeated by forces, are crucial to the understanding of dynamic assemblages I will outline below.

ENTANGLEMENTS AND PHENOMENA

> Atoms aren't what they used to be.
> (Barad 2007, 353)

In a recent book Ian Hodder (2012) has outlined an approach to archaeology which focuses on the entanglements between humans and things. While his starting point has some affinity with Latour and symmetrical archaeology, he argues for keeping people and things separate and distinct, then considering how they become interdependent. He also argues that actor network theory of the kind Latour pursues 'goes too far' by expecting humans to be involved in all events, and refers to the end of the last Ice Age as something that did not depend on humans, but happened to them (Hodder 2012, 93). From Hodder's perspective people and things become entangled in ways that lead them to *depend on* each other and develop full-blown dependencies so that, for instance, people are required to do more and more, and bring more and more materials and things into the relationship in order to maintain their relations with things. It is that sense of dependences and dependencies that he argues is missing in actor network theory (90). His analysis is therefore of entanglements rather than networks of freely associating actants. Hodder stresses the way that things rely on chains of relations with other things and people to operate, from Neolithic Anatolian houses to American aeroplanes. These things are entangled, and are also entanglements of their own. He draws out the way that small historical decisions can have enormous, unforeseen consequences many years down the line—such as the programming of twentieth-century computers to record the year in two digits instead of four, or the choice of the QWERTY keyboard layout. Furthermore, he argues that entanglements increase over time directionally, though not in a teleological way: people become locked into tight entanglements and are unable to unravel them, to change the world back to how it was before the entanglement began

(168–9). Hodder points out that entanglements may be weak or strong, centralized or dispersed, and the components may be strongly integrated or have multiple redundant features (107). There are cores and peripheries to each entanglement (109). He does not treat ideas as actants, but, importantly, he does account for the role of beliefs as important features of entanglements involving humans, concluding that 'the determinative factors in human action are neither material nor ideal. What is determinative is the entanglement itself' (112). Finally, he considers the temporalities of entanglements across annual cycles, life histories, through historical change, and through their material 'legacies', which I will return to later.

Hodder's approach to entanglement is inspiring, and provides one of the most extensive engagements with archaeological evidence of all the relational approaches published to date (cf. Conneller 2011). It gives a clear sense of the contingencies in how things, places, and events unfold. But like the vast majority of interpretative texts in archaeology, I think Hodder's book stops short in an important area. He emphasizes chains of events and chains of relationships as an entanglement unfolds, and the way that entanglements expand over time, but his chains seem to end before the archaeologist arrives on the scene (e.g. Hodder 2012, 57, figure 3.5). Hodder's book is ultimately concerned with what took place in the past; in his case, with tracing entanglements that occurred thousands of years ago. Some of the entanglements, or some features of them, clearly endure—such as the vulnerable walls at Çatalhöyük—and draw in those excavating and preserving them. But Hodder does not explicitly discuss the place of the archaeologist and archaeological techniques in the entanglement that results in his interpretation. How do the remains of past entanglements become involved in new entanglements? What does our interaction with (and, as archaeologists, our dependency on) the material legacies of past entanglements do to those entanglements? In order to explain the basis for asking this question I turn to the work of another theorist of entanglements, Karen Barad.

In discussing the particle physics of Neils Bohr (1885–1962), Karen Barad (2003, 2007), develops a 'relational ontology' founded in what she calls an 'agential realism'. She critiques the atomistic metaphysics (also known as particularism) responsible for perceiving entities as singular, bounded monads. Just as individualism has impacted greatly on historical western understandings of persons (cf. Fowler 2004, 17–21), particularism has impacted on the history of physics to the extent that the science of the atom was expected to be the science of the smallest indivisible unit, the properties of which should be fixed and each example of which should have identical properties. Thus, all other entities should be composed out of indivisible atoms with fixed values. Yet Bohr's research on atoms developed a quantum model in which the values result from the overall circumstance in which an atom is situated (quanta are 'packets' of energy at whatever scale and in

whatever kind they may exist). Rather than atoms existing as individual and indivisible units we then study, atoms emerge from the world as such when so isolated by a complex set of conditions, such as physical experiments.

Barad's point is that Bohr did not simply think up his model, it relied on a specific configuration of equipment, atoms, researchers, questions, and experiments (Barad 2003, 814 *inter alia*), and it is because of Bohr and others (many of those others being non-human—ideas, materials, and equipment as well as physicists like Max Planck) that 'atoms are not what they used to be'. In fact, Barad argues, 'concepts are not ideational but rather are actual physical arrangements' (820). In other words, we do not just arrive at ideas, they are produced materially as features of the world are reconfigured. Bohr established that atoms take the form they do *locally*, in relation to particular experiments. In this context the experiment is the assemblage, the entanglement. The entity of the atom is *not* particular, but the overall phenomena or entanglement in which it appears—the configuration of relations set up in the experiment—*is*, and gives rise to specific kinds of atoms behaving in specific ways. The most notable and famous example is that light behaves like a wave if we attempt to measure it as such and like a particle if we treat it to a different set of apparatus (Barad 2007, 97–121). Indeed, the same is true of matter—electrons—as postulated by Bohr in 1927 and established by experiment in the 1990s (2008, 105). Outside of the experiment, whether an electron is currently a wave or a particle is indeterminate (just as for Deleuze and Guattari indeterminacies precede assemblages and arborescences). Importantly, this is not to say that each electron is both a particle *and* a wave, but that an electron is manifest as one *or* the other depending on the circumstances, and, effectively that means that if we attempt to measure it as a wave it becomes one, because this measurement is a form of translation.[3] Equally, if such an electron is in motion we can accurately measure its momentum (as a wave) or its position (as a particle), but never both (Barad 2003, 814). In each case the possibility to grasp light or matter relies on the interaction, and all we can do is to describe the assemblage or phenomenon: the experiment *and* the version of the atom (etc.) that it produces.

Thus, we are entangled within the work we produce and the features of that entanglement we may wish to study. Barad therefore refers not to interactions but *intra-actions*, that is relations *within* these phenomena: '*phenomena are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting "components"*' (Barad 2003, 815, original emphases) and 'phenomena are the ontological entanglement of objects and agencies of observation' (Barad 2007, 309), so that

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[3] Of course this does not mean that an electron can become *anything* that we might seek to measure: it demonstrates that the salient characteristics of any entity, no matter how small, vary relative to their circumstances, and it permits that certain past and enduring relations pervade the entire interaction setting broad parameters for what an electron may be and can do.

[a] specific intra-action (involving a specific material configuration of the 'apparatus of observation') enacts an *agential cut* (in contrast to the Cartesian cut—an inherent distinction—between subject and object) effecting a separation between 'subject' and 'object'. That is, the agential cut enacts a *local* resolution *within* the phenomenon.   (Barad 2003, 815)

Thus, by investigating a phenomenon we can enact such cuts in order to appreciate the kinds of local objects and subjects that emerge in the process. To Barad these observations give rise to a relational ontology[4] whereby she accepts 'a causal relationship between specific exclusionary practices embodied as specific material configurations of the world . . . and specific material phenomena' (2003, 814). The configurations she refers to include concepts every bit as much as laboratory equipment and, indeed, much of Bohr's work on the nature of matter relied (as did much of the quantum physics of the twentieth century) on 'thought experiments' which could only be carried out in practice decades later.

  Barad refers to her position as agential realism because what is real emerges out of the intra-actions involved, and she establishes that we never reach a final resolution to any question because further and further apparatus (equipment, ideas, etc.) are brought to bear, ever extending the phenomena or assemblage under investigation. It is this latter point which fascinates me and which I think provides a spur for understanding exactly how archaeologists are entangled within the phenomena we aim to study. Barad (2007, 316–17 *inter alia*) explicitly describes this as an ongoing entanglement that involves entities from the past:

  time, like space and matter, is phenomenal (i.e., time is not an external parameter but rather is an integral aspect of phenomena). As a result of the iterative nature of intra-active practices that constitute phenomena, the 'past' and the 'future' are iteratively reconfigured and enfolded through one another: phenomena cannot be located in space and time; rather, phenomena are material entanglements that 'extend' across different spaces and times.

Time is a property of the intra-actions within the assemblage, and that assemblage is dynamic. It exists because of its relations, it continues to exist because of interactions (or, rather, intra-actions). New interactions become intra-actions immediately, extending the phenomenon or the entanglement. And so it is with Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England; that phenomenon has no single location or origin or core, but is drawn across many locales in the entanglements that I study and in which I am now involved. This phenomenon only exists now because of the intersection between various actants that have allowed aspects of this

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[4] As Barad (2007, 333) acknowledges, relational ontologies are a feature of quantum physics in the later twentieth century—hers is a specific kind of relational ontology.

phenomenon to emerge in the distant past, to change and to persist so that some features of it endure (passing through periods in which people were not aware of it at all) and participate in a transformed assemblage we identify as 'Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England' while other features dissipate. This phenomenon, then, is continually emerging. In short, our accounts of the past are real, and they rely on (and ought to reveal) the precise articulations that brought them into existence. Those articulations are part of the extended phenomenon—the ongoing emerging, and dynamic assemblage of artefacts, apparatus, concepts, and people—and our subjectivities are not aside from that reality but embedded within it.[5] I will build on this below and reconsider the temporality of entanglements or assemblages as I build a relational realist archaeology.

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF ASSEMBLAGES, NETWORKS, MESHWORKS, ENTANGLEMENTS, AND OTHER MATERIAL METAPHORS

The approaches discussed above are not discussing epistemology or subjective experience of the world, but the real nature of the world, of materials, organisms, life forces, entities, and ideas. They deploy various metaphors to describe the nature of the material world. The metaphors are historically situated; not all of them are consistent with the others, and they require explicit critical reflection before they can be deployed. For instance, Latour's view of a network with nodes has some affinities with the systems theory of the early to mid-twentieth century: an understanding of how mechanical systems such as electronic circuits and computers operate which was extended to explain the workings of nature ('the ecosystem') and design new technologies for communication (the internet), building (the geodesic dome), and structuring society (the American communes of the 1960s and 1970s) (Curtis 2011). Latour's formulation of a world with 'a democracy' or 'parliament' of actants potentially suffers from the same problems experienced by those attempting to use network technologies to form a new society; the emergent power relations were no more egalitarian or democratic than the pre-existing system. Companies, governments, and other powerful agents were able to stabilize the status quo through the discourse of systems reaching equilibrium or homeostasis. It is important to recognize that the actants in any network are unequal,

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[5] Interestingly, it has also been suggested that human decision-making operates like quantum mechanics, with any particular decision varying depending on those around it rather than following a consistent logic (Buchanan 2011).

distinctively formed, and differentially effective: Latour's parliament may become rowdy and give way to violence.

Ingold (2011) offers the meshwork as a competing metaphor, arguing that entities are not nodes that are connected by lines in networks, but temporal entities that negotiate their way along lines of becoming. These entities become entwined with one another, and where this happens repeatedly a knot may be formed, which looks like a node. For Ingold, Latour's networks connect monadic preformed entities; he critiques the idea of relations between entities and emphasizes the relations within entities. Yet Latour's approach *does* allow that entities have relations within them (though he 'black boxes'[6] those relations when considering that entity as an actant in a further interaction), and my interpretation of the circulating reference clearly considers that relations are within as well as between references. Furthermore, Ingold (2011, 85) himself acknowledges that the French term used by Latour, *réseau*, could be translated as netting rather than network, and that the inspiration for that idea can be derived from Deleuze, whose work inspired Ingold's own approach. Ingold arguably expresses this concept better, presenting the intersecting lines of relations not as connecting nodes or points, but as looping around one another forming a mesh or tissue, or bundling together.

We could also add the image of the river to these ways of visualizing relations and entities: we see confluences, divergences, and deltas, changes in direction, we see fast and slow flow, wide and narrow, we see a line that is always becoming—drawing together water, rock, earth, organisms—and yet has a history that gives it form. We can sometimes see fractal patterns unfolding across the course of the river (Figure 2.1). Water is always flowing into and out of the river, making its edges impossible to fully define, and the river interacts constantly with other features of the world at its edges (other kinds of lines of becoming that we are not currently focused on, but out of which the river springs), each shaping the other dialogically; clouds, ice, rocks, dams, trees, soil, sea. It has no single origin nor any one principle that shapes it, it emerges continually and yet endures historically (and when it shifts position, it leaves traces and residues). This image captures the sense of flow, of force and momentum, involved in lines of becoming and reminds us that those lines are not drawn by organisms alone. However, from an archaeological perspective it may not be useful to stretch the image of the line too far. We could say that an organism takes a path, and we could trace the line of its journey, but as archaeologists we can rarely do more than infer that line. Instead, we see the remains of *specific events and interactions*: we see

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[6] It is necessary to 'black box' some of the relationships that compose entities in order to operate those entities (e.g. I do not worry about what is going on inside my PC as I write this), but it is also necessary to return to, open, and explore such black boxes in successive translations of the referent entities.
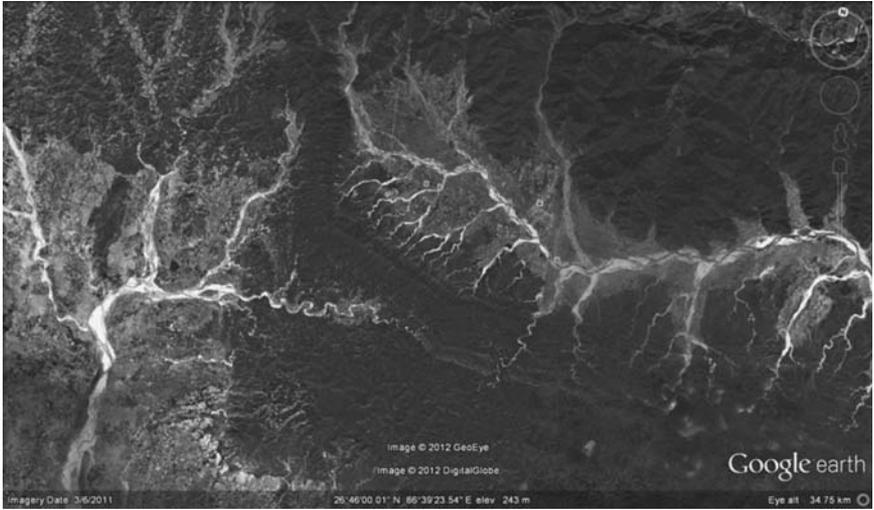
Figure 2.1 Fractal patterns in river tributaries

things, features, residues (cf. Lucas 2012; see next section). These events may unfold over long periods of time, and may bleed into and become interwoven with and changed by other intersecting events. What endures is seldom a line, though we can trace it as one by measuring the passing of time in a linear fashion. Organisms may well be made of tissues of lines, and we can attempt to trace the intersecting paths of differing actants by filling in the gaps in what we can see, but the way in which a barrow, say, becomes may have little to do with a line. Entities flow and pulse, change and hold form, but this is not always best conceptualized as a primarily linear process. For that reason in later chapters I will focus on becoming and on haecceities, but less on lines other than when tracing the emergence of entities from a series of successive interactions.

All of these images attempt to model things 'as they really are' and while they stress particularity they are of course intended to be applicable in all times and places, thus placing one metaphor or set of metaphors as primary before others. In some respects we might prefer one metaphor to another; it seems plausible to me that prehistoric communities might conceptualize some entities and relations as like fabric, tissue, or nets, though they did not possess 'networked' technologies. But, as Conneller argues (2011, 30), no single metaphor may suffice for *all* kinds of activity and entity. Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage was first devised in discussing modern literature, art, and politics, Latour's network to explain modern scientific practice and technologies, and Ingold's meshwork to explain the world as it unfolds through the action of organisms. These are all adequate to their specific materials, entities, and relations. Rather than adopting a rigid 'single metaphor' model for the relationality of things, people, places, and materials, I will attempt to

appreciate specific occurrences in which the entities involved and the forms of interaction taking place provide the means of analysis—in other words, *I will rely on the detailed description of the assemblage I am studying as a means to explore what it is and what it can usefully become*. This involves exploring how that assemblage, that entity, *is becoming* through past, present, and ongoing activities, processes, and events. I will adopt a modified version of Latour's concept of the 'circulating reference' in order to explore the temporal dimension of material things as they pass through successive translations by various other actants.

For instance, a Food Vessel carries forward many of the effects of the relations that produced it, and we could say it 'negotiates' a line of becoming relationally (Figure 2.2). It became entangled with other lines: the Food Vessels discussed in this book were almost all deposited with the dead, binding the end of their use-lives together with mortuary practices. The line of the vessel might be dispersed, diffract, or be threaded through the emerging line of some other entity and/or force (e.g. a midden or ploughsoil). But while we might think of this pot, this haecceity, as like a twisted string of threads, the threads of the string cannot easily be unravelled once the pot has been built and baked. We might think of it as like a cake which cannot be fully reduced back to the eggs and flour and sugar once it has been mixed and baked. But we are best appreciating the pot for *what it is*—a ceramic vessel that is the result of a very specific bundling of lines of becoming in the technology of potting (including trees, clay, stone, and the potters), some strands of which are tucked into the pot to this day and some of which continued elsewhere. Not all of the forces that intersect in the pot are materialized in the same way as others, and some of the same lines of becoming bundled in the pot could extend elsewhere. For instance, among the Ga'anda of Cameroon the bodies of women were decorated in comparable ways to the bodies of pots and granaries: they are equivalent vessels (Berns 1988). In such cases we could say that the *concept* of the pot as a vessel forms a line of becoming that pervades other entities, drawing each of them together along that line. We could equally say that the bodies, pots, and granaries are part of the same entanglement, and that the concept of 'the vessel' is a key force in the entanglement. So, the line that the potter traces through the world, or the line that the clay traces is different from the line that the concept of a body as a vessel traces, but we need to account for them all to appreciate what the Ga'anda body pot is. The concept of the line is useful, then, but ultimately all lines are bundles of other lines, just as assemblages are assemblages of other assemblages. What is produced is the haecceity: the entity, force, and/or substance as it emerges in a particular intra-action, a particular event; and the event may be enduring over a long period. And ultimately, haecceities are arborescences that contain the trace of rhizomes, or black boxes around points of change and intersection among relations, or knots of lines.
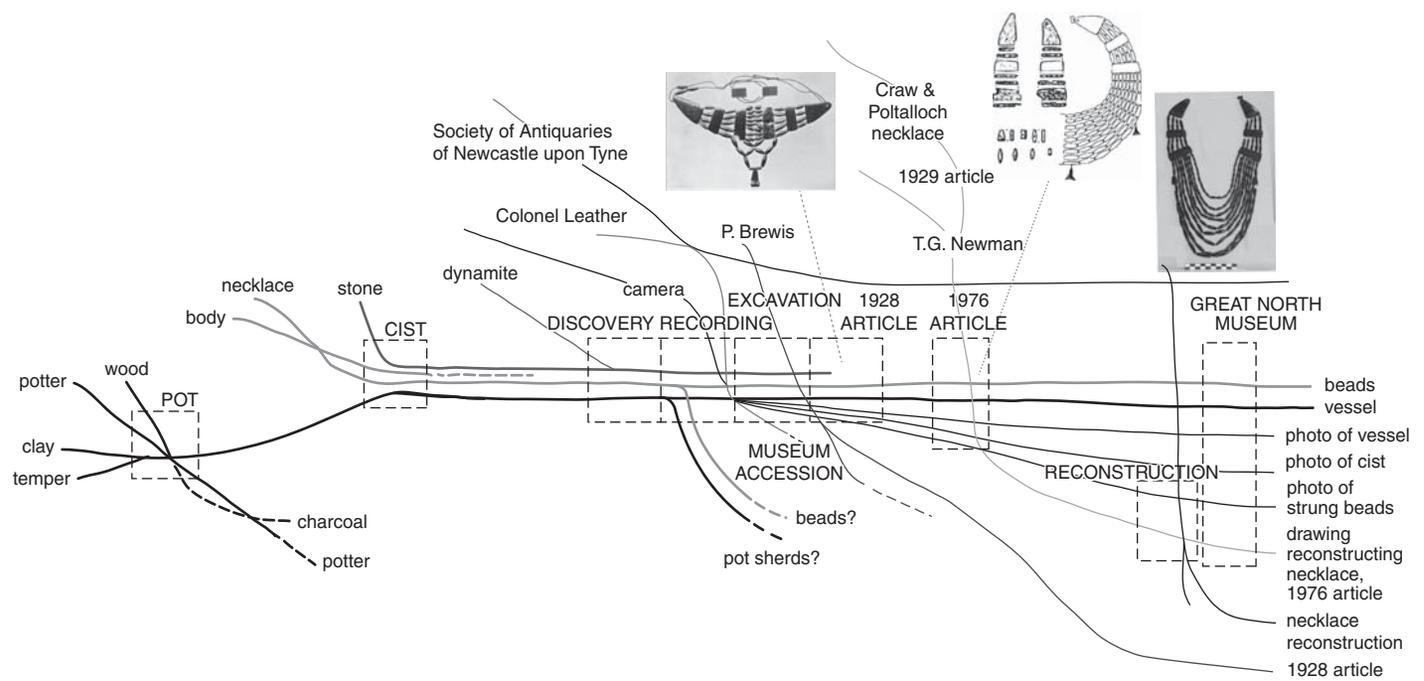
Figure 2.2 Lines of becoming involved in the Kyloe cist, vessel, and necklace. Drawn by Sheila Severn Newton. Photographs from Brewis (1928) and Newman (1976), reproduced courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne

The key concepts that I would combine, then, are the entanglement, the circulating reference, the haecceity, and the assemblage. The concept of the circulating reference allows us to scrutinize what is going on at each relation, each entwining, and consider the deviations made by the emerging lines of each entity as they intersect and flow into one another, the changes that continually refigure assemblages. It also reminds us that such lines may mutate and converge, or at other times separate: the reference does not circulate in a straight line, but changes direction and orientation over time.

BUILDING A RELATIONAL REALISM
FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS

> Any thing—caught at a particular place and moment—enfolds within its constitution the history of relations that have brought it there . . . we understand the nature of things only by attending to their relations, or in other words, by telling their stories.

>   (Ingold 2011, 160)

> Anything that has a causal effect or potential is defined as ontologically real.

>   (Wallace 2011, 7)

It should be clear by this point why the position I adopt can be described as relational; but why is it realist? It is realist because it perceives *all* the entities, forces, concepts, and relations it studies to be real, rather than perceiving only *things*, bounded and essential entities, to be real and ideas to be good or bad representations of these (cf. Barad 2007, 55–7). All of the theoretical models outlined so far describe specific iterations in reality which have no single pre-existing models, forms, or principles that dictate their outcome. They provide a vision of something that is not closed, but is composed of the activity within itself; that is not a system in equilibrium but one that is unstable and changing (becoming) in unpredictable ways; that is productive and has affects and properties that arise from its precise configuration; that is not an ideal type but a historical occurrence; and that is greater than the sum of its parts. There are some important differences between the models, and I have drawn some of these out above. I am content, though, to distil out these key features of whatever we prefer to call the instantiation in question. What is most important is to arrive at an archaeologically useful theory of such relationality, a theory which has clear methodological implications for making sense of the remains of the past in the real world in which we live. This theory should be able to consider not only assemblages 'in the past' but also the enduring

nature of those assemblages and the existence or legacy of those assemblages in the present. It must be able to consider the place of archaeological practices in the translation and continuation of those assemblages. I would like to take the next step in developing such an approach by reviewing Lucas's (2012) brilliant, bold, and visionary—but in some ways rather stark—reframing of the archaeological record.

Lucas's approach to archaeological assemblages

Gavin Lucas (2012, 168) argues that archaeology needs to be repositioned to examine 'entities and their relations—and in such a way that does not presuppose a given ontology (e.g. mental and material entities and/or substances)', an argument with which I wholeheartedly concur. Lucas translates the abstract descriptions of how assemblages work from Deleuze and Guattari through Latour and DeLanda into archaeological assemblages. He considers the mechanics of assemblage formation and dissipation. He recognizes that assemblages may be 'stable' and may be persistent or momentary, permeable, or impermeable (187). He argues that material things, such as archaeological remains, are 'residues' of other assemblages which are relatively fleeting. For instance, if we imagine a gathering of people building a cairn, the cairn is the residue—an enduring assemblage which was produced by another, more temporary, assemblage. That same cairn could be the focus of further gatherings, further assemblies, and it will be involved in a succession of other assemblages over time. So, some assemblages are 'momentary' and others are 'persistent'. As Lucas (186) argues, persistent assemblages, like the cairn, are not static, and there is a tension between their endurance and change: '[i]ndeed, the very notion of endurance or persistence of a stable state implies time and therefore change.'

Lucas's terminology for *how* assemblages endure and change, drawn from DeLanda and Latour, is exceptionally useful (Table 2.1). According to Lucas there are two key processes at work in the ongoing history of an assemblage: materialization and dematerialization. Materialization here does not refer to the making material of, say, mental ideas, but to the reorganization of matter from one form to another (Lucas 2012, 166–7).[7] We will start with assemblage formation, or materialization. Assemblages result from gatherings in particular locales, or from the repeated iteration of a specific type of object (and I would suggest we could add the iteration of a practice or idea). The two can operate together—Lucas (2012, 200) considers Sunday services at a church in which the assemblage of a religious gathering is both territorialized (given

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[7] Although, and with Conneller (2011) in mind, I would suggest that it is not only the form of a thing that may be changed as matter becomes 'coded', but its substance.

Table 2.1 Lucas's (2012) descriptions of processes by which assemblages accrete

'Gathering' assemblages	'Iterative' assemblages
Territorialization	Coding
Containment	Enchainment
Production of place	Recurrent association or recurrent citation (e.g. of object type)
e.g. Deposition	e.g. Typology
At 'centres of gravity' or 'centres of calculation'	Circulating references

locality) and coded (given form). He refers to the places attracting further gatherings, such as further congregation or, say, further deposition, as 'centres of gravity', and the iteration of types of things as enchainment or circulation. Events and practices might enchain or contain strongly or weakly—the more strongly this occurs, the more stable (i.e. enduring) the assemblage. A pot both iterates other pots and also gathers together some of the materials used in its composition, and it may contain other assemblages (e.g. a stew). Alongside these formation processes, there are also processes by which assemblages are pulled apart: deterritorialization (e.g. the dismantling of a cairn when sourcing stones in building a nearby wall) and decoding (e.g. the assemblage of cairns ceased to grow when the iterative practice of cairn building ended). Lucas refers to the processes that result in loss of containment for 'residue' (i.e. enduring) assemblages as 'exposure', and loss of coding as 'dispersal'. He argues that the archaeological record is part palimpsest (where some residues are partly erased and replaced) and part stratigraphy, formed by the interaction between formation and dissipating processes. The archaeological record is 'an archive of this process of (de)materialization' (205).

Lucas then focuses on the role of archaeological practices in the deterritorialization and decoding of assemblages. He divides the intervention of archaeologists with past remains from the circulation of references through archaeological reporting and writing, tracing how such practices free up territorialized assemblages and make them mobile, circulating through various 'centres of calculation' (such as laboratories). This process involves new gatherings and iterations—for instance through archives (Lucas 2012, 237). Importantly, these processes (through archaeological practice or otherwise) are going on all the time: they are part of the continuing formation, dissolution (and appreciation) of the archaeological record. Thus, for instance, Mark Edmonds's wonderful account of how Neolithic stone axeheads were found, reused, and collected over the millennia could be described as tracing changes in the coding and decoding of what an axehead is and can achieve, and changes in the territories in which such axeheads were active as they were translated by Bronze Age people using relics, farmers, antiquarians, labourers,

museums, and archaeologists (Edmonds 2012). For Lucas, the archaeological record is a form of memory (Lucas 2012, 210). In a way, archaeologists are trying to learn what things and places remember and in so doing have to take account of what has been forgotten and how that forgetting happened.

Dynamic assemblages

Lucas's excellent analysis makes a number of key points that I was struggling to articulate in earlier drafts of this book. He emphasizes the way in which the circulating reference expands as it travels (Lucas 2012, 245) and how we transfer some of the material properties of artefacts from 'one material form to another' as we translate them (238), as I have argued above. Vitally, he also presents archaeological remains as 'events' that take place over a very long duration (208), so that we come to see 'objects as stable networks of events' (187). Just as he says, 'objects are assemblages, and assemblages are objects' (186). Above all, Lucas develops a view of the material assemblage as an enduring 'residue' of more fleeting assemblages that have formed it, and intersecting with others that continue to permit or support its existence. There are some points of difference in emphasis. I would stress that things do not only remember past events and assemblages, they actually continue the active presence of some of their constituent relations and events—the fabric of the pot has become and still is ceramic, extending the impact of firing it in a way that has changed the interaction of particles within that fabric (irreversibly, just as Lucas (2012, 212) says). But these particles are always in relation, always interacting with one another and with other particles, especially on the surface of the pot. Prehistoric pots are especially porous and the amount of moisture within the fabric at any time is changeable. Interactions are taking place on the atomic level all the time. We not only have to consider the forces that first formed the enduring assemblage and those that might pull it apart, but also the forces that permeate it, keeping it together all the time. These forces are manifest locally, they are within the assemblage. Thus, I would describe such assemblages as dynamic, with their continuity provided by live relations that endure over time. For me, forces are always acting on materials, within them and among them; some of these forces keep them as they are while others change them, and in everyday conditions some materials are more stable than others. Many of these forces may be pervasive at the very large scale, such as those identified by physicists, while others are more local, such as the actions of those using or curating or burying or excavating or conserving such a pot. For Lucas the relations that made a thing or material assemblage have passed (though other relations reshape it repeatedly as it becomes involved in other material assemblages), but, while he does argue that 'assemblages are in a sense alive or animated' (188), in Lucas's account the

thing seems to endure by reason of its matter. For Lucas a thing is pulled apart only when exposed to 'dispersive forces', and kept stable by being 'quarantined' from such forces (214). For me, the thing in question endures because of the forces, relations, and entanglements that are at work throughout it and beyond—forces such as gravity or strong nuclear force, as well as the desire to preserve ancient monuments, for instance. These help to make it the kind of matter it is in the locality it is, and many of them were there when the object was made and have stayed active in a similar way within its assemblage throughout its existence. Assemblages are being materialized all the time.

There is also an important difference in emphasis on the role of ideas, beliefs, emotions, and other entities or forces traditionally diagnosed as immaterial. Lucas (2012) argues convincingly that there is an increasing gap between the most general theoretical approaches in archaeology and the practice of archaeology, and warns in particular against the focus on 'abstractions' like class, society, religion, and personhood (193). In his view archaeologists need to describe past material collectives only. As he puts it 'the problem with the social is that it got reified into an abstraction; a quasi-transcendent entity, rather than an immanent process of aggregation' (265), and this has led to too much generalization of 'social facts' such as cultures or chiefdoms. We cannot ignore the problems Lucas has identified, in particular the dislocation of synthetic narratives from the processes that produced archaeological remains and produce archaeological knowledge. The book you are reading now is in part an attempt to deal with some of those problems by ensuring that interpretation is embedded in the archaeological material and that inferences are thoroughly scrutinized, to make sure that what is black-boxed is reliable and effective, to work 'from the ground up' or from the remains outwards. At the same time we cannot do away with or ignore the role of abstractions in how things become materialized, dematerialized, and rematerialized: it seems very likely to me that past assemblages did include persons, religious beliefs, and codes of behaviour. The point of relational approaches is to acknowledge that there are no clear and transcendent forms or types of religious beliefs, persons, or social relations, and to argue against reifying such relations as, for instance 'social organization' or 'chiefdoms' or 'prestige goods economies' (see Chapter 3). In that, I am aligned with Lucas. The only types under discussion will be typologies of objects, sites, and practices. But 'abstractions' exist in the present: they are part of the assemblage within which we operate, they are woven into and emergent from the archaeological record as Lucas has framed it. The Bronze Age pots, blades, and necklaces that we study are currently entangled with concepts like chiefdoms and prestige goods whether we like it or not. It is therefore a vital starting point for me to consider whether each of these concepts remains well articulated within this assemblage of things, ideas, and practices, and to unravel problematic entanglements one by one. All of the articulations made by

previous archaeological texts have been effective in some way, to a greater or lesser degree, and have shaped the assemblage within which this synthesis must operate. The question is what effect they have had, how secure is the resulting region of the assemblage, and what happens if we untie the supporting connections and take some of the strands elsewhere? Part of that process remains the consideration of whether new concepts articulate well with what remains of the entanglement as we remove some elements—but these new concepts should not reify 'social entities' like alternative models of social organization. We cannot simply 'return to things' without exploring the history of the things as they are now in their fullest sense, having been successively translated through various interactions and differing media. Thus I will critically examine the translations to Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices that have been wrought by nineteenth- and twentieth-century interpretation in Chapter 3, work from typologies in Chapters 4 and 5, and in Chapter 6 invoke a variety of what some might argue are 'abstractions', such as rituals, funerals, and other mortuary practices, communities, differences among human persons, identities, cosmologies, assemblages, scales and regions, and haecceities, in order to understand the patterning observed from my analysis of the material assemblage of these mortuary deposits presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

Enduring relations and extended assemblages

I would suggest that all entities in existence (including ideas, techniques, and practices as well as pots, bones, rocks, gold, atoms, etc.) emerge out of relationships among existing entities and forces within specific, changing, entanglements. Some forces are far more pervasive than others, such as the relationship between energy and heat described in the Laws of Thermodynamics or between weight and mass described in conventional theories of gravity. These forces participate in many assemblages at once and may bind assemblages to one another. Other relationships are far more local in scale, such as the relationship between mourners and the body of the deceased. All relations are specific, such as the relationship involving myself, my keyboard, gravity, friction, ideas, other texts, archaeological remains, publisher, readers, etc. Some forces, and some relationships, may be stronger and others may be weaker in any given assemblage. Most relations between entities transform those entities to some extent (however imperceptibly the keyboard is worn and the muscles, tendons, etc., in my arms and back are shaped) and some produce new entities (e.g. this text), and change the overall assemblage in a minor or major way. The properties of entities are relative and historical. For instance, bone is formed as hard and enduring in relation to flesh and when conserved in museum collections may endure potentially for hundreds of years, but may not do so when suspended in acidic Northumbrian soil. The ongoing

relations, physically, chemically, socially, and culturally, are different. Bronze Age objects and human remains never existed outside of specific entanglements, even when they languished in the earth undetected by human beings for thousands of years, and do not do so now. Even when suspended in the soil and amid worms, roots, etc., the Bronze Age burial was in relation with and became transformed by those features of its environment. Relationships that produced material items like Bronze Age cairns or pots extend some of their local force and character out across time enduringly through these durable entities. The stones of the cairn were key features of the past assemblage. Such pots or cairns that we encounter today are dynamic material assemblages of multiple and ongoing interactions that have endured to some extent through a series of translations and intersections. By their creation, these media transformed some of the local relationships that made them and conveyed some features of the transformed relationship through time and space in a distinctive way (this cairn, that pot). Such things (this cairn, that pot) are not 'the past relationships' in a totalized sense, but certain properties became instilled in pots when they were made, or bones when they were formed, properties that became co-extensive with their existence and may survive successive translations because some relationships key to their formation endure over time along with them. If the pot is smashed it loses some but not all of those properties (it is still composed of fired clay, sand, and shell because smashing the pot does not undo the relationship between these components), and it is possible for us to tell that it used to have some of the properties it lost in that translation (e.g. the ability to contain liquids) (cf. Lucas 2012, 213). Archaeological analysis traces these changes in order to appreciate the significance of each transformation on the pot, on people and materials involved in the transformation, and so on.

Philosopher Graham Harman (2009) proposes an 'object-oriented' realism. Harman's definition of an object includes any entity, force, concept, etc. Harman (2009, 204–7 *inter alia*) argues that because certain aspects of an object always project into a current relation from the past we have to accept that entities have certain essential properties within them that will feature in whatever moment we experience the thing. He argues that essence is found in the 'interplay . . . between the unity and plurality of the thing'. Harman (213) disputes Latour's view that an actant 'is not real if it does not transform, modify, perturb or create something else', which he refutes by saying 'all entities are always in some sort of relation' whether or not anything is changed by this. I would suggest that *past relations also have enduring effects*, so that a pot is an enduring effect of the relationships in the assemblage which produced that pot. Whereas for Harman (187 *inter alia*) objects 'always hold something in reserve' from whatever relationships they are currently engaged in, for me forces, relations, and entanglements of many kinds are pervasive through time, pulling multiply on and within each object in any

given composition. Certain relations are ongoing within the assemblage: gravity, for instance, has roughly as much purchase on the pot today as it did after it was fired and, I would argue, the property that a pot is a vessel has also endured (unless it was broken down and the fragments reworked, for instance). There are enduring relations between atoms, operating in as well as between the fabric of things. Some of these relations are ongoing and continuous, and others are residual but rely on other ongoing relations. For instance, a fingerprint on a pot left by someone decorating it is residual of the interaction between decorator and pot, but it is maintained by ongoing physical, chemical, and potentially social and cultural relations. And through a relational realist perspective we can focus on the local assemblage of relations that maintain and potentially dissolve the fingerprint on the pot. Thus, I would concur with Olsen's (2010, 156) statement that '[a] Neolithic pot used for storing food, left behind in an abandoned settlement from where it is recovered six thousand years later, retains some of its uniqueness and autonomy': it does, but the 'uniqueness and autonomy' of the vessel derive precisely from the past relationships that made it so and ongoing relations that keep it what it still is (some of which have been ongoing repeatedly for thousands or millions years, preceding the pot), from the gathering of the clay, wood, and other materials needed in its manufacture to the unique conditions of its use, neglect, and taphonomy. Equally some features of the relationship between monument and place set up during the construction of a round barrow still endure, and have been translated in various ways into maps, photographs, texts, etc., which may circulate more widely than the physical monument.

For instance, there is only 'one' jet necklace that was deposited in a cist at Kyloe, Northumberland, but through its translations (e.g. photographs, drawings, and texts) reduced aspects of the necklace can be amplified and carried through time and space. Many of its key properties are extended, and so 'the Kyloe necklace' becomes an 'extended assemblage': *many-in-one and one-in-many* (see Figure 2.2). The necklace has been translated many times since the cist was discovered on 9 June 1927, as a quarry was prepared for blasting (Brewis 1928; Spain 1927), and each translation has changed the extent and effects of the key properties of the necklace by drawing it into new assemblages. Beads were taken from the site when it was discovered and only some could be recovered by Colonel Leather for donation to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne and kept at their museum. A reconstruction of the beads into a necklace was published in 1928 (Brewis 1928), and a different reconstruction suggested through a drawing in 1976, following comparison with jet necklaces from other sites in northern Britain (Newman 1976). A further reconstruction in replica beads is now at the Great North Museum. Key features of the 'residue assemblage' or the 'legacy' of past relations that is the necklace, along with some of the relationships that it 'records', is pulled into the new assemblages (e.g. the reconstructions). Each

assemblage, including 'the Kyloe necklace', is extended outwards through the process of translation via, say, photographic reproduction, and certain forms of photography may reveal something we could not see without it (e.g. magnification showing working marks on the jet, or x-ray photography revealing joins within the fabric of a pot). The resulting assemblage is both one (unified by the travelling yet relational properties of the necklace, such as the shape of the beads) and many different assemblages. While I would not define this plurity-in-unity as the essence of the thing, the formulation has some affinity with Harman's perspective. But his focus on the object, rather than on the changing assemblages which the object permeates and is permeated by, is problematic.

Importantly, the interactions with an assemblage that transfer some of its properties are really *intra-actions* that take place *within* the phenomenon in question—say, the archaeology of Food Vessel pottery. Indeed, whenever I write interactions I really do mean intra-actions, since in interacting two entities become part of the same assemblage. If entities are 'singular' and 'individuated' (Lucas 2012, 170) then they are also multiply constituted and grow in scale the more they circulate. If a certain pot is valued highly because of the role it plays in a typology it may be treated in a special way, become subjected to further analyses, and move into new assemblages such as a lecture theatre where pot typology is being discussed. Strictly speaking, properties cannot move beyond assemblages: if they are transferred they rather *extend some of the assemblage in a new direction*. The key point here is that the 'new assemblage' is not really a completely new assemblage, but is an extension of many older assemblages. Assemblages bleed into one another, and we have instead an unfolding, growing assemblage with different 'regions' within it (see Figure 2.3). Through the extension of some of their properties archaeological artefacts are also distributed through social
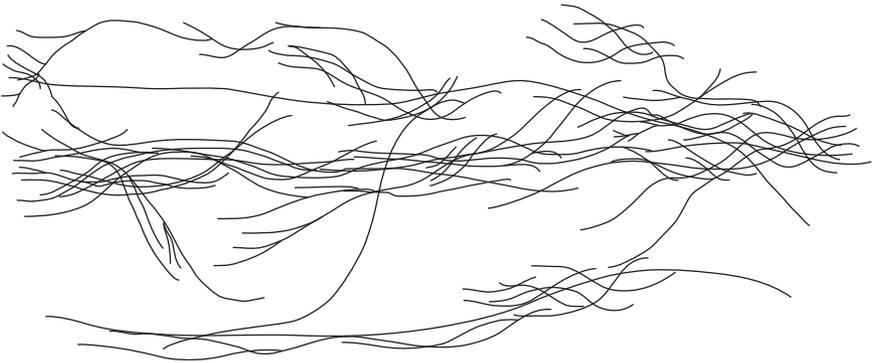
Figure 2.3 Regions within an assemblage. Drawn by Sheila Severn Newton

relations and through memories, knowledges and experiences, translations like photographs, texts, etc. They lived in past people's memories.

Inspired by Gell, John Robb (2004) offers the idea of an 'extended object'. This is an exceptionally useful idea, with a little modification. Robb's extended object extends outwards from a material core: '[t]o understand how material things are active—how their effective agency shapes human actions—we have to see not their naked skeleton, the thing itself, but the extended artefact, the artefact with its extension into social time and space' (Robb 2004, 133). Unlike Robb, I would argue that the extended object does not have a core, and there is no second domain of social time and space for it to enter. All features of the object emerge through chains of relations (as it circulates as a reference), including its 'more material' aspects and including the various meanings and translations of the thing. Just as the relations that keep a pot being a pot are going on all the time, so our actions, technologies, ideas, and practices in the present further extend that pot in different directions. These intra-actions change the assemblage *as a whole* (because when some part of it is changed so is the whole) but that change does not extend across the *entire* phenomenon.

For instance, we change the past as it exists now whenever we publish something new we have discovered, but we do not change the past when it was the present. Too much of that part of the assemblage is absent. What is missing are the many momentary assemblages in which the enduring assemblage of the pot was involved. Those regions of the assemblage can no longer be affected by ongoing activities elsewhere in the assemblage. If in AD 2020 we find, through excavation, some new evidence about activity at Stonehenge, it does not mean that any activity which occurred in *c*.2600 BC is changed at *that* point in time, but it does mean that the overall assemblage of the past has changed and that new futures for the past are possible that would not have been before. A new past emerges in AD 2020, and Stonehenge as a phenomenon enduring into the present *as a whole* is changed. If you like, the regions of the assemblage that are most active in AD 2020 become changed, while the region of the assemblage where the enduring features of Stonehenge interacted with other more momentary assemblages (e.g. people, things, and animals gathered at the site) *c*.2600 BC remains unaffected. The entities we study may be extended in multiple different directions at once as they become engaged in new relations and new phenomena; the same set of remains could be archaeological evidence to one person and sacred to another. In that respect the assemblage, the object is multidimensional; some aspects of it are singular, while others are replicable or plural. A pot may have only one clay form, but a view of its decorated and pocked surface may exist in multiple photographs and drawings, and, as an extended object, it may take on many different properties and effects in different assemblages. The object is an assemblage of relational properties, and as the assemblage changes, so does the extended object.

The analysis of 'Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England' involves many other assemblages interleaved with and within it, then: it necessitates a study of Beaker burials, the Kirkhaugh burial, a specific radiocarbon date obtained from a certain bone using a specific calibration and a certain set of apparatus and techniques, the conceptualization of exotic objects as denoting prestige, ideas about cosmology, and so on. The assemblage can be studied at various scales, from anthropological and archaeological engagement with 'mortuary practices' to the precise location of a certain artefact in a grave or cist. I think that in Lucas's scheme my phenomenon or assemblage here, 'Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England', does not have equal weight when compared to the material assemblage of the Kirkhaugh barrow. There is also a pertinent question over whether I am really studying 'practices' (Lucas 2012, 171). The assemblage 'Early Bronze Age mortuary *events* in North-East England' is perhaps a safer proposition: certainly, the starting point in tracing practices is to identify the events in which they are instantiated and attempt to deduce how one event relates to another. The remains under investigation are enduring events reaching into and participating in the formation of different regions of time and space. But this study does focus on the prehistoric practices involved in those events, and the legacy of those practices in the enduring events they helped shape. The assemblage in which those practices were involved is dispersed and heterogeneous, but some core practices were iterated over the long term (e.g. the deposition of human remains). We can also talk about an assemblage of practices just as we can talk about an assemblage of things, particularly if we acknowledge that things are becoming all the time. Thus, the assemblage 'Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England' extends, and its scope is increased, the more it is studied and written about. It has not ended but is repeatedly changing, and overlaps with and consists of regions of other assemblages (e.g. cremation deposits buried in Collared Urns, or crouched inhumations with Beaker pottery). Perhaps ultimately what is at stake is where we identify the limits of one assemblage and its border with another—*but we cannot do that in advance, it has to emerge from the entangled process of investigation itself*. For instance, I have chosen the boundary of the study from the outset to be mortuary practices *c.*2500–1500 BC, but three of the radiocarbon dates obtained for this project indicate that some of my corpus extended both far earlier, and far later (see Chapter 4). Thus, while the book is mainly about Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age burials, due to my 'agential cuts' these are regionalized within greater assemblages during the investigation. The assemblage has many points of origin, and our interactions with it keep it moving in new directions, even though these interactions involve concepts which may be problematic. We need to work with, against, and beyond those too.

IMPLICATIONS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RELATIONAL REALISM

> Relationalism [is] the view that a thing is defined solely by its effects and alliances rather than by a lonely internal kernel of existence.
>
> (Harman 2009, 75)
>
> Realism maintains that the world exists apart from our knowledge of it.
>
> (Wallace 2011, 14)

Relational realism withdraws from a complete relativism that argues that a thing is what it is solely in terms of its *present* relationships (cf. Harman 2009, 75, 129–31, 186–7), because it argues that *past relations have enduring effects* and that things (people, places, etc.) are never fully extricated from *all* of those effects. The term relational realism has already appeared in other disciplinary contexts (e.g. Epperson 2009; Tilly 2008). Michael Epperson (2009, 33) describes a relational realist 'double-rapprochement of physics and metaphysics' as the basis of his discussion of quantum physics and Barad's research falls in the same camp. Within sociology Charles Tilly (2008, 7) coined the term relational realism to describe an ontological perspective in which 'transactions, interactions, social ties, and conversations constitute the central stuff of social life'. Although there are differences between the versions of relational realism intended by Tilly, Epperson, and myself, each agrees that relations form the basis of reality; I think this is so whether we study the physical properties of things, social relations, or religious beliefs. In this section I briefly summarize some key features of relational realism emerging from my engagement with the approaches discussed in this chapter, before moving on to consider the general and the specific implications of this approach for studying the past.

Implications of a relational realism for understanding past realities

There are important methodological and theoretical implications to adopting relational realism. Non-representational theory strikes out against the correspondence approach to truth, which has been foundational to both positivist realism and subjectivist constructivism, as summed up by Barad (2003, 805–6):

> both scientific realists and social constructivists believe that scientific knowledge (in its multiple representational forms such as theoretical concepts, graphs, particle tracks, photographic images) mediates our access to the material world; where they differ is on the question of reference, whether scientific knowledge represents things in the world as they really are (i.e. 'Nature') or 'objects' that are

the product of social activities (i.e. 'Culture'), but both groups subscribe to representationalism. . . . Representationalism is so deeply entrenched within Western culture that it has common sense appeal. But representationalism (like 'nature itself', not merely our representations of it!) has a history.

Latour (1999, 280–90 *inter alia*) questions the idea that there is a single world 'out there' and many worlds 'in the mind' (or in many minds). Rather than designating some references as facts and others as beliefs he suggests we instead leave them all 'among the multiplicity of nonhumans' (284). Latour's non-representationalism demands we accept that there is no divide between ontology and epistemology but 'many differing partial ontologies' (287). Latour hints that these ontologies arise from specific conjunctions and transformations of references, arguing that 'there are as many practical ontologies as there are factishes' (290)—factishes being his term for references once we collapse the distinction between facts and beliefs (or facts and fetishes). For Latour the modern world is a result of a long history of specific articulations of such factishes.

While this implies we should not try to separate statements into 'facts' and things that are not 'facts', this does not descend into an 'anything goes' relativism in which any translation is as good as any other. Effective translations need to be accurate in that they need to be well enchained with (or well related to) previous articulations, and well materialized, otherwise they will not convince audiences. Latour argues that some translations of entities, some interactions between actants, are more effective than others. Latour (1999, 113–44) illustrates this by identifying how Pasteur's experiments on fermentation were able to effectively demonstrate the existence of microbes. Here he argues that the success of Pasteur's research depends on how Pasteur articulates yeast, temperature, water, sugar, laboratory equipment, and key ideas in chemistry and biology. Latour (1999, 143–4) concludes:

> through the artifices of the laboratory, the lactic acid ferment becomes articulable. Instead of being mute, unknown, undefined, it becomes something that is being made up of many more items, many more articles—including papers presented at the Academy!—many more reactions to many more situations. There are quite simply more and more things to say about it, and what is said by more people gains in credibility. The field of biochemistry becomes, in every sense of the term, 'more articulate'—and so do the biochemists. Actually, thanks to Pasteur's ferment, they come into existence as biochemists, instead of having to choose between biology and chemistry . . . The more work Pasteur does, the more independent the lactic acid ferment becomes . . . [t]he lactic acid ferment now exists as a discrete entity because it is articulated between so many others, in so many active and artificial settings.

If Pasteur had been unable to demonstrate the existence of this ferment then his idea would not have been well articulated: it would have been ineffective

and unable to bring the community of chemists into articulation with his idea, methods, and findings, and with the ferment itself. The ferment would not have emerged as a distinct entity either. Similarly, archaeological typologies and other ideas about the prehistoric past only endure if they are well articulated: with other ideas, with archaeologists and their practices, with prehistoric objects, with scientific techniques and tools, and so on. Their existence can give rise to new fields of study. In parallel, Ingold (2011, 162) argues that better-related stories come from those who 'can tell' well: '[t]o tell, in short, is not to represent the world but to trace a path through it that others can follow'. In these ideas about well-told stories and well-articulated or resonant propositions, and in the circulating reference, we have the basis for a critical appraisal of the usefulness and efficacy of interpretations about the past. There will of course be conflicting perspectives as any object/assemblage will extend into different assemblages and become regions of an unfolding assemblage at a greater scale. Different methods of translating and enchaining references can be compared, different ways of relating to the past understood as real and effective in varying ways. Appreciating why the arguments archaeologists make are well articulated is an important part of evaluating those arguments.

Ontology, what there is, is relational and local, even if some forces and relations endure and pervade the entire entanglement of human history and beyond. Alberti and Marshall (2009) achieved the brilliant realization of the implication of relational ontologies for anthropological and archaeological studies, especially to understanding past worlds. They argue convincingly that ontologies vary locally, and that we need to appreciate the distinctiveness of specific past articulations of entities as relating not just to differing beliefs, concepts, or ways of knowing, but to different ways of being and arenas of reality. As Alberti and Bray (2009) and Alberti and Marshall (2009) argue, we need not seek a universal theory of agency (say), but rather accept that agency depends on the local ontologies within which it operates. Such ontologies are the emergent results of particular agencies, events, relations between entities, and so on. In particular, animist ontologies involve local and contingent kinds of agency (Alberti and Bray 2009, 340). While Latour suggests obviating the terms ontology and epistemology,[8] it may be equally useful to retain them and to accept that epistemology is a feature of ontology, and that what really is can be transformed through epistemological developments since these are part of reality. The key point here, though, is that even if we fully apply the relational understanding of ontologies that arises from Barad's work on quantum mechanics some forces are pervasive in many ontologies. An electron cannot become *anything* that we might seek to

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[8] Barad proposes that we focus instead on an 'onto-epistem-ology': the sentiment is one I agree with but the term is unwieldy.

measure, though it could be a wave or a particle depending on the onto-logical arrangement it enters. Certain past and enduring relations pervade the entire interaction setting broad parameters for what an electron may be and can do. The same is so for human beings, animals, objects, and so on in differing ontologies—those ontologies have a history and share some forces with many and some with all other ontologies (cf. Harris and Robb 2012).

Many of the approaches discussed so far in this chapter are post-humanist. Post-humanism questions the membership of society as exclusively human, questions 'the environment' as a useful category compared to the idea of multiple intersecting and intra-acting entities and forces comprising an as-semblage, and questions the centrality of the human subject, observer, etc., in the shape of phenomena. This is not at all to say that humans should be removed from the phenomena under investigation or that all of those phenomena would unfold in the same way without human agency, but that phenomena do not depend on humans for their relationality; in other words, *relationality is not a matter of human subjectivity supplying differences of perspective; it is not a matter of epistemology, but of the fundamental ontology of how the universe works*. Humans are not special among organisms (Ingold—for whom organisms are not just agents but also 'hives of activity'), organisms not special among the inorganic (Bennett), and the inorganic is itself relational too (Bennett, and Barad). A post-humanist perspective is, however, still one interested in the human. Since what humans are depends on the phenomena in which we are immersed, then, we have much to learn about humanity by studying the other 'components' in the unfolding relations foundational to both humans and non-humans. As Olsen (2010, 139) argues:

> Paying more attention to things than was hitherto common does not leave us with an antihuman perspective. Rather, it may be seen as a way of bringing back a more complete human.

Thus, while a relational realist perspective is broadly non-representational and post-humanist it does not constitute an abandonment of either an archae-ology focused on human beings or an archaeology that interprets the social (cf. Lucas 2012, 265). It simply goes about and reports on these tasks in a different way than social or phenomenological approaches to archaeology have done in recent years.

To summarize, the key tenets of the relational realist approach I adopt in this book can be characterized as follows:

- All entities, whether organisms, concepts, things, materials, or places, emerge out of relationships between other forces and entities.
- Each entity that we study can be understood as an assemblage of differing forces, relations, and other entities.
- The properties of an assemblage are emergent from its configuration.

- An assemblage unfolds in a contingent, unique, and unpredictable way which may exhibit patterning without resulting from a singular organizing force.
- Entities or assemblages change in each interaction, but some features of the entity or assemblage may endure from one relationship to another *if some of the relationships previously articulating those features persist*.
- Relationality is not utterly transient—an entity cannot be defined solely in terms of the *current* relationships engaging it but also exhibits the traces, residues, or legacies of past interactions.
- Similar analysis can be applied to entities at whatever scale, which is why the terms entity, actant, and assemblage (or meshwork, entanglement, network, phenomenon) can be used interchangeably.
- Archaeological evidence is not an object or artefact—the whole assemblage of remains, apparatus, knowledge, and work constitutes archaeological evidence.
- We can trace the exact changes in the assemblage under investigation by considering how it is translated when it interacts with further actants; Latour's concept of the circulating reference provides a useful framework for assessing the changing assemblage.
- Archaeological interpretation does not simply involve changes to knowledge, but changes to reality; different concepts and techniques change the assemblage, the past that we study, for all of the entities still participating in that assemblage. Thus, we do not simply adopt new 'perspectives' on the past or think about it differently, but we rework the world and arrive at new formulations of reality through our endeavours.
- We are entangled within the assemblages we wish to study: as soon as we study them we extend them in new ways. We cannot escape the assemblage, only determine the directions in which we think it should be extended. The past is emerging continually.
- Not all translations are equally effective. Some intra-actions are less well articulated, less effective, or less enduring than others: all intra-actions have some effect of a distinctive kind and result in some kind of a new assemblage, but those assemblages are not 'equal'. As archaeologists we need to produce translations that are well related, that engage the phenomena we study in well-articulated and effective assemblages (see below).

The implications of relational realism for researching Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices

Assemblages involve things we might classically denote as 'immaterial', such as ideas, but which are utterly entangled within and inseparable from material

assemblages. As noted above, Hodder has a place for what Lucas terms abstractions, but Lucas eschews them. Specific abstractions, such as the State or personhood, are absent from the archaeological record, he says, and do not have the same real status as artefacts in the present. But as Wallace (2011, 159) argues, factors that are now absent, such as past religious beliefs or human beings organized into particular kinship groups or authority structures, leave an impact on the shape of the remains we find even though those features of the world no longer exist. The problem is that this impact is enormously varied and, as Lucas (2012) points out, we cannot agree on the nature of the abstractions involved. In part, I suspect, this is because of the uniqueness or particularity of such abstractions within particular entanglements, though I find it hard to let go of the idea that key features of certain entanglements could reoccur in many different times and places in similar, albeit never identical, configurations, and that there is a value to understanding these similarities—as I have argued for studies of personhood (Fowler 2004; 2008a; 2010a; 2010b). In sum, the precise social relations that occurred in the past were highly varied and had unique features—but there were social relations and I find it hard to imagine there were no abstractions, no codes of action or ideas about life, death, the past, and the future. The material entities we work with as archaeologists are produced in chains of events; but ideas, concepts, beliefs, emotions, myths, and even social institutions all have a role to play somewhere in the operation, though these should not be reified as specific forms or types.

Nonetheless, a relational realist archaeology needs *typology* when dealing with the material residues or legacies of past events—it needs what Ingold calls 'inversions', what Latour terms 'black boxes', and what might be described as a kind of arborescence or haecceity at a certain scale. Ingold explains extremely neatly how a process of inversion is at work in how we convert the intersections of lines of movement into the 'dots' of places, for instance. It is central to his analysis that lines of becoming *always* precede such inversion, and in his view networks (where lines connect fixed points) are part of this inversion: an inversion of the tissue-like meshwork. Both Latour (1999) and Ingold (2011, 153–5) consider fieldwork practices as producing a storyline through networks or meshworks: for Latour a reference is repeatedly translated through the ongoing actions of scientists and other actants, while for Ingold scientists are wayfarers like all organisms and their knowledge is produced by a movement along a way they find, rather than an 'abstraction' of information into a general comparable classification. Both scholars therefore trace the lines of becoming of the knowledge produced in a broadly comparable way, but Ingold (2011, 155) warns:

> inhabitant knowledge is forged not by fitting the data of observation into the compartments of a received classification but through histories of wayfaring. To unravel the meshwork, and to reassemble the resulting fragments on the basis of

their intrinsic similarities and differences, is to destroy its very meaning and coherence.

And (168):

> If nothing exists in and for itself, but is only the more or less ephemeral embodiment of activity-in-relation-to-others, then the whole project of classification—which groups and divides things according to fixed attributes— becomes impossible.

I think we both wayfare and classify, and need to do both. Archaeologists are inhabitants as much as the people whose remains we study. In the analysis carried out in preparing this book I have inhabited a changing landscape of knowledge about the period and region I study. It has changed significantly for me partly because I was not a specialist in either the region, nor really the period, when I moved to Newcastle in 2004 and thereafter began studying the local archaeology. The path has taken me through various libraries and museum collections, books, photos, meetings, conferences, landscapes, and archaeological sites. However, unlike Ingold's inhabitant, *I have to begin from the basis of the inversions that go before me*: it is only by reassembling 'fragments on the basis of their intrinsic similarities and differences' that I can come to understand how the meshwork was formed. I must classify pots and knives and burial practices in order to arrive at a sense of chronology and thereby detect the unfolding lines of becoming, the intertwining forces, the changing meshworks or assemblages, of the world I wish to travel. Indeed, these typologies are relational, and are repeatedly reworked by archaeologists; it would be a mistake to see them as referring to any ideal or Platonic forms. I am navigating a landscape formed by antiquarians and archaeologists as much as prehistoric actants. The circulating referents are my guide along the way, the network of information at my disposal is the thing I begin to unravel, to soften up and reshape as a meshwork of unfolding lines. My analysis acknowledges the 'histories of wayfaring' that have led to this analysis, the vast majority of which long precede my conjoining with the thickly bundled lines of becoming within the assemblage or tangled mesh we might term 'Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England'. I am, therefore, committed to tracing the paths of things, ideas, and practices in my analysis in a way that combines an understanding of how things develop in certain directions contingently with a focus on investigating the translations occurring to each 'line' (force, assemblage, or entity) at any point of intersection with other 'lines'. These intersections, these moments of deviation, diffraction, and conversion in becoming are of great interest as we consider how mortuary practices *change*. Each event not only is extended forwards in time, but draws in becoming from the past—it extends in both directions, changing the past in the present and shaping new futures. There is a vital place for classification in

this process if we can demonstrate that such classifications as we use have value in appreciating past *relations* and the *emergence of past ways of becoming*: and I think that we clearly can. I think there are boundaries that arise through the process of becoming, for instance, boundaries between one kind of entity and another, but '[b]oundaries do not sit still' (Barad 2003, 817) and classification allows us to trace the concretion and dissolution of specific boundaries and categories of entities over time.

My aim in this book is to understand what we can say about prehistoric mortuary practices by exploring some of the key chains of translation or entanglements and unravelling of relationships that have given rise to 'Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices' from the Chalcolithic to today. These relationships have been mediated many times by various people, objects, places, materials, and ideas, and each of those mediations is important, even if we decide to focus on some and not others in writing an account of the past. Single authors do not produce interpretations of the past all on their own. These arise out of a complex web of relationships with other individuals, communities, things, processes, ideas, disciplines, narratives, practices, and institutions (cf. Olsen 2003). The associations composing those actants are never static, but continually change: thus, how we know the Early Bronze Age changes continually according to the effects of changing patterns of infrastructure development, government funding, academic interest, theories about archaeological interpretation, techniques of recovery, techniques of chemical analysis, museum agendas, publishers' strategies, review processes, etc. This book is a product of a wider association of actants that I have assembled (and that have assembled me) in writing it, some of which are more significant forces in its resulting form than others. But the past is not simply created in the present actions of archaeologists (a relativistic and constructivist position), it is *continually translated and transformed*. The past is what endures; it emerges or unfolds continually and actively (Fowler forthcoming *b*). The work done in archaeology is a matter not just of shifting perspective, but of rearticulating things, ideas, techniques in reality. This book is not about 'the past in the present', it is not a book on the history of archaeological thought or practice. It is a book about Early Bronze Age mortuary practices—what they are and have been, how and what we know about them, working back through the chains of relationships that produced them and extended their residues through time. We can appreciate fuller and richer—and in Latour's terms more accurate or in Ingold's (2011, 162) terms better-related—accounts of the past through acknowledging a fully relational and realist approach.

In the following chapters I will report on and carry out a series of intra-actions within the dynamic material assemblage of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England. I will start in Chapter 3 by scrutinizing the interpretations that have become entangled with the assemblage, and concepts current in studies of similar remains

elsewhere in the British Isles that could potentially become entangled with this assemblage. I will expose the basis of these ideas and the grounds on which they may or may not articulate well with the assemblage of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England. In Chapter 4 I will discuss the dynamic material assemblage of the mortuary deposits, starting by acknowledging its transformations and translations through discovery, excavation (often in the nineteenth century), early study, museums and archives, and reporting on the enactment of further transformations to some of the assemblage through radiocarbon dating. I then turn to the features and deposits that were recovered by excavation, considering typologies of pots and burials and outlining a sequence of burial practices—setting up the conditions needed to understand the changing emergence, efficacy, and dissipation of actants over time in relation to one another. In Chapter 5 I move to the landscape location of these deposits, and the changing assemblies, legacies, properties, and effects of mortuary sites and monuments. In Chapter 6 I draw all of this together in an exploration of the unfolding and contingent development of burial practices and other activities at burial sites throughout the period, considering how different assemblages—bodies, artefacts, substances, persons, identities, communities, landscapes, places, regions—emerged relationally over time.

3

Theories as actants

Translating mortuary practice

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I bore down into the references that currently circulate in the assemblage of British Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices. The chapter focuses on the key conceptual frameworks in circulation, opening these 'black boxes' and exploring their relational emergence in archaeology. This chapter therefore investigates the impact of specific anthropological or sociological concepts on the interpretations of antiquarians and archaeologists, and the kinds of references produced based on those foundations, including: ethnic and cultural groups; elites and chiefs; prestige; social differentiation based on age and sex; rites of passage; cosmological principles; relational personhood; and relational materials. As Lucas (2012, 171) reminds us, the ontological status and impact of these concepts has seldom been explicitly explored. Ideas interact with other ideas as well as material remains, apparatus, and techniques, sometimes pushing them aside, sometimes becoming entwined with them. While some paradigms have directly influenced the location, recovery, and interpretation of burials from North-East England others have been less influential due to which theories were in the ascendancy in relation to when most excavations were carried out and reports written. The various circulating references are analysed critically as I consider the extent to which they are well or poorly articulated. This analysis is historical, since past actants have endured and left legacies on subsequent interpretations. I argue that it is only by assessing how well connected different aspects of the argument are in each interpretation that we can determine which fibres in the thread of our understanding should be left entwined and which should be teased out and replaced by yet other threads that resonate better with the others in the string. This is necessary in order to consider the effect each would have if brought to bear on or left implicit in a synthesis of the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices of North-East England.

RELATIONAL COMMUNITIES

Ethnicity, culture history, mobility, and interaction

> Of the two stone-lined graves in this Pitland Hills cairn, one contained a human skeleton, almost perfectly preserved, the adult man having been laid to rest in the usual contracted position, with a 'food vessel' at the head. The cranium was of a markedly *brachy-cephalic* or *round-headed type*, distinct from the dolicho-cephalic or long-headed, whom the former conquered, because they were a metal, that is, a bronze-using race.
>
> <div align="right">(Rome Hall 1887<i>a</i>, 280 original emphases)</div>

> The nation states of the last few hundred years have given us a historically unusual notion about identity: we feel that identity should have fixed borders within which similarity of language, customs, legal systems and physical types are quite different from those across the border.
>
> <div align="right">(Gosden 2004, 156)</div>

From the nineteenth century through to the 1970s the prevailing view, based on comparisons of the skeletal features of those buried with Beakers and Neolithic burials, was that a 'Beaker folk', who were more robust and taller than previous people with distinctively rounded and larger skulls, colonized parts of Europe including Britain. These people brought with them a distinct package of goods and a new burial practice exemplified by single crouched inhumation with a Beaker and selection of other objects from a broad repertoire including barbed and tanged flint arrowheads, stone wristguards, v-perforated buttons, copper awls, gold ornaments, and copper daggers. The 'origin' of this community was much debated, but by the 1970s identification and comparison of different styles of Beakers enabled archaeologists to explore complex patterns of movement and interaction across western and central Europe (e.g. Clarke 1970; Sangmeister 1972). This work met with a critical reaction in the mid-1970s. Burgess and Shennan (1976) asked why there was no sudden change in settlement patterns or uses of monuments or economics in northern Europe contemporary with the spread of the Beaker phenomenon. The force of their deconstruction of the 'Beaker culture' effectively deflected many British scholars in particular away from the idea of an ethnic group (however loosely unified) whose members migrated across Europe, and towards exploring the Beaker burial practice, equipment, and dress items as associated with a cult, a fashion, and/or as desirable and prestigious (e.g. Braithwaite 1984; Shennan 1982). Along with the suggestion that the Beaker package was spread by a 'peer polity' of elites interacting around the Atlantic facade (Shennan 1986), this spurred accounts of the Beaker phenomenon as adopted by indigenous British communities who, it was argued, already possessed a tradition of single burial (e.g. Thomas 1999, 122–3; Gibson 2007).

The spread of this phenomenon could thus be interpreted in terms of social interactions other than population movement (cf. Barrett 1994).

Other actants have revitalized the likelihood that some long-distance mobility of people was involved in the spread of Beaker practices and products. Not least among these are interpretations of a series of stable isotope analyses of human remains discovered in southern England dating to the twenty-fourth century BC (Evans et al. 2006; Chenery and Evans in Fitzpatrick 2011, 185–90). The isotopic signatures from the Amesbury Archer indicate mobility during his lifetime from the east of Europe while the 'companion' (a burial found nearby) seems to have spent his early years on chalklands, then some time in a similar region to the Amesbury Archer before his death and burial at Amesbury. Isotopic analyses of three of the five adult individuals buried together with five Beakers and fragments of two further Beakers in a wooden chamber and referred to as 'the Boscombe Bowmen' suggest that they had moved from other parts of Britain or parts of Portugal, France, or Ireland, to the chalklands of Wessex in childhood (187), and the two juveniles from the same feature could have lived locally or not (189–90).[1] These readings can be set alongside the wide currency of very similar objects and some shared mortuary practices across large regions of Europe, but, as Needham (2007, 46) wisely points out, '[w]e should not jump to an instant correlation between these two independently valid observations and see the majority of Beaker culture-carrying people as wide-range roamers'. Indeed, Beaker pots subjected to fabric analyses across Europe have been generally shown to be made locally, not imported (Case 1995, 26; Vander Linden 2007, 182). Some people were clearly mobile when Beaker pottery spread, but long-distance and/or intensive contact could also be argued based on the spread of other phenomena in preceding centuries (Carlin and Brück 2012), and the full scale and nature of that mobility is not yet clearly articulated (cf. Fokkens 2012, 124).

So, if there was no mass migration of colonists, but a widespread network did emerge that drew together and entangled people, things, and practices from across large areas of Europe, then what explanations can we offer for this? Stuart Needham (2005) assembled an impressive collection of radiocarbon dates from British graves and illustrated that the early graves, *c.*2450–2250 BC are all very stereotypical, few are particularly 'rich' in grave goods and the wristguard, arrowheads, and dagger form a very standardized set, with Beakers of a narrow range of styles extending over large areas (e.g. from Iberia into Britain or from the northern Rhine into Britain). Needham argues that the initial influx of people using the Beaker 'package' into Britain probably involved relatively minor population movement from, and increased contact

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[1] The chamber seems to have been used successively, so that while the last two burials were in a crouched position the others were displaced and bones were missing, though this may relate to later disturbance.

with, the Lower Rhine regions, northern France, and Iberia. Maritime-Derived Beaker styles, i.e. those with links to Iberia, were most evident in southern England, while All Over Cord designs were more common in northern and eastern England, suggesting some different points of origin for early Beaker 'pioneers'. The early Beaker practices were, he argues, part of an exclusive culture belonging to a relatively small community who were largely at the peripheries of what else was going on in Britain at the end of the Neolithic. He argues that these people were important because of their long-distance exchange contacts but distanced themselves from the rest of society as part of their role in that practice. Garwood (2012) and Fokkens (2012) have both argued that this package was very new when it was introduced to Britain: an 'invented tradition' (Garwood 2012, 313) in which a sense of community drawing on non-local ancestry was 'constructed' (Fokkens 2012). In Britain these burials are few and generally far apart. However, from *c.*2250–2150 BC there was an explosion in the number of burials, and in some cases the variety of artefacts found in burials across Britain.

While it is possible that early Beakers were the trappings of a specific community (perhaps not viewed as people of high status by other members of society, even if respected for their knowledge, skills, and/or ability to acquire special objects), later on their meaning may have changed. Needham (2005, 207–10) suggests that by *c.*2250 BC the fact that these communities had access to exotic goods due to their international exchange connections meant that they were able to command significant social status, and that their distinctive packages of goods would now be emulated by others. The adoption of new products into existing practices, new forms into existing materials (e.g. some 'wristguards' may be made from the Group VI rock from Cumbria previously used for stone axeheads: Woodward et al. 2006, 538), new materials with new uses, the wider adoption of Beaker-related artefacts and mortuary practices, and the subsequent development of new forms of mortuary practice are key features of this period. The distribution of artefact styles (and materials such as copper alloys and Whitby jet) indicate complex histories of interaction between Ireland, southern Scotland, and northern England, for instance (Sheridan 2008). But those using Beakers as markers of identity in death were not necessarily involved in all these intra-actions. For instance, many of those buried with copper alloy dagger blades were not buried with Beakers at all.

The 'Beaker phenomenon' changed repeatedly from the outset, extending and diversifying over time, before dissipating by *c.*1850 BC. While crouched burial with a distinctive range of objects was shared over a large area during the second half of the third millennium BC, the contexts chosen for deposition and the amount of deposition practised varied significantly. In northern France bodies with Beakers were often placed collectively rather than singly, and those in southern France in particular were sometimes placed in existing chambered tombs (Vander Linden 2007, 186). Beakers were adopted in

southern Scandinavia after *c*.2350 BC, and, where accompanying burials at all, were incorporated into existing burial practices, such as cemeteries of flat graves (Sarauw 2008). In Britain Beaker burials were largely single inhumations in graves or cists. In Ireland Beakers were inserted into ancient chambered tombs, perhaps with cremated bones, and some were buried in pits with cremated bones (Carlin and Brück 2012), but there were no crouched burials with Beakers, despite the presence of a mine at Ross Island which may have produced much of the copper used in making halberds, daggers, and other goods distributed throughout the British Isles (O'Brien 2004). Single burial in cists was eventually adopted in Ireland *c*.2150 BC, but a new style of pottery produced in the region accompanied these burials—Food Vessels— which became common across northern Britain in the following centuries (Brindley 2007; Carlin and Brück 2012; Sheridan 2004). This again attests to the high degree of general interaction during these periods. So why was there such diversity? Beaker burial practices within specific regions may stem from a different fusion of pre-existing local and new incoming practices in each case. Some Neolithic communities in Europe already placed their dead in a crouched position with meaningful orientations. While single burial is evident throughout the Neolithic period in Britain, it was a very rare occurrence, especially in the centuries preceding the arrival of Beaker products and practices. Yet the Neolithic dead were often laid out here in crouched form, whether buried singly or collectively (Fowler 2010*a*; Fowler and Scarre forthcoming). This may also have occurred in funerals that have left no trace, where the dead were left above ground or placed on a funeral pyre. Certain properties of the 'Beaker package'—including its fringes—emerged locally, and some features of the incoming practices that were not so alien to indigenous communities were brought to the fore.

What might in earlier centuries have been the trappings of a particular ethnic group (or several ethnic groups) might by the mid-twenty-third century BC have been more widely adopted as emblematic of certain values and practices (Needham 2005), or simply as media that increasingly became entangled with a whole range of emergent practices, relations, and effects. Burial practices became adopted more widely during this time and also mutated in regionally varied ways—so that grave orientation favoured north–south in southern Britain compared with east–west in North-East England, for instance— and there were changes in the artefacts deposited with the dead. Finally, as Needham argues, by 1900 BC the kind of burials (and other deposits) which included Beakers had changed significantly, as had the forms of many of the Beakers themselves. By this point in North-East England Beaker pottery had been contemporary with Food Vessels for hundreds of years and the two sets of burials shared many features. Arguably around 2000 BC the burial practices in which Food Vessels and Beakers (and new forms of pottery such as Collared Urns) featured became increasingly distinct from one another (see Chapter 5).

We have, therefore, seen a dramatic shift in understanding what 'cultural' phenomena, such as burial with Beaker pottery and associated items, may indicate. We are no longer in thrall to a culture history of bounded ethnic groups, though some ideas about cultural identity and ethnicity have endured (note, for instance, the use of the term 'Beaker people' to refer to anyone using Beaker pottery in Needham 2012). 'Beaker burial' is now articulated as a repeatedly 'invented tradition', successively translated into something different, and giving rise to new emergent identities. At some times, practices and things associated with Beakers perhaps had currency as an ethnic ascription— a 'boundary object' (Barth 1969)—at other times arguably not, and Beakers shifted in value and meaning relative to other mortuary phenomena. There may be cases of people who moved long distances *throughout* the third and second millennia, not just with the arrival of the first Beakers (Needham 2008). As well as better histories of the development of mortuary practices and associated material culture it seems very likely that in the near future it will be possible to trace specific histories of movement not only for certain bodies or objects but for styles of objects, forms of architecture, and kinds of practice, to a resolution of less than 150 years across northern Europe. This could support a new and much-needed history of the prehistoric world—but it will not be so new and far-reaching if we do not take to task the other components in the assemblage, the other references underlying our models of culture and society, to which I now turn.

Social evolutionary narratives of social organization

Nineteenth-century social evolutionary perspectives attempted to determine a 'stage' of development, simultaneously linked with a 'type' of society exhibiting a certain degree of social stratification (rather than simply social differentiation). Rowley-Conwy (2008) has illustrated that the 'three age system', the chronological framework for prehistory within which social evolution sat, was only one of several ways that the distant past was conceptualized in the nineteenth century until it triumphed over its adversaries in the 1870s. It is based explicitly on studies of typological progression, and became married with anthropological studies of the material culture and social organization of non-European communities. Thus, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century archaeological narratives often refer to 'stages' of civilization (e.g. savage, barbarian, civilized). There are too many entangled concepts here, all depending on one another for support, to fully unravel here, but in this section I want to focus on the impact of social evolutionism in understanding social organization.

Greenwell's research (e.g. Greenwell 1868; 1877) was immensely important in the detailed description it gave of the stratigraphic and typological

relationships between artefacts of different periods, and became a major force in the widespread acceptance of the Three Age system (Rowley-Conwy 2008, 244–8, 278–85). Greenwell's interpretations repeatedly dwelt on the relative sophistication of the material he uncovered with reference to progressivist schemes which linked types of artefacts with types of cultural 'development'— for instance, of decorated pottery he writes 'the ornament is precisely that which would be developed by the art instincts of a people in a comparatively low state of civilization' (Greenwell 1877, 65–6). Human remains were also scrutinized in order to 'determine' the 'level' of development based on assumptions about the significance of skull morphology. This is evident in Rolleston's (1877, 559–718) analysis of the 'prehistoric crania' in Greenwell's collection, and it was still influential in the early twentieth century so that, in describing the skull of an adult male found in a cist at Seafield Farm, Northumberland, in 1906, Filby wrote 'The skull is of a good type, not that of a savage' (Filby 1906, 123).

Statements like Filby's are now shocking and distasteful, and it is clear that difference in social organization has no basis in the diversity of human biology. Nonetheless, progressivist narratives are still lurking in some archaeological explanations of change in prehistory, partly due to a resurgence in social evolutionary narratives in the 1960s–1980s (Service 1962; Fried 1967; Renfrew 1973; Earle 1991a) which sprang out of and reacted to various cultural evolutionary approaches advocated by the forerunners of processualism such as Steward and White as well as Sahlins and Service (1960; cf. Chapman 2003, 33–59). These approaches retained an emphasis on emergent social complexity, centralization, and connectedness, postulating that societies moved from one state of organization to another. Authors decoupled these social factors from erroneous ideas about 'progression' in human biology,[2] and many of them came to argue there was no linear progression in how these societies evolved. Neo-evolutionary narratives sorted societies into 'bands', 'segmentary societies' or 'tribes', 'chiefdoms', and 'states' (Service 1962), or 'egalitarian', 'ranked',[3] 'stratified', and 'state' (Fried 1967). These anthropological constructs had a notable impact on interpretations of the British Early Bronze Age, particularly in Wessex and particularly the chiefdom. Building on

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[2] Social evolutionism of that kind is in any case a misunderstanding of Darwin's theory of evolution: species do not 'progress' though they may become more biologically complex, and even the most simple of organisms can be enormously successful as long as the relations giving rise to it continue around and within it. When such relations change species change, decline in numbers, or die out (cf. Hodder's (2012) conceptualization of the 'fittingness' of things within relations).

[3] Fried framed ranking as authority derived from, say, having a particular ancestry or access to some valued resource or ability—but importantly this authority did not translate into differential access to all other resources nor the ability to control or coerce other members of society beyond persuasion.

Fleming's (1971) analysis of territories centred around monument clusters, Renfrew (1973; 1979) argued that Neolithic to Early Bronze Age Wessex could be understood as organized into five competing chiefdoms which eventually coalesced. Before defining a series of characteristics for chiefdoms, each extracted from Service's (1962) schema which in turn draws on Sahlins' (1958) studies of contact-period Polynesia, he stated:

> A chiefdom is a ranked society, hierarchically arranged, sometimes in the form of a conical clan where the eldest descendent in the male line from the clan founder ranks highest, and the cadet branches are ranked in seniority after the main line.
>
> (Renfrew 1973, 542)

Renfrew (1973) ultimately concluded that not all of these features were present in Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Wessex, and added that rather than import a single model of a chiefdom society from anthropology we should 'admit that there may be different types of chiefdom society' (557), but he did conclude that chiefdoms were present. In a later publication he went on to distinguish between relatively egalitarian 'group-oriented' chiefdoms, which he identified in later Neolithic Wessex, and individualizing chiefdoms, which he perceived in the barrow burials of Early Bronze Age Wessex which seemed to lack any contemporary gathering sites where power might be centralized (Renfrew 1974, 82; 1979).[4] Power was now invested in the person of the chief, as evidenced by rich burial assemblages and large barrows. As Thomas (2002*a*, 45, 47) warns

> Each chiefdom appears to be composed of two opposed blocs: the elite and the commoners, the powerful and the powerless ... There is little sense of authority being unstable or imperilled ... Rather than characterized by the rise of an institutionalized elite, the late Neolithic may have been characterized by multiple, unstable, context-specific forms of authority.

The same could be said of the Early Bronze Age. Earle (1991*b*) largely follows Renfrew's model for emergent chiefdoms producing local centres of power in henge monuments and, particularly in the Early Bronze Age, demonstrating their ancestral rights to power through the practice of rich burials in large barrows at important locales. By contrast with Renfrew, Earle acknowledges that the basis of chiefly power was unstable as its 'financial' basis 'can rarely be sustained because of problems of inflation, depletion, and overextension' (Earle 1991*b*, 97), but his model is otherwise equally as monolithic in its rendering of power relations.

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[4] Renfrew (1974, 73) was explicit that '[l]ike all models its virtue is not that it may be true, but that it is useful', a statement with which I have much sympathy. However, the model risks being too useful and overpowering other actants if these are not explored in sufficient detail.

It is possible that there were figures akin to chiefs with special forms of authority at certain times and places in British prehistory, but if we are to entertain this proposition we need to consider in greater detail exactly what we mean by the term and what relations are involved. We should be wary of reifying societies as members of a certain 'type' or as being at a certain 'stage' of development—particularly when one historical chiefdom came to dominate the comparative approach espoused by Renfew and others (cf. Kinnes 1982, 146).

RELATIONAL STATUS

> It seems scarcely necessary to remark that many unburnt bodies were those of persons of high rank among their people . . . it cannot be supposed for a moment that the whole population was buried in the sepulchral mounds . . . These mounds must be regarded as the places of sepulture of chiefs of tribes, clans, and families, or of other people in authority claiming and being allowed a position of respect, and of those who were nearly connected with them, as wives, children and personal dependents. . . . It can scarcely be questioned that it was the habit to slay at the funeral and to bury with the dead man, wives, children and others, probably slaves.
>
> (Greenwell 1877, 20–1, 112, 119–20)

> the chief whose burial place this was, had been interred without any of the usual accompaniments.
>
> (Greenwell and Embleton 1862, 36)

> The notion of status is rather too simple to contain the changing mix of values attached to people and to objects, and social standing derived from a person's ability to acquire, use and give away items of social power in a manner creative or subversive of the social codes attached to people and things.
>
> (Gosden 2004, 154–5)

Social persona in the mortuary sphere

Greenwell (1877) clearly perceived burial deposits as direct reflections of the status of the dead. He thought some deposits found in the same barrow or cairn were contemporary and the result of mass funerals, which became part of his view of social stratification: in large barrows chiefs were buried with slain wives and slaves, while mounds with central child burials or 'rich' child burials suggested a system of hereditary leadership (1877, 119). Processual authors also thought that burial practices would reflect the identities of the dead, though through the selective filter of the 'social persona' as understood by mourners. Social persona refers to the features of the identity of the

deceased that are brought to the fore in the mortuary sphere. The term originates in Ward Goodenough's (1965) sociological analyses of how the duties and rights of each person (*ego*) in a community are generated in relation to those of any other person (*alter*). He argued that each interaction between *ego* and *alter* mutually constituted the status of both. For Goodenough: '[t]he composite of several activities *selected as appropriate to a given interaction* constitutes the selector's social persona in the interaction' (Goodenough 1965, 7 my emphases). Social persona draws on biographical reality and fits with conventional social roles (e.g. a mother should be an adult female parent). Arthur Saxe (1970) argued that the mortuary treatment accorded to a deceased individual would refer to their social persona *in that context*, but Lewis Binford (1971, 225) defined social persona as 'a composite of the social identities maintained in life and recognized as appropriate for consideration at death', and Pierpoint (1980, 198 my emphasis) defined it as 'the summation of *all* the identities, group or otherwise, which describe the individual, and indicate his position in "society"'. This seems to misunderstand Goodenough's original use of the term for an aspect of identity that was transitive, contextual, and relational (cf. Fowler 2013). But there are further problems with these approaches.

Processual archaeologists in the 1970s and 1980s attempted to detect general principles in which features of mortuary treatment related to which aspects of social persona by reviewing anthropological literature and/or by carrying out ethnoarchaeological observation of mortuary practices. They attempted to discern, for instance, which features of identity—or 'status'; status being multidimensional—affect grave orientation (sex or social affiliation such as lineages or moieties) or type of grave goods (sex, sometimes social position) or method of bodily disposal (anything except sex). Some of these results are summarized in Table 3.1. These have been widely influential: their comparative nature stretches their entanglement out deeply across time and space, providing an articulation that seems strong. But they are problematic. Binford (1971, 227) confesses that he devised 'a very crude index of complexity' based on 'a generally accepted correlation between forms of subsistence production and societal complexity' that could be challenged in a number of cases using his own definitions, even if we accept the validity of this materialist idea of societal complexity. However, his results showed that among the 40 communities he examined, hunter-gatherers, shifting agriculturalists, and pastoralists displayed similar patterns, whereas settled agriculturalists displayed others, and across these categories Binford (1971, 228–31) found that mortuary practices could vary according to conditions of death or location of death, by age (especially for settled agriculturalists), sex, social position (except for pastoralists; this term refers to status not associated with age or sex—Binford 1971, 230), and social affiliation (e.g. kinship groupings such as lineages, moieties, and clans). Some strands of this entanglement seem to

Table 3.1 Attribution of features of identity reflected in specific aspects of mortuary practice by processual analyses of ethnographic literature

Aspect of mortuary practice	Aspect of identity	Scholar	Evidence provided
Treatment of body (cremation/inhumation/exposure)	Anything except sex and age	Binford	7 communities from 40 compared yielded any evidence
Grave orientation	Sex Social affiliation (e.g. membership of lineage or moiety)	Binford	12 from 40 yielded any evidence
Position of body in grave	Not studied	None	N/a
Type of grave goods	Sex Social position	Binford	21 from 40 provided evidence—strong pattern by sex (16)
Quantity of grave goods, and type of goods present in quantity	Social position	Binford	9 of 40 for quantity, 7 for type and quantity
	Not rank	Tainter	Unspecified range of examples
	Wealth (not necessarily associated with rank)	O'Shea	4 communities from the Great Plains, North America
Presence of grave goods of restricted distribution/supra-local prestige symbols[1] (Brown) or, durable artefacts of limited distribution	May or may not indicate rank associated with authority in specific spheres	Brown	Unspecified
	Authority and rank	O'Shea	3 communities from the Great Plains, North America
Location	Anything except sex or location of death	Binford	33 of 40 communities provided evidence
Spatially distinct burial grounds	Group segmentation (including by rank associated with extensive power)	Brown	Unspecified
	Segmentation by lineage and descent	Saxe	4 cases out of 4 studied

[1] Such an ascription is of course highly suggestive and interpretative—as argued in this chapter, it is a significant problem to determine whether or not prestige is the best concept to apply to artefacts with limited distributions, even when these are exotic. O'Shea's (1984) ascription simply of a category of special objects which occur over wide areas but in small numbers and are made of durable materials is more useful.

resist disruption, then. But other strands are flimsier. Binford's attribution of specific facets of identity to aspects of mortuary practice often makes judgements based on small numbers of studies (see Table 3.1).[5] He concludes that in cases where some occupy special rank and status then differentiation from the rest of the population is notable in many or all dimensions of mortuary practice, though he does not specify the statistical strength of this particular observation (1971, 235; cf. Saxe 1970 who cites four specific and detailed cases to support this view). It is important to add that many of these processual authors stressed that no one variable should be taken independently, and that, as Goldstein (1981, 67) puts it, 'a multidimensional approach' is needed in gauging the place of any burial in relation to others. In other words, there is a significant limitation to any comparative framework because it attempts to distil out general rules about singular factors which are locally part of a highly relational field of other intra-actions.

The idea that a version of the identities of the dead is portrayed in their mortuary rites has been enormously influential in interpreting British Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary rites. While explicit reference to the ethnographic patterns identified by the processualists in the 1970s and 1980s are very rare (though see Pierpoint 1980 for a notable exception), it is widely accepted that patterns in the treatment of the dead relate to age, sex, and other social relations (e.g. descent). Some patterns in differentiation of the dead in Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age Britain *can* indeed be easily observed and there is a long history of studying patterns in the burial modes of people of differing ages and sexes. There are methodological issues that plague attempts to identify the sex of the dead in particular, but some patterns cohere well at regional and sometimes larger scales, especially for Beaker burials. Adult males seem to predominate in Beaker burials (Clarke 1970; Harding and Healy 2007, 230–2; Mizoguchi 1993; Pierpoint 1980; Sofaer Derevenski 2002; Tuckwell 1975). Males buried with Beakers were usually buried in a crouched position on their left-hand side: in Yorkshire and North-East Scotland the head was orientated towards the east in a grave that lay east–west (Tuckwell 1975; Shepherd 2012). An east–west grave orientation is also seen among Beaker burials from the northern Rhine (Clarke 1970, 257). By contrast, in the south of England men were buried with the head to the north in a north–south grave (Shepherd 2012, 274; Sofaer Derevenski 2002). This pattern is similar to Beaker burials on much of the Continent (Clarke 1970, 257). Females are fewer than males in the earlier burials, and in Yorkshire women were usually buried on their right-hand side with their heads to the west (Tuckwell 1975).

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[5] It is not clear whether the dashes in Binford's table IV signify that no evidence was recorded of that feature in any of the 40 societies he studied, or that he can be sure that none of them exhibit that feature. However, since a zero is usually used to indicate a certain absence, I interpret that he was only able to find relevant information in a small number of cases.

After *c*.2250 BC, when there are relatively numerous burials of both men and women, some artefacts appear to have been placed in the graves of men (e.g. copper-alloy daggers, though knife-daggers appear to have been buried with men and women) and others were almost always buried with women (e.g. jet necklaces). Harding and Healy (2007, 233) point out that sex may be an important factor in choice of burial location, citing the deposition of women in an ancient Neolithic monument while a series of men were buried in a local round barrow. Choices about the location for deposition might have implications for recovery of women's burials, and this could be compounded by other prehistoric decisions about how the body should be transformed and where to physically direct the remains (Brück 2004*b*, 181). These analyses suggest that some of the cross-cultural anthropological designation of body orientation and choice of grave goods as related to sex is relevant to British Chalcolithic/ Early Bronze Age practices, but the possibility that the decision of whether to bury or not related to sex might be an indicator of the weakness of the narrow range of examples accessible to the ethnographic/ethnoarchaeological analyses, while differences in the location of the dead by sex in the British evidence raises serious questions about even the stronger correlations in studies such as Binford's (Table 3.1). While aspects of social persona may indeed be important when depositing the remains of the dead these must be deduced relationally in any time and place. I will therefore be very cautious in appealing to the processualists' conclusions regarding social persona and burial practices.

Some studies of British prehistoric burials stress or imply that the biographical identity of the dead provides a field from which the social persona is constituted and that burial practices therefore offer a window on the 'real' identity of the dead, while others stress the specific relations between living and dead from which the social persona was constructed 'at the graveside' as it were (e.g. Brück 2004*a*), but the idea that burial practices have little to do with the lived identities of the dead has scarcely been considered. There are arguably two reasons for this: if burial is a feature of a funeral then our own experiences in the present (from many parts of the world) and from historical periods suggest that funerary practices do relate to the identities of the dead; and if we postulated that these burials did not result from funerals it would leave us in a very difficult place where we need to articulate an interpretation without an analogical basis. The way that these depositional practices were repeated over time suggests that they were ritualized, as funerals are, but I also think we need to press further and think of them as *not only* funerary in nature. There are patterns in depositional practice here, but we cannot be certain that the social persona of the deceased was the central reference: as I will argue below, we also need to bear in mind that the deceased was undergoing transformation through the funerary process, which may extend beyond the time of burial, that reasons for practices may relate to factors such as means of death, and that treatments of the dead draw out specific ideals.

Status, rank, and hierarchy

There is also a long-standing practice of connecting the amount of energy and resources invested in the mortuary activity, the rarity of the grave goods, and the 'status' or rank of the deceased (e.g. Tainter 1978; Needham 2005, 209). Pierpoint (1980, 45–59) attempted to produce a statistical measure of the 'quality' of different Beakers based on factors such as vessel height, number of decorative bands, number of decorative motifs, and thickness of vessel wall, and sought correlations between the 'quality' of Beakers in 65 Yorkshire graves and the sex and age of the individuals in those graves. He found that most of his 'low quality' vessels were buried with children, and 'high quality' vessels with adults or sub-adults, and that children were buried with the smallest vessels. Given that vessel height was one of his tests of quality we can query whether this tells us much more than that small Beakers were associated with children, which need have no significance for understanding social differentiation in vertical terms at all. But he also concluded that the tallest Beakers were found with other objects in the grave which was less likely to be so for smaller ones, and that 'the "richest" artefacts (bronzes, stone axes and jet) were only associated with the very highest scoring and tallest vessels' (1980, 58). He drew similar conclusions in studies of burials with Food Vessels which held for 67.7 per cent of his sample (109). Pierpoint's analyses usefully detect small but significant variations in grave assemblages by sex and age in Yorkshire, and verify statistically that where more goods are found in graves the vessels selected are also likely to be larger[6] and better executed; but there need not be any link with vertical status divisions. Part of the problem here is the assumption that the objects in the grave refer to the individual identity of the deceased, something that cannot be resolved on empirical grounds in that we do not know why these people were buried and not others. Pierpoint's analysis does suggest that in Yorkshire on average male bodies were accompanied by (marginally) taller vessels and a greater number of surviving artefacts than women or children, but it does not tell us why this is so. Some possible explanations are that men were held in the highest regard (Pierpoint's interpretation), that certain key issues were worked through male bodies, that there were certain activities that men were generally expected to participate in and things specific to those activities were included in graves, that vessel height was relative to the size of the body of the deceased (suggesting an interesting affinity between body and vessel that I will return to in later chapters—and cf. Shepherd 2012), and/or that men required more specific items to accomplish a specific efficacy than women or children generally did. Larger, fine

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[6] Mean average Beaker heights were 14.4cm for children, 16.3 for women and 17.4 for men, with 'rich adult' graves containing Beakers averaging 19.3cm tall.

vessels and rich grave goods may have been provided for some adults, but the degree to which these were people elevated above others in many dimensions of life is unclear. Ultimately, Pierpoint's identifications of social differentiation between burials is convincing, but the inference that this reflects wider hierarchical relations cannot be properly evaluated and remains only a weakly articulated proposition.

The idea that emergent hierarchies could be detected from studies of social differentiation in mortuary deposits tallied with the social evolutionary approaches identified above. Binford and Tainter were especially interested in interpreting mortuary deposits as indexes of social ranking and cultural complexity (compared with Saxe (1970), who also recognized an ideological dimension to mortuary practices) rather than simply social differentiation. It was part of Renfrew's (1973, 1979) model for Wessex that rank was inherited, perceiving social differentiation in burials as clear evidence for ranked hierarchical status, while Pierpoint's (1980) statistical analyses led him to conclude that the degree of social hierarchy increased progressively through the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age with a peak in the differences in status between men, women, and children around 2500 BC and thereafter a decline in differences of sex and age but increase in vertical social differentiation in general.

We may certainly be able to locate exotic goods in burials and infer special value based on their rarity, luminosity, enduring nature, and distant origins (Needham 2008). It is notable, though, that there is not much confidence in the comparative literature that the presence or absence of grave goods is related to wealth or status for the deceased (Tainter 1978, 121; Bradley 1984, 21; Ucko 1969, 267). Ucko (1969, 267) presents an ethnographic caveat to such ideas:

> High-ranking and wealthy priests of the Yoruba of Nigeria are given funeral rites of great splendour, together with a profusion of valuables which are displayed at the funeral. These valuables, which are provided by the kinsmen of the dead person, do not however find their way into the grave, but are taken by the deceased's fellow priests of the same cult association. In other cases, images of wood, brass, clay or ivory may be placed in a Yoruba grave simply because the dead person's heirs are not members of the same cults as he was and do not know how to handle them, or because they were used for sorcery and too dangerous to keep.

Such caveats do not seem to have deterred interpretations of elites from graves with even one or two exotic objects—indeed, they only serve to illustrate the problem that we imagine that the grave contents that have not survived the millennia would increase the wealth and status of the deceased in our eyes. The bias in our imagination is towards vertical or hierarchical differentiation.

There have been few synthetic attempts to model relative status between different burial sites in the North-East or place this in an evolutionary framework, and there is great diversity in how the status of burials at different sites are described by their excavators. Many nineteenth- and twentieth-century accounts of Early Bronze Age sites are actually chary of extending social interpretations of the evidence they describe, providing descriptions of the finds without making any inference on status or identity. In other cases excavators were notably reserved in their assessment of their discoveries. For instance, Trechmann (1914, 156) wrote of the Hasting Hill barrow, which is situated on a knoll above the location of a complex of much earlier Neolithic monuments and with a wide view, where his Find IX (cist 1) actually has the richest variety of artefacts in a single grave assemblage from the entire region:

> In contrast to the richness in number of the burials, is the poverty in workman-ship and decoration of the objects . . . in remarkable contrast to those I have found in some other barrows in the neighbourhood . . . we may conclude that the makers of the barrow were either not very well provided with elaborate posses-sions during life or that they were not disposed to deposit them with the dead.

Dixon's account of the discovery of a burial in a rare log coffin at Cartington, Northumberland, offers that:

> Buried with such care, on the summit of an eminence, commanding an extensive view of Coquetdale, and apparently a solitary burial, it has we doubt not been the last resting place of a person of some note, who might have held sway over the district, and who in his lifetime hunted the wild ox, the red deer, the wild boar, and the wolf amid the hills and dells of upper Coquet.   (Dixon 1913, 82)

A 'person of some note' is usefully ambiguous, not implying a specific role, authority, or power. However, as is common throughout British literature on the period, there are numerous interpretations of burials as stressing elevated status for the dead. In closing his discussion of excavations of barrows at Pitland Hills and Low Shield Green, where only vessels accompanied some of the dead, Rome Hall (1887*b*, 266) simply notes '"[t]he dearer their dead the larger the stones;" the greater and more imposing would be their burial mounds'. This need not imply an emphasis on hierarchical status but does indicate a typical belief that the people buried in barrows were more import-ant, more cared about, than others. In an address the year later, and published in the same issue, however, he wrote the barrows were 'the site chosen for the interment and cremation of the primeval *chieftains* (see *British Barrows*, p. 112) being the summit of the freestone crags and the adjoining plateau of limestone rock' (Rome Hall 1887*a*, 270 my emphasis). Where grave goods themselves are not forthcoming, the argument for high-status individuals is also sometimes made by reference to prominent landscape location, the size of the covering mound, or other measures of labour investment (as formalized by

Tainter 1978), then. Claims to elite status have also been made by association with other similar features elsewhere—or even simply on the basis that the remains were buried at all. For instance, Passmore and Waddington (2012, 212), noting the presence of children's remains at a variety of Early Bronze Age sites, suggest inherited status:

> Given that only the elite within society are likely to have received such special burial it is possible that the burial of children indicates that status was becoming ascribed through lineage and not just achieved during life.

Such interpretations are common (e.g. Mount 1995); the assumption is that because only some people were buried and rich objects are present in some of the graves, that all those buried must have been higher ranking than those not buried. Such interpretations do not cite specific ethnographic examples where burial *is* reserved for an elite, and cannot establish that rank rather than any other factor is responsible for the choice of burial for these and not other mortuary practices which remain unseen or only faintly seen and therefore not fully and equally evaluated. As such they remain weakly articulated.

Prestige and competition

Thorpe and Richards (1984) compared 'ritual authority structures' grounded in the use of henge monuments and Grooved Ware pottery with emergent 'prestige goods economies' at the time when Beakers were introduced to Britain. Ritual authority structures involved ritualized gatherings in which everyone knew their place. By contrast the increasing presence of Beaker cultural practices associated with new exotic objects eroded centralized authority and replaced it with a prestige goods economy in which there was greater social mobility and diversity (cf. Bradley 1982; 1984; Braithwaite 1984; Shepherd 1986). On the basis of the evidence at their disposal, they argued that early Beaker burials were rare and located away from henges and other later Neolithic sites where Grooved Ware pottery was common in Wessex, but not in Yorkshire. Thorpe and Richards argued that this is because Yorkshire was already involved in prestige goods exchanges among competing lineages; for instance, across the Pennines into Cumbria as evident in the importation of Group VI axeheads from Langdale and the presence of flint from Yorkshire in Cumbria. They suggest that Beakers were associated with prestigious exchanges, and so became incorporated into an existing prestige goods economy in Yorkshire whereas the ritual authority structure in Wessex had to be destabilized before Beakers could become widespread. In a parallel perspective at a greater scale, Shennan (1982) postulated that while large monuments like henges depended on any elites maintaining the support of the wider community, control of prestige goods could separate those involved significantly from

others (1982, 158–9). He argued that the exotic personal ornaments buried with the dead in the Early Bronze Age indicated an ideological mechanism by which the power of the elites was naturalized in their persons and dramatically celebrated (160).

Importantly, some of these interpretations presented burial furniture, architecture, and the effort lavished on the dead as ideological 'statements', 'representations', or 'claims' on behalf of elites or would-be elites. Shennan (1982, 161) argued that 'ranking, competition, the way in which power is exercised and the use of valuables are all ideology-dependent and must be recognised as such'. Parker Pearson (1982) and Bradley (1984) argued that clusters of rich burials would correlate with times of notable 'competition, threat or ambiguity' (Bradley 1984, 75), implying that periods of stable social, political, and economic relations might tally with periods of relatively little funerary elaboration. In each of these interpretations a clash of ideologies and struggles for power are vital to explaining the formation of the mortuary evidence. Nonetheless, some studies of status and identity still perceived the archaeological remains as reflections of these phenomena. Clarke et al. (1985, 82) argued that Beaker pottery was by nature a prestige good, and that contemporary metallurgical knowledge led to an 'entrepreneurial form of leadership in which emphasis on the individual was altogether more acceptable and desirable' (83). They argue that burials reflected the identities of craft specialists and/or those commanding them, claiming that metallurgy would have presented an ideological challenge to existing frameworks as well as exchange systems, and that those 'ambitious individuals' controlling the craftsmen (*sic*) producing Beaker pottery and early metal objects would have acquired a kind of individual leadership akin to 'the status of "Big Men" with a power and prestige quite apart from the ruling elites' (87). Interestingly, the anthropology of 'big men' suggests that while they do exercise individual skills and compete with one another for efficacy, 'big men' are not best described in terms of a western understanding of individuality (see below), or indeed leadership or power in all spheres of activity.

Despite their differences, these approaches suggest that Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices were deployed in competitive negotiations of status. This was grounded in a new approach to change, ultimately rooted in Marxism and set to challenge the processual view that social change was an adaptive process for the benefit of the social organism as a whole. These interpretations drew the structural Marxist anthropology of the 1970s into the assemblage (e.g. Bradley 1984; Rowlands 1980; Thorpe and Richards 1984; cf. Frankenstein and Rowlands 1978; Godelier 1977). Central to these anthropologies is a fundamental connection between land, labour, blood, and ancestry: people who invest labour in the land make claims to that land, and the descendants of those people maintain those claims including through the remains of their ancestors. The success of any lineage is read indigenously as

evidence of the power of their ancestors, who intercede with divine powers to ensure that success (Bradley 1984, 20–1). Hierarchies can emerge between lineages and clans, depending on access to resources and ritual authority. Exotic items can also form a key currency in exchange and gift-giving through which ties of debt and obligation are produced and maintained. Structural Marxism suggests that competition increasingly becomes exclusionary to those without access to key resources of various kinds (cf. Chapman 1981), until the disparities within the system lead to its collapse and reconfiguration. Successive waves of new prestige goods can upset existing forms of authority, and lead to increased competition between communities and individuals vying for position in a 'prestige goods economy' (cf. Bradley 1982; 1984).

These approaches raise vital issues, acknowledging that artefacts, bodies, and monuments are manipulated in ideological and competitive statements. However, it is difficult to ascertain the effectiveness of each statement, each claim to power made in the funerary sphere. Did the ability to acquire flashy objects and forge long-distance relations necessarily tally with being influential in all local decisions? Certain kinds of power might be effective in some spheres but that need not mean they permeated others (Thomas 2002*a*). Prestigious goods might have been retained by the living rather than placed with the dead, and passed on to a successor—'rich' burials might suggest that inheritance was not permitted and power could not be passed on (Parker Pearson 1999*a*, 89; Woodward et al. 2005, 31). This idea has often been pushed aside by other ideas. It is perhaps an inconvenient idea in that such a practice leaves little archaeological trace other than when it is transgressed (e.g. in burying an heirloom). It is nonetheless of particular interest when dealing with sparse grave assemblages at times when, say, we know that copper or copper-alloy axeheads were in circulation but not buried with the dead. Prestigious objects may be inalienable from the community, rather than the property of individuals (Weiner 1992; cf. Barrett 2012, 12–13). Particularly special objects in prehistory might not be given very often, and their burial might have been a way of investing their special efficacy in a certain place or a relationship within a community including the living and the dead. Barrett (1990, 186) also argued that earlier funerals, largely by inhumation, would not have been effective places for 'the competitive display of rank' since those mourners most likely to be exposed to the body would already have been aware of the status of the deceased. He adds that display practices such as 'procession, sacrifice and feasting' would have been more effective in this regard. There are cases where such practices can be inferred, for instance, from the collection of 185 cattle skulls placed on top of the cairn at Raunds barrow 1, preserved by alluvial deposits (Harding and Healy 2007). Even here it seems likely that only *c.*35 of the cattle were slaughtered and consumed at the site and the remaining 150 skulls were placed on the cairn when unfleshed and may have been brought from elsewhere (Mays in Harding and Healy

2007, 258–9). This barrow covered an unusually well-provisioned Beaker burial. In general, the evidence for funerary feasts is sparse. For Barrett, the rise in cremation coinciding with elaboration in mortuary architecture suggested a greater emphasis on display in the funerary sphere. Interestingly, however, by this time (after *c*.2000 BC) large funerary monuments reserved for single individuals are rare, and all but absent in North-East England. Funerals involving cremations did not often leave a substantial enduring legacy. Furthermore, in acquiring prestigious goods and burying them or giving them to other families, a family may simultaneously acquire respect and deplete any significant economic resources; spending on funerals may put a family into debt (and tie them into specific relations with others) as much as it elevates their prestige or that of the deceased (cf. Fowler 2008*c*, 47). In such a situation it may be difficult for any family to retain elevation through prestigious displays for long. This may perhaps explain variations in the amount of 'effort' or 'wealth' spent on a series of burials at the same general locale as much as the status of each individual involved. In short, some of these burial practices may have maintained generally egalitarian relations, where social elevation shifted rapidly, even as they acknowledged some forms of efficacy associated with the deceased.

Just as importantly, there are problematic core assumptions in placing the individual deceased human being at the centre of analysis, and modelling society in terms of struggles between competing egos each using material things as resources in the competition. In fact, prestigious goods can be exchanged as part of 'non-antagonistic' relations as well as antagonistic ones (Needham 2008, 319), yet the emphasis in our narratives lies on the latter. This perpetuates the idea that society was made up of individualistic human beings with things, architecture, and animals as resources and symbols rather than social entities. Such approaches extrapolate very specific kinds of power relations throughout the later Neolithic/Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age across northern Europe. It has formed a central strand in the entanglement, around which earlier notions of status, elites, and social organisation have adhered.

Competition, prestige, and elites in the twenty-first century AD

The idea that we are recovering the burials of competitive social elites engaging in some kind of interaction with their distant peers (and journeying widely in the process) has become deeply entrenched in the assemblage. For instance, Sheridan's (2008) review of groundbreaking work on the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age convincingly discusses studies of interaction at various scales, and provides an interpretation of Beaker pioneers such as the Amesbury Archer as 'less a Conquistador, more an adventurer' (65), a man

whose skills saw him become a celebrated member of the community. Yet she also refers to such people as 'high-status adventurers gaining prestige from undertaking long-distance journeys' and goes on to discuss the 'wealth' of 'the Early Bronze Age elite of Kilmartin Glen' (66) without critically evaluating how artefacts are valued and whether wealth is the most useful term for these special items. Elsewhere Sheridan (2012, 175) elaborates that 'much effort was expended in showing off the wealth of the elite (including, for the first time, women) in ostentatious and/or richly equipped funerary monuments'. Again, there is an assumption that exotic goods are best understood as wealth, and that an elite (rather than a wider community) were responsible for the activity. Fitzpatrick's (2011) analysis of the Amesbury Archer moves between subtle discussions of the complexity of the man's social persona and the conclusion that because he practised metalworking at a time when few did he was part of a group of 'elite' craftsmen (226). Research on the Gristhorpe Man concluded that he 'appears to be a paramount chief born locally, as indicated by his local isotope ratios, but linked into a wide network by the sea, with his burial accoutrements being part of a regional tradition of interment' (Melton et al. 2000, 811). To give just one more example, Needham (2005, 208) argues '[b]y [2250 BC], to produce and use Beaker pottery was *de rigeur*, so too for any local leader to be buried in Beaker fashion', without specifying the nature or scale of this leadership. There is no doubt that artefacts made from special materials were circulated over long distances during the period, nor that they were used to adorn or accompany some bodies during life and/or during burial. It seems likely that some people were held in special regard and that some bodies were chosen for deposition from among them. However, there are various factors that we ought to consider in explaining these phenomena and alternative reasons why bodies might be buried. One possibility is certainly that these people became social elites, able to wield political influence due to access to exotic goods, knowledge, and distant contacts and alliances. But it is also possible that people buried with such objects were celebrated for their abilities, knowledge, and skills, their abilities to co-operate widely in 'non-antagonistic' ways, even for their beliefs, moral codes, and practices—yet not in a way that translated directly into power that could be wielded in a hierarchical relation-ship in all spheres of life. The kinds of leadership and authority imagined need to be specified and related to the archaeological remains, and it is perhaps best to avoid the term 'elites' altogether. For instance, it may be unsurprising that those able to work metal might have such metalworking objects or products in their graves, or receive gifts from others in thanks for their efforts in a way not seen in graves of people with different and more common skills, but this is not *prima facie* evidence of hierarchical ranking.

It is clear that some people did attempt to identify themselves and others through special objects, such as we see in 'Wessex I' and 'Wessex II' graves, while others identified themselves through different strategies (Needham

2000; Peters 2000); but even here there is no need to divide these strategies up by attributing some to elites and the rest to commoners, and every need to consider what each of these differing mortuary strategies achieved (Fowler 2005). What connections, assemblages, and translations were these strategies involved in? What differing identities emerged? My point is not that we should completely do away with the idea that there was social differentiation in Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age northern Europe, but that the term 'elite' has effectively consumed social differentiation within its 'black box' and become deeply entangled with other concepts like prestige, long-distance contact, and cosmology (see below). At present the term 'elite' holds unqualified connotations of hierarchial power relations over an unspecified and undifferentiated broader community, and terms such as 'high-status', 'wealthy', 'leaders', 'paramount chiefs', and 'prestige' have become rolled together and also represent only a narrow range of the possible interpretations we could offer for the specific patterns we see during the period. We need to be more specific about what supports the view of the kind of elite persons we have in mind and what spheres of activity we think they had authority over. If we think there is clear evidence not only of some ranked social differentiation but of inherited rank or stratification we also need to be explicit about where and when this emerged, arose to prominence, and dissipated.

The idea that the special objects in graves are indications of personal or dynastic wealth and prestige implies the spread of specific kinds of value-systems along with these objects. Chris Gosden has argued convincingly that 'wealth . . . is not a simple cross-cultural category, in that the values attached to people and things vary' (Gosden 2004, 153), and 'systems of wealth are relative not absolute scales of values, anchored in deeper social and cosmological values' (80). Gosden also argues

> [c]olonialism exists where material culture moves people, both culturally and physically, leading them to expand geographically, to accept new material forms and to set up power structures around a desire for material culture. . . . Colonialism is a relationship of desire, which creates a network of people and things, but the exact shape of desire and the ensuing network will vary.   (153)

This is not an argument for the kind of colonization associated with nation states: Gosden identifies a type of 'colonialism without colonies' (39) whereby change spreads within communities that already share the same broad cultural milieux (e.g. Meso-America in the centuries preceding European contact), as well as 'middle ground' colonialism in which shared interest in material exchanges brings together people with distinct cultural differences (e.g. early twentieth-century AD Papua New Guinea). There may be some merit to thinking about the changes in ritual activity and material culture in the British Isles during the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age in terms of changing relationships of desire creating new entanglements of people and

things particularly given the existence of some 'shared cultural milieux' in the third millennium BC, such as Grooved Ware pottery or henge monuments (cf. Carlin and Brück 2012). It is not necessarily the case that political power was the object of people's desire for things that had connotations of distant places, nor that highly valued exotic things were valued in the same way in all cases and throughout the currency of that class of objects or material. Objects like daggers with copper-alloy blades might have been important artefacts of contact, moving between assemblages and conjoining them, changing the shape and extent of the overall assemblage and taking on different local properties and effects. Perhaps those moving notable distances during their lives and those exchanging valued materials and objects desired new social partners, new interactions, and intermarriages, new knowledges and ideas, new lives for themselves even, rather than new (hierarchical) statuses, generic power, or particular possessions. Such interactions changed people, things, and places, and certainly we should expect there were power relations in each interaction; but we should not model these as hierarchical self-aggrandizing relations in every case, even where exotic goods are present. Indeed, Vander Linden (2007, 187) argues not for 'peer polity' interaction between elites as the mechanism by which artefacts spread and social change occurred during the later third millennium BC, but for a 'network' of interconnected communities who often shared overlapping burial practices and artefact types with several of their neighbours, arguing for a generally 'high degree of mobility of individuals from one community to the next', a pattern which seems to fit the emerging isotopic evidence from British burials well and tallies with the emergence of local clusterings in choice of vessel style and other media as grave goods at a regional level (Fowler and Wilkin forthcoming; see Chapter 6).

Brown (1981, 26) points out that 'social ranking does not presuppose . . . centralized leadership' nor indeed any specific form of authority and leadership or inheritance, and follows Fried's (1967, 109) definition of 'a ranked society as "one in which positions of valued status are somehow limited so that not all of those of sufficient talent to occupy such statuses actually achieve them"'. Thus, in order to be certain that ranking is a significant feature of the context we study we must make judgements about the nature of mechanisms for social exclusion (as, for instance, Bradley (1984, chapter 3) does in framing Neolithic and Early Bronze Age 'complex artefacts' as 'weapons of exclusion'), rather than, say, devices through which inclusive social phenomena spread. It is clear that exotic artefacts, things made from materials with lengthy chains of production from ore to metal to dagger all in a distant place, say, or that special knowledge about such technologies, *could* be part of such mechanisms, but their presence in some graves and not others is not, *by itself*, evidence that such mechanisms existed. If it is hard to see how 'elites' could maintain their position at henges without the co-operation of the wider

community, it is equally difficult to see how 'elites' could control the extensive chains of relations, persons, substances, things, processes, and places involved in the production of jet or copper alloy objects without the co-operation of many differently organized local assemblages of these participants (cf. Carlin and Brück 2012, 205). It is also worth noting that Brown distinguishes between power and authority as two different features or kinds of rank, where authority is translated into power only when it pervades *multiple* spheres of activity and extends beyond the immediate lineage of the person in question. Part of the problem lies in the binary nature of terms like egalitarian and hierarchical, or commoner and elite, and much of the solution may lie in being more specific about what kinds of relations and what degrees of similarity and difference we can perceive as constituting past persons. In short, we need to return to explorations of the relationships involved in social differentiation.

Relationality with power

John O'Shea's (1984) study of mortuary variation in North American Great Plains cemeteries presents a rigorous and instructive analysis of three societies in which leaders with authority in some areas, known historically as 'chiefs' by Europeans and European Americans, stood in relation to other members of society. One of the features of O'Shea's approach is that he distinguishes items that denote specific rank (e.g. stone pipes associated ethnohistorically with chiefs) from wealth (based on quantities of goods, but also rare, exotic, or fine items not specifically associated with ranked roles). Pawnee society was ranked into hereditary chiefs and priests, hereditary warriors and cult members, and commoners, but differentiation in status (and not necessarily hierarchically) could also be acquired within these ranks by trade and personal achievement. Considering excavated graves from the Pawnee Barcal site, O'Shea identified that very few graves included markers of restricted social position, such as stone pipes within the graves of chiefs, but many included traded goods indicative of a wider continuum of wealth (1984, 101–8). Chiefs tended to be buried with quantities of such 'wealth' objects, but they were not the only ones who were. O'Shea concluded:

> Overall, the grave assemblages tended to reflect the achieved personal status of each individual . . . This suggests that the ranking system was quite weak, with little absolute difference between the individuals within it.

In other words, there were families producing chiefs and warriors of various kinds, but these families were probably not significantly elevated above others nor significantly differentiated among one another. Individual variation and social persona stood in contrast with rank. In another example, O'Shea

identified differences between males and females and adults and subadults at Arikara burial grounds: at Larson 15 types of objects were found with men but not women while none were associated exclusively with women, and subadults were often buried with the same kinds of ornaments as adults but not tools, weapons, or other objects found with adults (O'Shea 1984, 190). This differentiation presents adult male identities as special. At the Omaha Big Village burial ground O'Shea also discerned that where there were clear differences in wealth between 'richer' and 'poorer' graves the richer graves tended to have few special status items, indicating that such emblems were unnecessary as indictors of rank when rank and wealth grades coincided (251). Crucially, however, O'Shea's study convincingly concludes that differentiation between rank is far more readily apparent in archaeological remains than differentiation within ranks, *even when ethnographic and historical evidence clearly identifies such heterarchical social distinctions* (O'Shea 1984, 250–4). Here O'Shea identifies an important absence that shapes our understanding of the assemblage we study. This is largely because, at least in the Great Plains communities that O'Shea studied, heterarchical distinctions such as moieties or membership of secret societies or divisions of status among those of equal rank were marked by emblems 'more sensitive to decay' (i.e. made less durably), and also 'common and locally derived' (253). Age and sex distinctions were evident in the mortuary data alone, but this was most evident when, for example, male roles were specially marked out in enduring items in the grave. The degree to which we should see the choice of less durable items for female graves as a matter of lower status is highly problematic, however, given the value of textiles, basketry, worked hide, and other organic materials in many communities (e.g. Weiner 1992); thus, we may detect distinctions of sex, but I would be very wary about relating these to a *hierarchy* of value. Equally, given so many organic items will have decayed away completely since deposition we have lost a great deal of evidence for other heterarchical social distinctions if these were also marked in British prehistoric communities using local, ephemeral media.

I am not proposing that we draw direct analogies between Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age British communities and the Pawnee, Omaha, or Arikara of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, nor that these represent social types (e.g. certain kinds of 'chiefdom'). For one thing, the burial patterns are extremely different: there are no nucleated flat cemeteries like those of the Great Plains communities in Early Bronze Age Britain, and there are significant differences in the range and quantity of things included in/recovered from graves in the two contexts. O'Shea's analyses suggest that both vertical and horizontal differentiation (and intersections between them) are brought to the fore in mortuary practices, and that we can attempt to differentiate between 'wealth' and specific markers of social rank or consider the extent of overlap between economic efficacy and rank. O'Shea also demonstrates that it may be possible

to differentiate degrees of hierarchical distinction, particularly where special emblems of rank are used. If we can draw any general comparisons then it ought to be possible to consider patterns in mortuary assemblages and mortuary treatment in terms of such differentiation, at least as far as durable objects are concerned (e.g. those made of stone, pottery, or metal, most likely to survive in graves from North-East England). However, durable items are most likely to be used to mark enduring distinctions of hierarchy or features of identity concerned with sex and age. If we accept his results as a basis for comparison then prehistoric mortuary evidence is very likely to seriously underrepresent the heterarchical aspects of social differentiation, and thus leave us with a skewed appreciation of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age communities in Britain. I think this describes the current picture available in publications on the period. Furthermore, the relative paucity of enduring emblems of authority (compared with objects we might see as exotic trade items) and of burials with large numbers of goods in the corpus may hint at the relative *absence* of hierarchical relations. And while emblems of authority may well have been passed on after the death of the holder it is not possible to know to what degree this supported *hierarchical* divisions.

Reading O'Shea's analyses of Great Plains communities with their complex systems of ranking and plural chiefs in each community also brings home the enduring impact of Renfrew's choice of a model of Polynesian chiefdoms for prehistoric Wessex. In the understanding of Polynesian chiefs that is dominant in the archaeological imagination (e.g. Earle 1991*a*), these chiefs are paramount social figures from divinely sanctioned lineages, and the quantities and range of material encompassed by these powerful persons are staggering. Recent anthropological analyses of Polynesia and Melanesia have stressed that chiefs, 'big men', and 'great men' are all intelligible as persons whose authority rests on their ability to encompass a range of relations in their person, including through material culture and substances. But, vitally, their efficacy relies on detaching and distributing the products of these relations from their person and giving them to others (Mosko 1992). Polynesian chiefs carry out such interactions at the scale of their chiefdom: they must decompose themselves in order to extend their efficacy out into others. 'Big men', 'great men', and chiefs do not acquire power in all dimensions of life by owning possessions. If we see prestige goods as special 'parts of persons' and as relations made material that circulated in the prehistoric past then we arrive at a rather different reading of motivation for such artefacts being present in graves (cf. Brück 2006, 75–6). Such objects might also have been spiritually charged conduits for authority and/or efficacy and specific kinds of power (including spiritual or magical power; cf. Shell 2000; Sheridan 2003; Woodward 2000, 109–22; Woodward et al. 2005, 55) but not the currency of self-aggrandizement or even of straightforward competition. Our use of the term 'chief' might also be rather different if we reflected on the chiefs Evans-Pritchard

(1940) describes among the Nuer in the 1930s. 'Leopard-skin chiefs' were strangers to the community among whom they lived and in which other chiefs did not 'belong to the dominant clans in the tribes in which they function' (174). Such distance provided the chiefs with a position from which to arbitrate during difficult disputes. Importantly, the 'leopard-skin chief' had no widespread authority, and did not enjoy an elevated social status or acquire wealth. He was 'a sacred person without political authority' (5) who arbitrated in certain kinds of dispute. As in other communities, there were other kinds of chiefs with authority in other specific areas, and the power of all Nuer chiefs was situation-specific (173). Although Nuer chiefs from differing villages shared a sense of identity, Evans-Pritchard is adamant that they did not 'comprise in any way a class or rank' (173).

The kinds of social differentiation postulated for Melanesia or described among the Nuer or discussed by O'Shea for the Pawnee, Arikara, and Omaha are reminders that 'chiefs' may be many things. While it has a complex anthropological history and acts as an umbrella for many different social formulations, *the term 'chief' is not necessarily redundant or unsuitable*, then, and the idea of social differentiation is certainly not invalid in our studies of British prehistory. At the same time we cannot ignore the likely bias in mortuary evidence that overlooks heterarchical social differences. Overall, it is most important to be specific about the relations we see in the archaeological evidence, and to use analogies to clarify exactly what the terms we use are *and are not* intended to convey.

It is notable that the referents 'chiefs' and 'elites' have endured throughout the successive translations of 'Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary deposits' that have occurred since Greenwell's day. While some attempts were made by processualists to refine the focus of our studies of mortuary practices and identify potentially distinct spheres of authority, power, wealth, and rank, these have seldom been explicitly deployed in interpretations that make statements about elites during British prehistory. Challenges to the idea of elites have largely been attempted obliquely through considering the importance of other factors such as personhood, cosmology, and kinship. None of these concepts are necessarily *opposed* to ideas of chiefs and elites, rank and status, however, even if they can be used to challenge some of the core assumptions in the use of those concepts. In fact, many interpretations of elites in British prehistory rest on the idea that such roles were maintained in part through some kind of cosmological sanctioning—in other words, that religious beliefs were part of the ideological mechanisms supporting elites (e.g. Braithwaite 1984; Garwood 1991; Sheridan 2003; Needham 2000). If we are to move towards a view of the social in which the term effectively means all relevant actants in a relation, then we need to accept that how past societies and past identities were negotiated cannot be understood simply by perceiving mortuary evidence as tools for arranging human beings in relation to

one another. We need to consider how people were situated in relation to, and given life within, their cosmos, their ontology, with its many and varied components.

RELATIONAL BELIEFS, PRINCIPLES, AND PRACTICES

In a recent synthesis of the prehistoric archaeology of the Northumberland National Park, and reflecting on the presence of pyre debris and cremated bone at Turf Knowe North, Frodsham (2004, 77) offers that:

> Perhaps the majority of people were cremated, after which their ashes were gathered up along with bits of pyre debris and simply scattered over the local sacred cairn where one or more known ancestors, perhaps gradually retreating into myth as time went by, were also interred.

This interpretation invokes a motivation for the patterns in deposition and monumentalization of burial grounds founded in religious belief. The concept of spiritual or religious belief has played a significant role in discourses on the period across northern Europe, and can be detected locally in Field's (1999) conclusion that the siting of Northumbrian barrows along river valleys but not in the most prominent locations with the widest views was in accord with a sense of 'harmony', and in Edwards' (2005) conclusions that the burial mounds of Coquetdale were placed in landscape locations that were liminal to the activities of everyday life. Like inferences about status, the connection between mortuary practices and religious beliefs has a long history. Greenwell (1877, 25–6) could discern only one key pattern in the orientation of bodies in Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age graves: they were usually turned 'facing the sun'. Interestingly, Greenwell (1877, 102–3) also considered the possibility that grave goods were placed with the dead in order to 'propitiate them, so that they might not injure the living', alluding to contemporary communities among whom 'this was [effected] by the offering of various things, and amongst them food' (Greenwell 1877, 103). This idea has not circulated widely in subsequent years, unlike the idea that the dead were given provisions for a journey to the afterlife. Greenwell was ambivalent about this latter idea, arguing first that this could not be sustained since these provisions were so few and poor, and so many graves had no such goods (of the 379 burials he considered only 94 had any grave goods; Greenwell 1877, 59), before capitulating that since 'some semi-savage people at the present day practise the same custom, the probability is strongly in favour' of it (60–1). It is notable, though, that Ucko's classic analysis of ethnographic accounts of mortuary practices states that the reasons for including or excluding goods in graves are many and varied, and do not 'correlate with particular types or systems of afterworld

beliefs' (Ucko 1969, 266). Greenwell also suggested that the crouched position denoted the normal position of sleep among these communities (Greenwell 1877, 24) but did not connect this with any notions of waking in an afterlife. He also dismissed ideas that the position was emblematic of the foetus in the womb, arguing that this knowledge required 'a mental process beyond the power of the persons who originated the custom' (23), a point of which Tuckwell (1975) was rightly sceptical.

Greenwell's interpretations of beliefs about death and the afterlife were piecemeal, but clearly influenced by anthropological sources. Twentieth-century interpretations of British prehistoric archaeology became ever more co-ordinated, eventually focusing on the presence of principles structuring past practices, principles which were often argued to be embedded in indigenous cosmologies (e.g. Fowler 2008*a*; 2008*b*; Hodder 1984; 1990; Owoc 2002; 2005; Parker Pearson and Richards 1994; Parker Pearson 1996; 1999*b*; Richards 1990; 1993; 1996). These principles permeated a range of contexts, being instrumental in the ritualized actions of daily life as well as special ceremonial events (Barrett 1989; 1990; 1991; Brück 1999; Bradley 2005; Owoc 2005). In these propositions principles formed part of a coherent scheme of beliefs which had a logical place for everything in the cosmos. Such cosmologies may have served specific sectional interests. These ideas are ultimately derived from structural and symbolic anthropology and carried through post-structural approaches such as structuration (e.g. Barrett 1988; 1989; 1991; Mizoguchi 1993), theories of practice (via Bourdieu, especially Bourdieu 1970; 1977), and contextual archaeology (e.g. Hodder 1987; 1990). Garwood's detailed studies of changing mortuary practices and monument construction throughout the British Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age are excellent examples (Garwood 1991; 2003; 2007; 2012). Garwood postulates that cosmologies changed during the period, involving differing ideas about time, the past, ancestry, and descent—and that these principles were revised through changing activities at, and transformations of, the places associated with the dead. For instance, he suggests relations of lineage across time could be reconfigured and revised through each additional act of mound construction at (particularly linear) barrow cemeteries (Garwood 2007, 48). In his earlier work he also associated henges with narratives of an eternally unchanging cosmological order during the period *c.*2500–2000 BC, and later sequences of funerary deposits at round barrow cemeteries with the emergence of a conception of time concerned with lineage and ancestry while a sense of eternal order was brought to the fore at 'super-centres' such as prominent barrow cemeteries as well as some continued use of henges (Garwood 1991, 27). By the 1980s mortuary rites had long been interpreted as arenas of social renewal as well as the redistribution of social roles, and a renewed focus on cosmology emphasized the potency of funerals as cosmogenic events. In these studies cosmological principles are set alongside

principles in the structuring and organization of social relations, particularly relations of ancestry and descent. This ultimately stems back again to structural Marxist anthropology. In an early appearance of this influence, Chapman (1981) drew on a series of examples from across the later Mesolithic and Neolithic in Europe to argue that formal burial grounds emerged when vital local resources (of whatever kind—we could add spiritual 'resources' to his list) came under significant pressure—often a feature of increased sedentism. Burying those who invested their labour in a particular locale at or near that locale was seen as presenting a claim by the descendants on the resources associated with it. Thus, in various ways, burial grounds are seen as places where members of the living community justified their positions in society and in the cosmos simultaneously (cf. Barrett 1988; 1991).

Arguments based on sequences of burial practices and monument construction and alteration articulate well with the development of small cemeteries, barrows or cairns with multiple graves, and barrow or cairn cemeteries in Early Bronze Age Britain, though the extent to which these relate to cosmological principles or to specific formulations of kinship or ancestry needs to be established in each case through pattern recognition. I will argue that communities of the dead became extremely important during the Early Bronze Age in North-East England, but I would note that during the period *c.*2500–2250 and possibly later there is little in the way of formal burial grounds in Britain as most of the dead that were buried were placed in isolated graves or cists (cf. Garwood 2012, 311). In the following period nucleations of the dead are more evident, but there is little to suggest that all of the descendants of a specific ancestor or lineage were buried at each cemetery. Ancestral connections may provide part of the explanation for changing burial practices during the period, but we need to both look beyond this and also explore the specific kinds of relations of ancestry and descent in more detail. The idea of cosmological principles also needs to be handled with caution: as Garwood stresses, these principles can and do change, they can be contested in certain circumstances and they can be deviated from. From my perspective they are post-hoc reifications of practices in the process of becoming, they are crystallizations and formalizations of forces and events that had multiple origins and meanings (and that have entwined but separable futures) into a new and identifiable force. They are perhaps not best given the status of governing principles so much as actants that articulate well and repeatedly with other actants in the assemblage, or strands in the entanglement that have become strongly glued with many of the other strands. As suggested in Chapter 2, what might appear a single ordered principle may have many points of origin and result from the repetition of many minute interactions of differing kinds. But perceiving society, time, and the cosmos as utterly entwined and engineered through repeated and ongoing heterogeneous action articulates well with the kind of non-representational approach to reality I am advocating in this book. It is

also a theme that has become increasingly popular in interpretations of barrows and burials over the last ten years, and all that is needed is to remove the idea that we are examining (only) symbolic statements and media, and accept that the cosmological engineering we can detect were real practices with real effects that sometimes worked as planned and sometimes did not.

RELATIONAL PERSONS, THINGS, MATERIALS, AND PLACES

Persons, things, materials

> The treatment of each individual could have encapsulated the preoccupa-
> tions, needs and beliefs of the immediate lineage at the juncture of his or
> her death.
>
> (Harding and Healy 2007, 237)

As has been pointed out several times in recent years (e.g. Brück 2004*a*; 2006; Fowler 2001; 2004; 2005; Jones 2002*b*; Thomas 2002*b*; 2004), the dominant narratives of social agency in prehistoric archaeology throughout most of the twentieth century rested on a specific understanding of human nature in which individuals are the key actants, and those individuals desire autonomy, influence, and power. Individuals in the modern western world have been most commonly understood as monadic entities who exist prior to relationships into which they enter, and this understanding has implicitly infiltrated our accounts of the prehistoric past. Since the technologies that give rise to such modern western individuals include the individual ownership of possessions, customized bodily appearance, and single burial (albeit in cemeteries), the presence of 'single burials' with artefacts in the prehistoric past has been implicitly taken as evidence for self-determining monadic individuals. This understanding of personhood depends equally on the attribution of value to objects as possessions and alienable wealth (Brück 2004*a*; 2006; Chapman 1996; 2000; Fowler 2004). Greenwell (1877, 60, 105–6) himself expressed doubts that the objects included in graves related to the biographical identities of the deceased, pointing out how few burials contained anything at all, the predominance of pottery which he said was so porous it could not hold liquids for significant periods of time, and argued that many of the items appeared 'quite new' when found rather than suffering the signs of constant use. Even though we now know more about variations in the treatment of these objects (Woodward et al. 2005), and have to accept that a whole range of organic remains may be lost for many graves, some of Greenwell's scepticism is worth retaining as we approach grave assemblages in North-East England. If grave

goods were important in indicating the identities of the dead then we may well ask why so few graves contain many such objects, and why such a narrow range of artefacts were selected for inclusion with the remains of the dead (e.g. why were metal axeheads excluded from graves?). There is clearly also far more diversity in Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practice than single burial of intact corpses (Fowler 2005; Gibson 2004; 2007; Petersen 1972). On these and other grounds Joanna Brück, Andrew Jones, myself, and others have questioned the equations that (*a*) single burial with objects = individualized persons, and (*b*) single burial with exotic or diverse objects = self-aggrandizing individuals seeking elevated status. These critiques occurred in the context of a broader engagement with the value and meaning of the materials associated with the remains of the dead—from jet, amber, and gold ornaments (Jones 2002*b*) to curated pottery (Woodward 2002) to the very earth and stone used to construct monuments where the dead were buried (Owoc 2002). These approaches stem from a broad post-structuralist and phenomenological tradition in anthropology and archaeology, travelling in tandem with ideas about structuring principles, contextual agency, and the mutual constitution of persons and worlds. They arguably require only a little reconfiguration to chime with non-representational approaches.

Julian Thomas (1991) presented one of the first attempts to reinterpret the personhood of the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age dead in a study of the body in Beaker burials. He argued that the body and accompaniments in the grave could be read as a kind of text, and concluded that the restricted range of associations indicated 'stereotypical' and idealized identities; in other words, specific kinds of social persona were created. Given the repetition in certain features of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices and goods we could certainly consider the presentation of the body and grave furniture as idealizations of a desired identity after death (cf. Case 2004; Fowler forthcoming *a* and *b*; Needham 2011). The question becomes one of what exactly is being idealized in each mortuary act: is it, for instance, 'the ritual idealization of society' (Garwood 1991, 18), 'individual sacralised identities' (Garwood 2012, 311), the production of 'ideal ancestors' (Fokkens 2012, 120), a sense of sociality and kinship, some combination of these and/or other factors? It is also important to remember that this idealization took place during a process in which the dead person was being transformed (Fowler 2011; 2013; and see below). Their relations with the living and the dead are changed during the funerary process, successively *altering* their social persona and drawing out different and sometimes new features of their identity in the process.

Thomas's (1991, 40) view that Beaker burials displayed 'the human being as a bounded and indivisible entity' could also be questioned. As Brück (2004*a*; 2006), Fowler (2001; 2004; 2005), and Jones (2002*b*) have all pointed out, personhood does not end at the skin, and artefacts and materials may all be

extensions of persons. All bodies and objects may result from combinations of personal investment by several persons—they can be said to be multiply authored. The problem with Thomas's (1991) interpretation is simply that it leaves the human body on a different footing to the rest of the mortuary deposit. A number of other studies in the 1990s focused on the role of the body in mortuary rituals, each implicitly retaining this distinction between the stuff of the body and other remains. Mizoguchi (1993) and Last (1998) both explored the remembering of past deposits at the time of a new funeral at the same site, stressing how identities were being produced and revised relationally through similarities and differences in the location, orientation, treatment, and accompaniments of the dead. Brück's (2004*a*) study of single burials emphasized how funerals coped with loss through commemorating relationships in life and argued that specific relations between the mourners and the dead individual were materialized in the mortuary corpus of body, things, and materials. Brück, like Garwood (1991, 27), Mizoguchi, Last, and Lucas (1996), emphasizes the role of kinship in these mortuary interactions. The mortuary corpus is read as relating to the personhood of the dead although this does not 'simply reflect the social identity of the deceased' but 'communicate[s] the character of the relationships that made that person what he or she was' (Brück 2004*a*, 311). Both Thomas and Brück also stress the metaphorical role of objects placed in graves. Thomas (1991) related Beakers to consumption, antler picks to labour, ornaments with gendered roles, and arrowheads, wristguards, and daggers with warfare and hunting—in each case thinking about how the objects cite bodily activities. He suggested that the objects placed around the body at Hemp Knoll should be treated as statements about the deceased, while those found around and on top of the coffin were features of the funerary rite. Brück considered the ritualized destruction of objects and other acts as relating to the funeral as much or more than to the particular individual. Thus, breaking objects, wrapping and burying bodies, and building mounds all become 'material metaphors' for the relationships the mourners were remembering and reworking.

Importantly, Brück's study also stated that 'objects constituted part of the person' (2004*a*, 325; cf. Fowler 2001; 2004; Jones 2002*b*). She published a series of other studies that underline how bodily substance circulated in a way parallel to, or integrated within, the circulation of a host of other materials in Bronze Age Britain (Brück 2001; 2005; 2006). Based on ethnographic studies (see Fowler 2004; 2008*a* and *b*; 2011), we could suggest that the body need not 'belong' to an individual person, but may be of the community—and this may be the case as much if not more so for special persons able to encompass a wide community than for ordinary ones. The burial of a person may constitute a gathering, or bundling, of things, materials, and relations at the scale of the community but temporarily focused on a specific body and place. Jones (2002*b*), pursuing the observation that personhood 'is emergent and continues

to be substantiated through the maintenance and reiteration of social relations' examined the durable, shiny, colourful, and luminous materials found in some Early Bronze Age graves at the heart of his discussion of personhood in the period. The properties of these materials were drawn through their working from raw materials into particular substances and objects (e.g. as copper ore was mined, extracted, smelted, given the form of a blade, polished, and hafted). He argued that these objects were biographical objects that had variously been given and received, curated and maintained, fragmented and recombined, before deposition. Jones concluded that 'the bounded integrity of the body's surfaces and the boundaries of the grave are held in place while distinctions between the deceased and the living are mediated across this boundary' (2002*b*, 170). He suggested that the durable coloured objects he examined were associated with particular regions (e.g. jet with Whitby, copper with the south-west of the British Isles) and that combinations of these materials were citations of specific social relations. In this account the grave, and the assemblage as a whole, becomes the person under examination rather than the body—and, again, this person is an accumulation of relations (and the products of relations) with and between other persons. Thus, '[t]he so-called "rich graves" of the Early Bronze Age are therefore rich in terms of the complexity of the relationships they objectify, rather than in the intrinsic status of the deceased or the objects placed with them' (171). Elsewhere, Jones (2001; 2004; 2007) considered the role of the aesthetics of the funeral event—from the shapes of and decoration on artefacts to the smells and tastes involved—in forging and provoking memories among the mourners. Owoc (2002; 2005; 2007) also turned the focus on the living community burying the dead and building the monuments, stressing simultaneously the way their actions renewed the cosmos and the social order while commemorating the relations that comprised the deceased, and the role played by properties of the materials involved in these actions (such as the colour of soils and turves). Studies of Cornish barrows by Owoc (2002; 2005; 2007) and A. Jones (2005) turn the attention towards the builders of these monuments and the acts and timing of construction events, situating the mortuary practices *within* these sequences rather than expecting that monument construction revolved around funerals. This in part stems from the lack of burials at the Cornish barrows, something which differs from the pattern in North-East England, but it brings home the centrality of the assumption that sites where the dead are buried are primarily funerary sites (cf. contributions to Last 2007, especially Harding and Healy 2007).

These are important approaches, not least because of how they reframe all of the materials of the period as meaningful and as effective media through which personhood, experience, and memory emerge and are distributed. These are no longer simply symbolic resources or wealth, though they are still deeply embedded in social relationships. If we identify 'rich' burials, then

we need to attend to how personhood was constituted through these burials, not just for the deceased but relationally, among society. And that society includes, consists of, people, things, materials, practices, processes, beliefs, and so on. Personhood is emergent from relationships, it is a property that emerges from interactions involving all of those participants. At the same time we have to respect soils, trees, wood, stones, animal bones, antlers, jet, amber, and so on as material things that are *unlike* human beings and have different emergent properties and effects—but again these entities are relational and become entangled along with the personhood of human beings. Thus, in this current study I intend to consider the co-emergence of different relations, different materials and persons, things, and places. Interpretations will not be based on any direct ethnographic analogies nor even anthropological schema for personhood—though of course one root impetus in the entanglement remains anthropological. Indeed, there is another key aspect of mortuary deposits that can only be approached with another anthropological intervention: mortuary practices as transformations effected through rites of passage.

Mortuary practices as transformations

I would say that many scholars of British prehistory now do not see single burials as primarily acts that venerate the identities of special, autonomous individuals (though this view does not always percolate through in public discourse). The question is, what do we replace that with? While I wish to keep an open mind to the possibility that mortuary deposits may have been formed through events that were not funerals, I think it reasonable to expect that most were funerary in nature and were ritualized. At the same time I would acknowledge that such acts of funerary deposition might have arisen from historical episodes or coincided with other ritual cycles, as much as they depended on the death of a specific person. They may not be best understood as *only* funerals, but I think it important to attend to the funerary aspect in analysing burials. I will therefore outline an interpretation of these deposits as the enduring vestiges of rites of passage (cf. Fowler forthcoming *a* and *b*).

Interestingly, relatively few studies focus on the transformative nature of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age funerary practices. Barrett (1990; 1994) considered the key features of funerary practices and deposits at Early Bronze Age barrows, but focused on the various opportunities for display and symbolic communication rather than what this meant for the transformation of the dead or the surviving community beyond the renewal of 'certain rights and obligations' (1994, 187). However, he did discuss the 'making of the dead' through the funerary rite (115), consider how and when in the funerary sequence 'rites of reincorporation' might occur for those who were cremated (115, 123; cf. Owoe 2001, 198), and postulate the bodily activities of mourners

(123). Barrett clearly drew on a structural anthropological model of ritual, though he did not set out its foundations. Lucas (1996) focused on the body as a medium for negotiating changing relations of ancestry and descent during the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age in Yorkshire. But after outlining the transformation of the dead into ancestors in the Neolithic, he argued that in the later third millennium those buried with Beakers had achieved 'ancestor-hood' in life meaning that their bodies did not need to be transformed following death (110). He contrasted this with later funerary practices where the living 'increased' 'the authority of an ancestor' through offering gifts to the body in the grave during the funeral (111), and cremation deposits in which 'there is no longer a process of ancestralisation' (113) since the transformation destroys relations of descent traced through the flesh, allowing the cremated bones to act as a kind of gift. Each of these interpretations could be questioned. Not all of the goods deposited with Beaker burials were necessarily owned by the dead before burial (cf. Kirkhaugh, Chapter 4; Brück 2004*a*, 317–18), and could have been part of a funerary transformation. The dead might have been expected to transform *after* burial (cf. Fowler 2011; 2013). Bone, as well as flesh, could be the media of kinship—and indeed Brück (2009) has argued for the sharing of cremated bone between kin and affines at Bronze Age funerals. There is no reason why intact bodies complete with finery could not be given as gifts to whatever powers there were as well as cremated bones—and indeed, whether bodies were sacrificed in this way at the pyre or only when buried is a moot point. As noted above, Brück (2004*a*) considered how the dead became contained during the funeral, while Fowler (2004, 74; 2005, 125) has suggested that daggers and knives may have been associated with cutting ties to the dead, something explored further in Chapters 4 and 7 by locating the presence of these objects in the sequence of funerary events.

The approach I will now consider is drawn from structuralist anthropology which focuses on the structuring of events in rites of passage, relating the physical practices involved with changes in personhood for the deceased and for those involved in the funeral. This is not really a new introduction—structuralist and post-structuralist anthropological work on ritual and rites of passage is deeply influential in how death has been discussed in the literature, but the step by step implications for this in interpreting the funeral event rarely move beyond discussions of funeral sites as places for liminal transformation (cf. Barrett 1988; 1989; 1990; Owoc 2001). Since these studies are based on funerals, and we think we are seeing the archaeological residues of funerals, the articulation between these anthropological concepts and the archaeological evidence seems strong, particularly in comparison with studies of social organization or ethnicity where we cannot be certain these issues were important in funerary practice. The risk in giving it fuller passage through the assemblage is that the approach universalizes rites of passage into a specific structure. It is based on a series of cross-cultural comparisons, *but* it

provides only a very loose model for action. If we reframe the principles that this approach distils out as simply actants that may have greater or lesser force than other actants in any given interaction we can allow that some funerals might be more rigid in their organization than others, and that the timing, duration, and components of the funeral may vary. Indeed, as we will see in coming chapters, funerary practices certainly did vary and change with time.

Van Gennep (1960) identified three phases to rite of passage: pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal. Building on this, Victor Turner (1969) argued that identities and relationships that pre-existed the death of the deceased would be affirmed in the pre-liminal phase. This might involve dressing the dead in their own clothes (though these might be ceremonial outfits such as wedding clothes if they were married) and organizing visitations by mourners. Afterwards, the deceased and any intimate mourners, such as spouses, are separated from the living community through 'rites of separation'. The identities of, and relationships between, mourners and the deceased are further transformed during the liminal phase of the ritual. The liminal phase—which might be very brief or extremely long—is a time of uncertainty in which identities are in flux. It may continue following burial, especially if bodily remains are to be further transformed through a later process. Taboos and prohibitions may apply to how mourners act during this period. The final, post-liminal phase of ritual activity involves the incorporation of the now-transformed deceased person into the community of the dead, the afterlife, the cosmos, and so on, depending on the specific belief system (see also Fowler 2013). Such 'rites of incorporation' also free intimate mourners such as widows or widowers from mourning obligations and restrictions and bring the whole community of survivors together yet again.

I would, however, make some slight modifications to this scheme. The identity affirmed prior to the liminal phase is an idealization on the part of the mourners, and may stress the most desirable aspects of the identity of the deceased. Visitors may leave food and other gifts with the dead in this phase (e.g. Metcalf and Huntington 1991, 91). Indeed, even at this point in the funeral the dead may be prepared for their post-liminal reincorporation. This reincorporation may be beyond the agency of the living community carrying out the funeral, and may need to arise in a future and/or afterlife when the efficacy of certain objects and substances placed with the dead may be called upon. The key agents in this reincorporation may be ancestors, spiritual beings, or deities. Feasts and other celebrations among the living may also take place to mark the time when the deceased is anticipated to join the community of the ancestors or attain a new state of existence. The artefacts, bodies, and materials we detect are therefore participants in a narrative sequence, and in this sequence some phases might contradict or revise the statements made in earlier ones. Archaeological deposits cannot necessarily be neatly attributed to one stage or another in the ritual process,

and the deposits we find may materially 'telescope' different phases of the narrative process. Finally, while we could perceive this as a narrative with a desired course and outcome, the inherent risk involved in rites of passage means that anxieties and uncertainties may surround the process. Contingent measures may be needed, and a variety of outcomes may in fact occur.

We do not have a complete population of the Early Bronze Age dead, and need to explain this. Not all the burials made during the period have survived, been excavated, or recorded, but even so it is highly unlikely that everyone who died was buried. Needham (2011) estimates that throughout Britain *c.*29,000 mortuary sites from the period have been identified, and allows that there may originally have been as many as 50,000. Even if we allow, as he does, a generous average of ten deceased per site, this must constitute a small proportion of the millions of people who must have lived and died throughout the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age. Needham estimates one burial for every 18 deaths—and of course these burials are not evenly distributed in time and space. Needham's calculations are a very well-educated guess, and if we accept them as even remotely useful we have to accept that the majority of the population were not buried. Importantly, however, this does not mean the remainder of the population had no funerals only that burial of their mortal remains did not constitute part of that funeral or was not carried out following that funeral. This rather raises the question why deposit the remains of the dead at all? What does deposition achieve?

Various answers could be offered. Barrett (1994, 63) points out that deposition 'fix[ed] the end of each individual ritual at a specific and permanently marked location in the landscape'. This raises the vital issue of the relationship between ritual sequence, funeral, and place. Garwood's work illustrates the important legacy of mortuary monuments for subsequent funerary practices, another important issue I will pursue. But there are many mortuary deposits that were not marked by elaborate monuments and/or were not the scene of later burials. Burial in the same cemetery may generate or acknowledge shared ancestry, but this does not explain isolated burials. Monuments have been argued to commemorate, but also to help forget the dead (Williams 2001). Above all, deposition without cremation puts the body out of reach of animals and the elements, meaning that it can decay in a confined space. Various materials including soil could be combined with the body to varying effects. While body parts and objects associated with the corpse could be brought back into circulation it seems they seldom were, though I will explore indications of some later intercessions with the dead. The dead were contained. Deposition after cremation similarly encapsulates some of the substance of the dead, though the flesh has been removed or relocated in the cosmos and it seems that much of the bone was not deposited. Nonetheless, the remains of the dead were sealed in place in the case of burials and not in other cases. Based on the low numbers of burials within the population we could suggest that since most

funerary rites did not involve burial those that did may not have been 'the social norm', but reserved for specific categories of body, of person, and/or even categories of event such as a 'difficult' or particularly disturbing death. Such a death may be one that disturbs particular individuals or families, and/or the wider order of things, and may require much further ritual work than other deaths. As Bloch and Parry (1982, 15–18) point out, it may be difficult for even those involved to be certain how 'good' or 'bad' the death is. In short, burials were a particular kind of transformation which removed human remains and other things and materials out of circulation by 'giving' them to a particular locale. This may have been in part apotropaic, protecting the remains of the dead that people were anxious about by lodging them at potent places. Cist burial also provided opportunities to monitor the remains of the dead. But deposition practices changed repeatedly, emerging as different effects and in different forms which demand close attention. Finally, Humphrey Case (2004, 204) has argued convincingly that burials were part of a 'dialogue between the living and the dead' in which the living attempted 'to assert their participation in activities desirable for the wellbeing of the group both living and dead'. Thus, we can perceive mortuary deposits as intercessions between as well as transformations of the communities of the living and the dead.

CONCLUSION

The narratives that currently dominate our discussions of Chalcolithic/Early Bronze Age mortuary practices have emerged from specific histories and relationships. I imagine that there are nonetheless similarities between these interpretations of British Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices and those of many other times and places, because many of the actants discussed in this chapter have circulated widely. The history of these actants within the assemblage should not be characterized as simply a shuttling back and forth between 'data' and 'theory', but is an ongoing relational process of negotiation between ideas, materials, things, practices, and agendas. Interpretations that are well articulated in some respects and for some regions may be less accurate and effective in describing others, and, as we come to question some of these interpretations other interpretations entwined with them fall into question too. While many of the actants here fall into Lucas's category of the unobservable (Lucas 2012, 177)—a Bronze Age chief cannot be observed in quite the way a Beaker vessel can—they are nonetheless real (cf. Lucas 2012, 253–4) in that they have an impact on the relational field from which the past continually emerges. The key point is that all of these ideas have some place in future narratives of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices: by

understanding their specific histories and effects we can better understand what these references are, what impact they have, how well they fit with the material we examine, and the extent to which they are already present in that material because of their historical influence on how evidence has been assembled. I suppose I do not want to forget the disciplinary past, but to understand how it affects the disciplinary present, and therefore the future of the prehistoric past. I am not arguing that we can simply 'clear the ground' in order to apply yet further monolithic theories, nor that the evidence is a passive partner in the process of interpretation, nor even that there is some new meta-theory for interpreting mortuary practice that will replace these approaches with something inherently better. Rather, I suggest that each new idea, technique, or technology we apply, each new piece of evidence we recover, acts as a translation of what went immediately before it, creating a chain or line of translations stretching back into the past. Each translation changes the entities that we study in profound ways, but has embedded within it the enduring principles of past interpretations, such as ideas about ethnicity, cultural groups, power, or ritual. In order to carry out my own re-articulation and transformation of these circulating references in a specific region the remaining chapters of the book will focus on the mortuary practices of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age North-East England.

4

Packing and unpacking black boxes

Pattern and diversity in Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices from North-East England

INTRODUCTION

The next three chapters analyse and interpret patterns in mortuary practices in North-East England from *c*.2450 to *c*.1500 BC. This chapter focuses on the deposition of Early Bronze Age human remains along with various artefacts and materials, exploring how histories of deposition inform us about emerging bodies, persons, things, and materials. It does this by identifying artefacts and burials as belonging to certain types—it therefore reproduces inversions or packs objects into black boxes so they can circulate productively in the rest of the study. At the same time it is explicit about how these boxes are shaped by their contents: the artefacts, apparatus, references, and analyses involved. This provides the conditions for exploring the relations that gave rise to these inversions and teasing out what these suggest about intra-actions in the prehistoric past.

Not only was there a shift from the deposition of corpses to cremation before deposition, there were also changes in the attendant furniture and architecture of mortuary deposits which allowed different effects, experiences, and identities to emerge. Along with these changes, continuities and recurrences in ritual practices also emerged. The chapter traces the chronological patterns in mortuary practices including continuing and changing uses of pottery (which initially accompanied the dead and later contained their cremated bones), cists, graves, and pits, and ways to direct the body towards death. It examines the inclusion of flint and bronze knives and daggers with the dead from *c*.2200 BC and the use of burnt or burning wood at the site of deposition. In each part of the period artefacts and materials were sometimes placed about the person at certain stages in mortuary practices, and sequential transformations and translations to the deceased person and the community burying the dead took place through various stages in the funerary processes. In exploring these features the chapter provides the basis for appreciating the transformation of the body and person

and of artefacts and materials during the mortuary process, and examining the production of certain assemblages, effects, and categories within specific mortuary practices. It places changes in such practices, assemblages, effects, and categories in a long-term comparative perspective.

Chapter 5 relates the results of a similar interpretative process in order to characterize the changing landscape settings of mortuary deposits and the changing architecture of the locales where the dead were transformed as different kinds of communities of the dead materialized in differing ways. In so doing it puts the mortuary deposits in the context of other archaeological sites and environmental evidence from the period. During both chapters we will start to consider how practices endured through their repetition and the way that they mutated as certain enduring entities came to the fore (e.g. urns containing cremated bone; monuments covering communities of the dead) and others gave way (e.g. cists containing corpses or cremated bone). Chapters 4 and 5 together start with archaeological inversions, refining and appreciating them. Chapter 6 moves from the refined inversions to trace the relations constituting them—it will consider the lines that were becoming as they thread their way through the contingent episodes of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England, and consider what the patterns identified indicate about emergent senses of community, cosmos, materials, places, things, and persons in the Early Bronze Age world.

It is important to distil out such patterns, but while we can trace the emergence of certain practices and categories in the mortuary evidence we have to acknowledge that each practice is also unique: it is not a simple manifestation or photocopy of a pre-existing category, identity, or tradition. Each act, each deposit, is particular and specific, it is historically contingent and could have happened differently: it is a haecceity arising at the intertwining of different lines of becoming, but is not simply a snapshot of any one line as it passes by or an 'example' of a totalized tradition. Thus, Chapter 6 will not only draw out the lines that emerge from this entanglement between the mortuary practices, deposits and locales, archaeological apparatus, ideas, and interpretations, but also return to some specific burials, places, and landscapes, considering their impact on wider practices, materialities, ideas, and experiences: the way that each burial had some historical effect.

TRANSLATIONS THROUGH DISCOVERY, DOCUMENTATION, CURATION, AND RE-ANALYSIS

In order to re-evaluate how well articulated previous statements are, how 'stable' they are, we need to bring new mediators, new translators, into the existing assemblage and see what changes and what endures as a result. The

first step in the project was to collect together all of the publications about the deposits, most of which were gathered at the Cowen Library, now part of the Great North Museum library. I recorded key information relating to the sites for which there was good contextual information in a Microsoft Access spreadsheet, now available online through the Archaeology Data Service and partly summarized in Appendices A and B. The references to texts on specific sites are listed in Appendix A and I will only cite references to these reports in coming chapters when quoting the source. I used texts on artefact typologies to ensure consistent attribution of the objects to type based on drawings or photographs (and sometimes just descriptions) in the literature, also drawing on previous typological corpora (e.g. Tait 1965 for Beakers; Gibson 1978 for Food Vessels; Gerloff 1975 for metal blades). I used grid references to plot spatial patterning by burial mode and artefact type in ArcGIS: maps of key results can be found in this and the next chapter. In a few cases I re-examined flints, pots, and blades. Most of the human remains from excavated prehistoric sites in the region were curated by Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums. Permission to carry out physical analysis and radiocarbon dating was granted by TWAM, and the osteological analyses were carried out by Michelle Gamble in 2011 at TWAM premises and Newcastle University's Wolfson Archaeology Laboratory. The full results of the osteological analysis are recounted elsewhere (Fowler and Gamble forthcoming; Gamble and Fowler forthcoming), but I have summarized some of the key results in Appendix B. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Newcastle University funded a nationwide survey locating human remains from the region, the osteological analyses, and much of the radiocarbon analysis. Bones from ten different skeletons, selected according to their association with specific artefact types or their modes of burial, were submitted to the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit for sampling and dating: the results are summarized in Table 4.1. The results in Table 4.1 were set alongside those from previous research, recently summarized for northern Northumberland by Passmore and Waddington (2012) and Millson et al. (2011). I placed these results alongside recent typo-chronologies in arranging the deposits chronologically (e.g. Curtis and Wilkin 2012; Healy 2012; Needham 2005; 2012; Sheridan 2007*a*).

The dataset I have accumulated results from a series of translations by antiquarians, museums, osteologists, scientists, equipment, and laboratories that have taken place over the last 200 years, as well as a host of other ongoing translations within the assemblage stretching over thousands of years. The human remains, associated artefacts, and burial practices discussed in this chapter have all been translated repeatedly. It is worth reflecting on some of these translations before considering the analysis of the remains.

Other than Greenwell's *British Barrows* (1877), much of the literature on the corpus until the 1990s was written by members of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne and published either in *Archaeologia Aeliana: or*

Table 4.1 Radiocarbon dates generated during the course of this project (all from human bone)

Site/deposit reference (osteological identification)	Diagnostic artefacts present	Lab. reference	Uncalibrated result BP (δ^{13}C)	Calibrated radiocarbon date (cal BC, 2σ/95.4%) [single highest possibility]
Whitton Hill henge 1, 'cremation 15'	–	OxA-26259	4531 ± 29 (−23.23)	**3361–3103 cal BC** [3241–3103 cal BC 63.3%]
Hollybush (adult male 23–57 years old), crouched	–	OxA-26258	3751 ± 27 (−21.06)	**2279–2041 cal BC** [2211–2121 cal BC 68.2%]
Allerwash (adult, male?)	Masterton flat riveted bronze dagger blade	OxA-26253	3713 ± 28 (−21.23)	**2199–2030 cal BC** [2153–2030 cal BC 79.9%]
Hasting Hill (adult male 40–55)	HBSP Beaker	OxA-26255	3686 ± 28 (−21.21)	**2194–1977 cal BC** [2145–2009 cal BC 86.5%]
Reaverhill (adult male in 30s)	Ridgeway variant bronze flat riveted dagger blade	OxA-26254	3660 ± 28 (−20.86)	**2135–1951 cal BC** –
Warden Law (subadult, *c.*3–6 years old)	Food Vessel Urn with cordon	OxA-26257	3593 ± 27 (−24.40)	**2025–1887 cal BC** –
Hasting Hill (infant *c.*1 year old)	Vase Food Vessel	OxA-26256	3524 ± 28 (−20.70)	**1931–1756 cal BC** –
Whitton Hill henge 1, pit 28 cremation (adult, male?)	Food Vessel Urn	OxA-25793	3475 ± 34 (−25.13)	**1889–1693 cal BC** [1889–1732 cal BC 89.5%]
Whitton Hill Henge 1, 'cremation 2'	–	OxA-25794	3084 ± 31 (−26.42)	**1426–1270 cal BC** [1426–1290 cal BC 93%]
Whitton Hill henge 2, pit Y cremation	–	OxA-25795	2930 ± 29 (−25.11)	**1259–1026 cal BC** [1219–1026 cal BC 88.5%]

Miscellaneous Tracts relating to Antiquity, the society's annual journal, or in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne* which provides a record of papers read at meetings and notes on artefacts in the museum collections studied some time after excavation by staff of the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, academics, or other local specialists. Most of the reports on Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age burials brought to light by local activity are short, but often include a drawing or photograph of either a cist (often after it had been emptied) or artefacts recovered. Unsurprisingly, large mounds were treated to longer reports, though this did not always mean that more detail was provided on individual features. Very few contain section drawings, though some stratigraphic relationships within mounds and features are reported on. The reports provide insight not only on the prehistoric remains, but also the circumstances of their discovery, the social relations involved in identifying, preserving, and bringing the remains to the attention of members of the society and/or local archaeological authorities, and general understandings of and attitudes towards prehistoric burials at the time of writing. There are various reasons for the discovery of sites from quarrying (e.g. Kyloe) to ploughs snagging on cist cover slabs (e.g. Dilston Park) to the burial of a mule (e.g. Wooler). The effect of these translations on the residue assemblages is profound and can hint at earlier histories of translation, such as the loss of mounds through decades or centuries of ploughing. They can also shape the assemblage strongly. As Mount (1995, 98–9) points out in his analysis of Irish Early Bronze Age cemeteries, shifts in agricultural practices from, for instance, workers following the plough to driving a machine dragging a plough, can significantly affect the chances of discovering certain kinds of deposits; cremated remains in pits in particular seem to be noticed less often in recent decades.

The reports on the discoveries also illustrate changing interpretations of the prehistoric past and reveal significant diversity in how, for instance, human remains were treated upon discovery, examined, and interpreted. For instance, at Wooler the blacksmith discovering a cist while burying his mule in 1872 then attempted to fit the animal into the cist, displacing the human remains before an antiquarian could arrive (Greenwell 1872, 416). While it is clear that the quality of preservation of the remains is variable, the quality of excavation, of analysis, and of reporting is also highly varied. For instance, the phrase 'urn' was used prolifically in the nineteenth century in particular to refer to all kinds of prehistoric vessels (depending on the author), some authors refer to burials 'of the usual kind', it is not always clear on what basis sex is attributed to skeletal remains, and it is often unclear on what basis the number of individuals is determined from a deposit of bones. The human remains found in a cist at West Wharmley provide an example of the complexity of the translations undergone by some remains since recovery. The 1929 report on the bones include a partial inventory and conclude that the bones derive from a single

individual aged *c.*25–30. Yet when examined in 2011 the box containing the bones from West Wharmley held the longbones of at least two adult individuals (Gamble and Fowler forthcoming). This suggests either that the original description was highly erroneous, that the bones accessioned were not those excavated, or that the bones in the box are not all the same ones that were originally accessioned. In some cases where more than one burial was located at a site or in the same landscape it is not always possible to deduce which set of archived remains relate to which burial reported in the published literature, restricting exactly how the information can be used, as at Summerhill and Bewes Hill (Gamble and Fowler forthcoming). Bones may have 'circulated' in ways that have not been recorded, either in writing or in the matter of the bones. Nonetheless the ongoing legacies of some relations endure: in almost all cases the bones can be safely identified as from a specific deposit or at least site, and can be radiocarbon dated and/or yield information about health, diet, age, and sex. Where some information is reliable but others suspect I have indicated the information that cannot be confirmed as well articulated in italics in Appendix B. Which relations we draw into the assemblage depend on the techniques we use, the funding at our disposal, and so on, as well as the recent histories of the remains and their extension through text and image. In the remainder of this chapter I will outline the patterns emerging from interacting within this assemblage in the years leading up to and including AD 2012.

PATTERNS IN MORTUARY DEPOSITION: UNCREMATED REMAINS *c.*2450–1750 BC

At the most general level, burials in this period were largely placed in short cists in a crouched position, though cremated or partially burnt remains were also laid in some cists, particularly towards the end of the period. In a few cases there are suggestions that time elapsed between the burial and covering the burial site with a mound, or of intercession with the skeletonized remains of the dead. Changing relations with people, practices, and products from other regions are also apparent in the mortuary evidence.

Burying the dead with Beakers, *c.*2450–2100 BC

Two groups of burials could date to *c.*2450–2200 BC: those with LC or MC Beakers certainly do, while those with SN Beakers probably date to *c.*2300–2100 BC and tall SN Beakers probably date to the earlier end of that period (Wilkin 2009, 43). Thus, only four or five burials can be certainly attributed to the 'Chalcolithic', or *c.*2500–2200 BC (Table 4.2; Map 4.1), though some of the
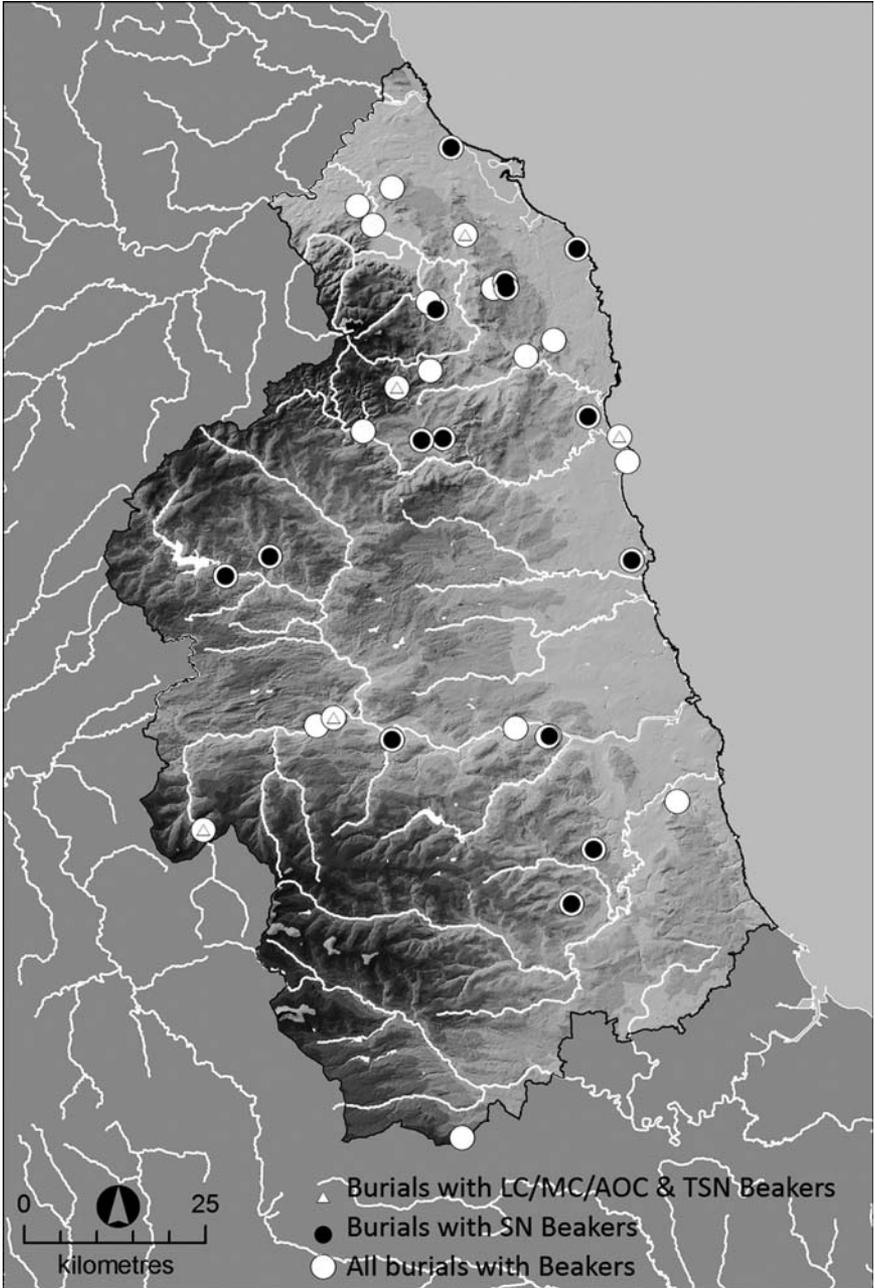
Map 4.1 Distribution of burials with LC/MC AOC Beakers, TSN Beakers or SN Beakers

Table 4.2 Key features of burial practices for Beakers likely to date to *c.*2450–2200 BC: Low-Carinated or Mid-Carinated and Tall Short-Necked Beaker deposits

Location	Feature (length)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/ facing), Materials	Artefacts
Amble	Cist, NE–SW (1.2m)	Crouched	1, adult?	Beaker 'by the side of the skeleton' (SWLNW)	Beaker (lost) SN? (TSN), N3?
High Knowes Cairnfield A cairn 2	Grave pit (1m), E–W	No bone recovered	–	?	Beaker (sherds), flint scraper, 2 barbed and tanged arrowheads
Kirkhaugh cairn 1 deposit	Placed on land surface	No bone recovered	–	Vessel under a stone slab (to SW of burial area)	Beaker LC or MC AOC + see text
North Hazelrigg cist	Cist (0.75m), NW–SE	No bone recovered		Vessel 'in each corner at the south-east end'	3 Beakers: 2 SN (TSN), 1 miniature, type?
West Wharmley cist	Cist (0.7m), E–W	1 crouched?, ?1 not cremated	1, adult, male?, possibly also 1 adult, female (bone scorched)	Part filled with sand and soil	Beaker SN (TSN) N2

remaining 18 burials containing SN Beakers, the Cartington coffin burial, and a couple of other burials without Beaker pottery could potentially also date to up to a century before 2200 BC.

One of the most unusual Beaker burials in the region almost certainly dates to this period. A suite of objects including a gold basket-shaped ornament, probably a hair-clasp but previously referred to as an 'ear-ring', probably accompanied a since-dissolved body at the centre of Kirkhaugh barrow (Maryon 1936). This ornament is similar to the pairs found with the 'Amesbury Archer' and a second nearby burial in Wiltshire (Needham in Fitzpatrick 2011, 129–40), and is one of only a handful of such ornaments known from the British Isles. The wider assemblage of artefacts at Kirkhaugh matches those sometimes observed with early Beaker burials on the Continent and in other parts of Britain: a flint barbed and tanged arrowhead, six worked flint flakes, two flint cores and 'a number of' unworked flakes, a fragment of a 'whetstone', a fragment of a flat sandstone rubber, and a nodule of iron pyrites, as well as a Low-Carinated or Mid-Carinated Beaker with All Over Cord decoration

(Maryon 1936, 211; Cowen 1966, 219–22; Tait 1965, 16; Figures 4.1 and 4.2). The vessel was too fragmentary to be more specific about its form. An item identified by Maryon (1936, 215) as a flint saw is a flint fabricator probably used as a 'strike-a-light'[1] in conjunction with the iron pyrites, suggesting a fire-starting kit. This assemblage shares a number of similarities to the artefacts found with the Amesbury Archer, though far fewer in number and without any knives or daggers. Needham (in Fitzpatrick 2011, 115) has suggested that a cushion stone, interpreted as a metalworking tool, found with the Amesbury Archer may be paralleled in the Kirkhaugh 'whetstone' with its 'semi-polished surface' (Maryon 1936, 213). Three of the Beakers buried with the Amesbury Archer were also decorated with All Over Cord. A Low-Carinated AOC vessel was also recovered during quarrying from Wards Hill,[2] Northumberland, and while there are no details of any mortuary evidence, barbed and tanged arrowheads and a whetstone were collected at the same time (Tait 1965, 16), suggesting at least one other burial of this kind in the North-East. The type of Beaker from the disturbed grave under a round cairn *c*.2m in diameter at High Knowes could not be identified beyond that it had a collared or cordoned

Figure 4.1 Artefacts recovered during the 1936 excavation at Kirkhaugh. Not shown: flint cores. Photograph courtesy of Andrew Parkin

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[1] It is very similar to that from Rudston barrow burial 6 (BM 79 12–9 1060, Kinnes and Longworth 1985, 76). I am grateful to Alison Sheridan for suggesting I consider whether one of the flints might fulfil this function.

[2] Wards Hill is one of a number of probable mortuary deposits which could not be included in the dataset of 353 deposits for detailed analysis due to a lack of contextual information, but which nonetheless provide supporting evidence in this study.

Figure 4.2 The flint from Kirkhaugh. Photograph by the author

rim (Jobey and Tait 1966, 34–5), a feature which may be present on Low-Carinated Beakers (e.g. Radley 4A; Needham 2005, 184 fig 5.1). No human remains were recovered, but in the disturbed cairn one complete and one partial barbed and tanged flint arrowhead were found. The use of a cut grave rather than a cist is unusual for the region, but common among the wide distribution of early Beaker burials. There is little other evidence of the archery kits, whetstones, or wristguards seen in some graves from Aberdeenshire or in Yorkshire during this period, nor of artefacts in graves or funerary mounds exhibiting strong similarities to northern Continental examples. Low-Carinated and All Over Cord Beaker pottery has been recovered from the sand dunes at Ross Links, Northumberland, probably originally from occupation contexts (Brewis and Buckley 1928; Tait 1965, 12–15). Such pottery is distributed sparsely around the northern parts of the British Isles (Needham 2005, 178–9) in mostly coastal and riverine locations, and has strong affinities with vessels from the Lower Rhine area.

It is tempting to see the flint objects from Kirkhaugh as equipment belonging to the deceased; however, the fabricator, the arrowhead, several of the flakes and one of the cores appear to be of the same blue-grey mottled flint, and it seems possible the artefacts were produced on site and the waste material deposited with them during the mortuary process. Specialist analysis would be required to see how well articulated this suggestion can become, such as that which Brück (2004*a*, 317–18) notes concluded that 18 flint objects (also found with iron pyrites) were struck from a single piece of flint in grave 203 at Barrow Hills, Oxfordshire. That analysis also suggests some of the assemblage there was used to craft grave furniture. Likewise, Harding and Healy
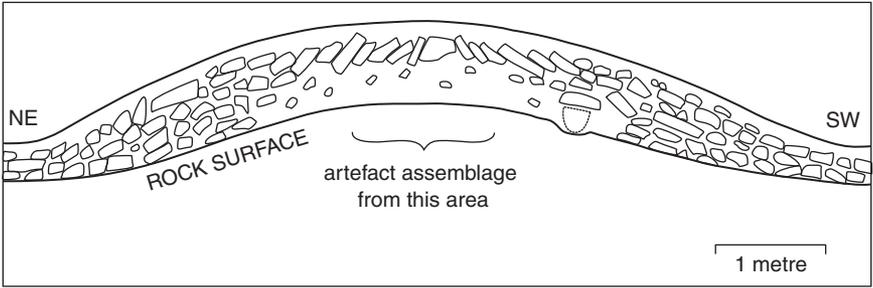
Figure 4.3 Section drawing of Kirkhaugh barrow 1. Drawn by Sheila Severn Newton, after Maryon (1936)

(2007, 250) suggest that the freshly knapped and briefly used tools found in some of the graves from barrows at Raunds, Northamptonshire, were used only in activities to do with funerary preparations. In such cases, it is possible that the assemblage was produced specifically for use in the funeral and/or to accompany the dead. At Kirkhaugh, perhaps some of these tools were used in the early phases of the ritual process and/or buried with the body so that the deceased was provided with tools that could be used to hunt, start fires, and cook in the afterlife. Although the mound which covered this person was essentially a cairn, the area at the centre where the finds were located is composed of earth and topped with flat stones (Figure 4.3). It is possible that the body was placed on the land surface, possibly in an organic container such as a wicker, bark, or wooden coffin. It is unclear whether all of the cairn stones were laid down together, or whether the area to receive the body was circumscribed with a ring, before the body was placed within this space and then covered with further flat stones. This 'above ground' placement is very unusual: all the other bodies in the study were buried in either cut graves or cists. While it would be easy to miss bodies placed on the land surface under barrows where preservation conditions are poor, very few other artefacts from the period have been found in locations that might indicate associated burials where the bodies have since decayed. The person buried at Kirkhaugh was placed in an elevated position before being covered, and although she—or, much more likely given these grave goods, he—may have been lowered into a space in the formative cairn to rest on a rocky surface smeared with clay, he or she was not buried into the ground in the same way as most Beaker burials in the region.

It is difficult to draw any conclusions about the orientation of the cists in which the remaining bodies accompanied by early Beakers were buried, or the positioning of the bodies in these cists given there are so few of them, but a strong pattern emerges when we consider them alongside SN Beaker burials (Table 4.2; Table 4.3; Map 4.1). Eight out of the 20 of these Beaker burials for

Table 4.3 Key features of burial practices for SN Beakers and Cartington, c.2300–2100 BC

Location	Feature (length)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [dates]	Artefacts (Needham (Wilkin's ecn), Clarke)
Altonside	Cist (0.95m), E–W	None recovered	–	Vessel in NE corner of cist	Beaker SN, N/NR
Ancroft	Cist (1m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, male?	Beaker in front of face (WLN)	Beaker SN, N3
Bluebell Inn	Cist (1m), E–W	Not cremated	1, child?	Head to the SE of cist	2 Beakers: 1. SN or HBSP, N2; 2. SN (ecn), N3
Brandon barrow	Cist (1.5m), SE–NW	Crouched, scorched/burnt bones	1, ?, ?	Burning to stones, soil, and bones in cist, Beaker behind head (SELS)	Beaker SN (ecn)
Cartington chamber	Cist or vault (?), E–W?	Enamel from 3 teeth	1?, ?, ?	Monoxylous coffin [2340–2060 BC], bracken (ELS?)	Beaker sherds, calfskin or kidskin with stitchmarks, flint scraper.
Dilston Park cist A	Cist (?), ENE–WSW	Partially burnt bone, teeth	Teeth from 1?, adult (17–20 years?)	Charcoal	3 Beakers: 1. SN, N/NR, 2. SN, N3, 3. SN, N/NR
Dilston Park cist B	Cist (?), ENE–WSW	None recovered	–	Vessels to SW end of cist, 'ashes' to SE side of cist	2 Beakers: 1. SN?, N/NR, 2. SN (ecn), N3
High Buston	Cist (1m), E–W	Not cremated	2: 1 adult, male?; 1 adult, ?	No mention whether bones articulated	Beaker SN (ecn) N2
Lilburn South Steads cist	Cist (0.95m), N–S	Not cremated	1, adult, female (teeth heavily worn)	Bones displaced, some long bones split longitudinally	Beaker SN (ecn) N2 sherds, bronze knife-dagger, jet button type 6a, flint blade
Rayheugh cairn 1	Cist (1.2m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, ?	Vessel behind shoulders, stone 'pillow' (ELS)	Beaker SN or HBSP, N2
Rosebrough Moor cairn 1	Cist (1m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult?, ?, traces only	Vessel in front of face (ERN)	Beaker SN (ecn), N2
Sacriston cist	Cist (1.17m), ESE–WNW	Not cremated	? 'much decayed'	?	Beaker SN (ecn), N2
Smalesmouth	Cist, ?	Not cremated	?		Beaker SN (ecn), N3
Summerhill cist 1	Not recorded	Crouched?	(?) 1, adult, female	Cannot verify correct remains	Beaker SN (ecn)
The Sneep	Cist (1.1m), SE–NW	Crouched	1, adult, female	Sand floor, hands on knees, vessel behind shoulder, flints near vessel mouth (NWRSW)	Beaker SN (ecn) N1/D, 2 flint scrapers, 5 flint flakes
Woodhorn	Cist, ?	Not cremated	1?	?	Beaker SN (ecn), N3

which feature orientation was recorded were laid in cists with an east–west orientation (as was one grave), another three cists east-south-east–west-north-west or east-north-east–west-south-west, four were north-east–south-west or south-east–north-west and one north–south. Within the cists where body position was recorded five had their heads to the easterly end (three of which lay on their left side facing south, another lay on his or her right side and faced north) and three had their heads towards the westerly end (two on their left-, one on their right-hand side). The 'east/left/south' pattern is that most commonly observed for males buried with Beakers in Yorkshire, where a much larger data set exists (Tuckwell 1975), and for North-East Scotland where TSN Beakers often accompanied adult males (Wilkin 2009, 43; cf. Shepherd 2012). It is not possible to draw any firm conclusions about orientation by sex based on the evidence from North-East England, though the patterns may be similar. TSN Beakers certainly accompanied adult burials at least, and SN Beakers more generally were selected for burial with adults of both sexes and with at least one child and one young adult.

By *c*.2200–2100 BC Beaker burial practice in the region constituted a distinct burial mode: an assemblage of body, a stone cist between 1m and 1.4m long, pot of a specific style, and usually an east–west bodily orientation. While the burials associated with AOC and Low-Carinated Beakers first established burial practice in the region, as far as we are aware, the placement of bodies in graves or above ground but covered with mounds did not continue or spread among local communities. Short cists and SN Beakers are found widely between Yorkshire and Aberdeenshire, and people in the North-East of England were clearly involved in intra-actions within this extended region. The assemblage of funerary practices found in North-East England by 2200 BC was partially the result of an initial impetus towards a novel way of treating some dead bodies and transforming some places which ultimately derived from distant places to the south of the region, but the most enduring impact emerged from a shared set of burial practices that developed across northern Britain in subsequent centuries in a rather different way than in southern Britain where, for instance, north–south burial orientations predominated. Through building cists, shaping pots, and burying the dead, a specific sense of becoming emerged with sufficient force to be carried forward, to form principles that could be reflected back upon and further translated, and to change the nature of place in an enduring way that would have cumulative effects.

But within this pattern there is diversity, including a further locally unusual burial with affinities wider afield: the log coffin burial from Cartington. In Britain, log coffin burials cluster in Yorkshire, eastern England, and Wessex, and they are also known in the Netherlands, Germany, and parts of central Europe (Ashbee 1960, 87; Melton et al. 2010, 798). The Cartington log coffin

was found within a cist which 'was protected by a rudely constructed course of arches which extended the entire length of the grave' (Dixon 1913, 81). When the coffin was discovered it was found to contain only the enamel from three teeth, a scrap of stitched calfskin or kidskin, a layer of bracken, some sherds from a Beaker, a scraper, and some flint fragments (Dixon 1913, 81–2). The Beaker was described as 'neatly ornamented from top to bottom with plain horizontal lines', but the sherds were lost before a suitable identification was arrived at (Tait 1965, 26). The calf- or kidskin has been variously interpreted as the remains of garments or evidence that the body was 'wrapped in the skin of a kid or calf' (Grinsell 1953, 250), and while it might have had other uses (pouch, sheath, etc.), the fact that a coffin burial from Gristhorpe, Yorkshire, was wrapped in an animal skin (possibly tanned: Melton et al. 2010, 805) supports the idea of some funerary wrapping. The Cartington coffin was radiocarbon-dated to 2340–2060 BC in the 1980s AD. This is a rather wide date range, and the wood could be producing a date earlier than the use of the coffin. The skeleton found within the log coffin from Gristhorpe has been radiocarbon dated to *c.*2200–2050 BC (Melton et al. 2010), although it contained a Merthyr Mawr type flat bronze dagger blade with whalebone pommel, a flint knife and a bark container, and no Beaker. Emerging research suggests that such coffins were used from *c.*2300 to 1700 BC (Melton et al. 2010). The Cartington monoxylic coffin and burial may derive from the earlier part of this sequence. The Cartington burial illustrates successive events of containment, perhaps wrapping the body in hide clothing or a shroud, placing it within a wood coffin, and covering it with stone in a way which both commemorated and distanced the body of the dead through successive nested funerary transformations.

What implications, if any, do Kirkhaugh, Cartington, and High Knowes have in comparison with other sites for understanding social differentiation during this period? In a study of Beaker burials in the Upper Thames Valley Sofaer Derevenski (2002, 202) noted that grave length was not directly correlated with stature or sex, nor with the number of artefacts placed in the graves. It is not possible to compare the grave size with the 'wealth' of the artefacts for the disturbed grave at High Knowes or the above-ground deposit at Kirkhaugh. The Kirkhaugh barrow was 7.3m in diameter, and the remains of the disturbed cairn at High Knowes were around 2m in diameter. There are plenty of examples of larger barrows from later centuries in the region covering cists which contained no artefacts at all, while the presence of covering mounds is difficult to ascertain for many 'isolated cists' due to differences in subsequent land-use: for instance, the Dilston Park cists were recovered from land subjected to repeated ploughing by the beginning of the twentieth century AD and no mounds were noted upon discovery. The Cartington burial was not covered by any mound that survived into the twentieth

century AD, but cut into a natural 'eminence' close to the head of a stream (Dixon 1913), and the coffin interior of 1.2m is a similar size to at least 18 other cists. By comparison, the smallest cist likely to be from before 2200 BC, North Hazelrigg, contained three Beakers while the 1m-long cist at Bluebell Inn contained the remains of a child with two Beakers, and two cists at Dilston Park contained multiple Beakers, one yielding the teeth from a young adult. This suggests that larger cists did not correlate with a larger number of more durable artefacts any more than with larger mounds; in fact, some multiple Beakers were associated specifically with the bodies of younger people during the early part of the Beaker period in the region. Indeed, while the majority of burials for which age has been ascertained were of adults, these examples of young adult and child burials from this period suggest that burial was not entirely reserved for adult males. While there may have been people bringing exotic artefacts into the region during this period there is little evidence that these had a dramatic impact on social differentiation or any competitiveness surrounding funerary events. Those (perhaps incoming, probably male) adults associated with archery, such as those buried at Kirkhaugh and perhaps High Knowes, might have been rare exceptions rather than the rule. In fact, the presence of such archers across the country receives a great deal of interest, but probably accounts for a tiny proportion of the burials recovered: only six such 'archer' burials have been recovered from 120 cists containing Beakers in North-East Scotland (Wilkin, pers. comm.). The presence of such burials in North-East England indicates an awareness of rare burial traditions practised only sparsely over wide areas of Britain and northern Europe, suggesting either a high degree of cultural connectedness and mobility for a small number of people or a widespread understanding of a specific and possibly historically short-lived category of person in life or towards death.

Burials of uncremated remains with daggers, knives, and jet *c*.2250–1850 BC

New materials and artefacts became available in the region around *c*.2200 BC, particularly jet and bronze. Jet is a hard black fossil resin which burns and can be rubbed to generate a weak electrostatic charge. In Britain true jet can only be obtained from near Whitby in Yorkshire although it is possible to use more common cannel coal or lignite as substitute materials. In a study of jet and jet-like artefacts in the National Museum of Scotland likely to date between *c*.2200 and *c*.1800 BC, Sheridan and Davis (2002) were able to show that most of the fusiform jet beads, spacer plates, and v-perforated buttons were made of true jet, while most disc beads (thought to be slightly later in date) were made of

cannel coal or lignite. Jet beads were fairly fragile, and individual beads might be lost or broken: when this happened they were replaced with beads made of local materials. Those necklaces with few non-jet beads show 'relatively little sign of wear, and were apparently complete when buried, suggesting that they had not been worn for very long before being consigned to the grave' (822). Where some beads of cannel coal were included in spacer-plate necklaces the bead forms matched the rest of the necklace (822–3). Those spacer-plate necklaces that combined jet, lignite, and cannel coal 'seem to have been incomplete when buried, and some or most components show heavy wear, suggesting a considerable period of use' (823). This combination may have resulted from necklace curation and repair, perhaps during the lifetime of a person wearing the necklace or perhaps over several generations. Such items may have been inalienable from a community (family, clan, cult, etc.). There is some indication that beads might be recycled from one necklace in constructing a new one; for instance, the Monybachach necklace seems to have combined beads from four or five originary necklaces (823). In Scotland at least, jet necklaces were seemingly found with the bones of women (816).

The description of the Angerton beads, lost since their discovery in 1842 (Cowen 1966), suggests seven spacer plates and a v-perforated button and these might either represent exotic jet fixtures of a necklace otherwise composed of organic elements which did not survive to recovery or (as seems most likely) poor recovery in which smaller jet or jet-like beads were missed. A spacer-plate necklace was also found at Kyloe, while a necklace consisting of around 90 disc beads and 10 fusiform beads was recovered from a cist at Blawearie (Greenwell 1877, 421–2; Kinnes and Longworth 1985, 103). No human remains were recovered from these cists.

Six uncremated burials included v-perforated jet buttons. These are particularly interesting since v-perforated bone buttons were a component of early Beaker burials across mainland Europe but have not been found in the region, while the jet buttons do not appear until after *c*.2200 BC. Jet buttons were buried with crouched burials (one apparently female) in two north–south cists at Great Tosson, one with an Food Vessel Urn and one a Vase Food Vessel; with a man crouched in an east–west cist at Wooler; with the remains of a woman, later disturbed; with an SN Beaker and a bronze knife-dagger in a north–south cist at Lilburn South Steads; in upcast from a robbed north–south grave with a late Beaker at Chatton Sandyford; and seemingly as a fastener for a jet necklace at Angerton. These different associations are spatially and perhaps temporally varied: the association with Food Vessels comes from Upper Coquetdale, the graves from the Chatton Hills, while the very large button from Lilburn South Steads (Figure 4.4) may be earlier based on the ceramic association. The cist at Lilburn South Steads was disturbed, although

it is not clear when, and any of the objects might have been added at that point. The buttons from around the Milfield Basin are all Shepherd's type 1 and 2, at least some of which date to *c.*2250–1950 BC (Shepherd 2009, 340). Most of the Type 2 buttons across Britain have been associated with beads, suggesting they were necklace fasteners. Most of the jet objects in North-East England were found in northern Northumberland, associated with north–south to north-east–south-west orientated burials (Map 4.2).

The materials to produce copper-alloy objects did not exist in North-East England either. Likely points of origin for the copper include Ross Island in South-West Ireland (O'Brien 2004), sources in Wales that produced copper from *c.*2100 BC and perhaps earlier (Timberlake 2009), possible sources in South-West and Central Scotland, and perhaps as-yet unidentified Cumbrian sources which may have been exploited given the lure of stone from the Cumbrian mountains in the Neolithic period (Topping, pers. comm.). It also seems likely there was an active community of metalworkers smelting and casting copper-alloy objects in North-East Scotland (the 'Migdale-Marnock tradition': Needham 2004). Contacts with people from these regions, whether direct or indirect, seem very likely in the flow of early metals into North-East England. Five of the eight burials with bronze blades in North-East England come from the same part of northern Northumberland as north–south cists and most of the jet ornaments, though the only burial with a copper-alloy blade to have a north–south orientation also has a jet button, while the other three are found along rivers in southern Northumberland (Table 4.4; Map 4.2).

Figure 4.4 Jet button from Lilburn South Steads. Photograph courtesy of Andrew Parkin
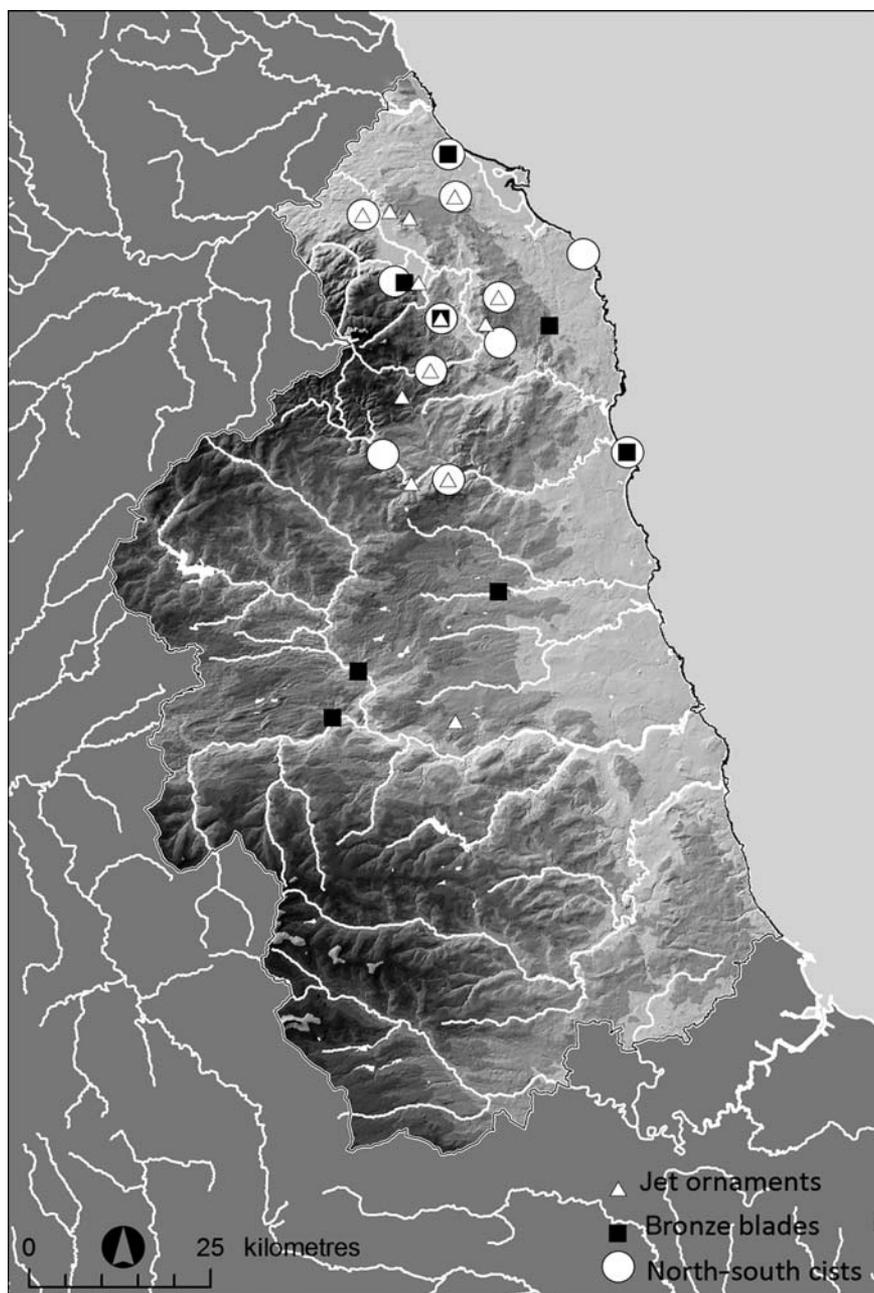
Map 4.2 Distribution of all burials with jet ornaments, bronze daggers, or in north–south cists

Table 4.4 Key features of burial practices for remains buried with copper-alloy daggers or knife-daggers

Location	Feature (length)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials	Artefacts
Allerwash cist	Cist (1.25m), E–W	Partly disarticulated	1, adult, male (lower body only) [2199–2030 BC]	Rushes, shale or coal, earth/stones dagger in 'hands' position (WLN)	Masterton flat riveted bronze dagger blade
Angerton cist	Cist, ?	Not cremated	1, adult, female?	?	Bronze blade, 2 flint knife blades, flint?, ?7 jet spacer plates, ?1 jet button
Bowchester	Cist (1m), ENE–WSW	Crouched	1, adult, male? (lesions on parietal)	Blade found while sieving fill (WRS)	Flat riveted bronze knife-dagger blade
Cheswick cist	Cist (0.8m square)	Not cremated, 'traces' only	?	?	Ridgeway flat riveted bronze dagger blade
Lilburn South Steads cist	Cist (0.95m), N–S	Not cremated	1, adult, female (teeth heavily worn)	Bones displaced, some long bones split longitudinally	Beaker SN (ecn) N2 sherds, bronze knife-dagger, jet button type 6a, flint blade
North Charlton cist 2	Cist (1.8m?), E–W	Extended?	1, ?, ?	Dagger described as lying on chest	Masterton bronze dagger blade
Reaverhill Farm cist	Cist (1.2m), NE–SW	Not cremated	1, adult (30–40), male (periodontal disease) [2135–1951 BC]	Remains partial or disturbed	Ridgeway type bronze dagger blade, hilt likely bone, ivory, or antler
Warkworth cairn cist 1	Cist (1.1m), NE–SW	Crouched?	1?	Head to E	FV, flat riveted knife-dagger blade, flint flake

Bronze or copper-alloy flat riveted blades are divided into daggers, of which Gerloff (1975) classified several types, and knife-daggers which tend to be shorter and narrower than daggers. The daggers from Allerwash (Figure 1.3) and North Charlton cist 2 are of Masterton type, and bone from Allerwash has yielded a radiocarbon date of 2199–2030 BC. This meshes well with a radiocarbon date of 2210–1940 BC (GrA-19054) from cremated human bone accompanied by a Masterton type dagger at Gask Hill, Fife (Baker et al. 2003, 117). The dagger from Cheswick is Ridgeway group, while that from from Reaverhill (Figure 1.3) is a Ridgeway group variant. Bone from Reaverhill has been radiocarbon dated to 2135–1951 BC, and cremated bones buried with a very similar dagger to Reaverhill from the Hill of West Mains, Auchterhouse, Angus, date to 2030–1880 BC (68.2 per cent; GrA-19990: Baker et al. 2003, 117). The composition of the Reaverhill dagger seems particularly rich in tin at 29 per cent (Page and Walker-Turner 1991, 130) compared with less than 17 per cent for most daggers of the period (Northover in Cressey and Sheridan 2003, 60–1), but the surface of the blade was measured using x-ray fluorescence rather than the destructive sampling deployed by Northover. The results may reflect some surface enrichment but are more likely to indicate the leaching out of tin from within the blade (Dolfini, pers. comm.). Sampling of the blade interior would be needed to better understand how the tin and copper have intra-acted within the blade and contiguous media over the millennia. The Reaverhill dagger is of a rare type found across Britain, particularly in the south. The blades from Bowchester and Warkworth are classified as knife-daggers. Dates available for flat riveted knife-daggers range from 2150–1910 BC (92 per cent; Beech Hill House, Perth and Kinross: Baker et al. 2003, 123) to 1940–1630 BC at Gairneybank (Baker et al. 2003).

Both jet ornaments and copper-alloy daggers are prime examples of artefacts conventionally interpreted as prestige goods and thereby as indicators of elevated social status for the deceased: they are exotic, originating outside the region, they were polished, bright, and enduring, they require craft expertise to manufacture, and they are rare among the burials of the region. Those buried with daggers or jet, and/or those burying them or interceding with their remains, were arguably tied into long-distance relationships, some perhaps based on direct interactions in the Milfield Basin (and potentially visits to similar monument complexes outside the region). In addition, the north–south burials in which jet was most often found were far more common in southern Britain at the time. I do not doubt the special value of these objects, but this need not necessarily be associated with a prestigious goods economy nor with competition and self-aggrandizement. Harding and Healy (2007, 243) point out that most of the personal ornaments in the graves at Raunds, Northamptonshire, were placed by the body, rather than worn, and again this raises the possibility that things added to the grave were not the possessions of the deceased. One way to assess whether jet ornaments and bronze daggers

could be emblems of either rank or wealth is to seek evidence for correlations with the quantity of objects in the grave (noting that a strong negative correlation may actually be an argument *for* an emblem of authority or even rank that required no appeal to wealth in the funeral), grave size, or the location of the grave with respect to mortuary monuments and the size of such monuments. Another is to consider the location of these graves with respect to major monuments, rock art panels, and other enduring legacies of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age activities, which I will explore in the next chapter.

   None of the cists used to bury those with copper-alloy daggers are shorter than 80cm, but there are only eight in total. The distribution reflects an overall pattern of durable objects preferentially occurring in larger cists (see Chart 4.2). Three of the eight dagger burials are associated with other grave goods, with Lilburn South Steads associated with another potentially prestigious object in the form of a large jet button, and the burial at Angerton was accompanied by at least the spacer plates from a jet necklace and two flint knives and another flint artefact as well as the copper-alloy dagger or knife-dagger. Both of these cists were only *c.*1m long and do not seem to have been covered with a substantial memorial in the form of a mound. Only two dagger burials were found within surviving round mounds. The location of the North Charlton cist with respect to the mound is unclear, as is the centrality and primacy of that at Warkworth which seemingly lay at the centre of a 12m-diameter mound mostly composed of beach pebbles but damaged before it could be recorded. There is certainly no correlation with 'wealth' across the group, but since accumulations of 'wealth' do not seem to be part of the mortuary practices for the Early Bronze Age in Britain at all it is probably better to read this weak 'negative correlation' as indicating that either: (*a*) there were no important measures of wealth, and that authority, rank, or social status were spheres that did not rest on wealth or (*b*) wealth was measured in terms that did not translate into durable grave goods—for instance, food. The latter explanation is less convincing as, if food were understood in terms of wealth, we might expect elaborations of the ceramic repertoire and the common existence of multiple ceramics in graves, or elaborations of places associated with food production, processing, and storage (fields, granaries, houses), or an emphasis on the inclusion of animal remains at mortuary sites. As we have seen, two or three vessels were sometimes found in graves, but (*a*) this is rare and restricted to specific vessel types and (*b*) there is no sense that the graves are 'over-provided' with vessels or other foodstuffs. The fact remains that there is no evidence for the kind of over-provision that, for instance, Fitzpatrick (2011, 227) identifies for the Amesbury Archer in common with other European Bell Beaker graves— even at Kirkhaugh, where each item in the burial assemblage is singular. Angerton is perhaps the most notable exception. It is possible that grave

goods were metonymic—a part presencing a greater 'whole'—and that one vessel full of food or drink manifested control over a much larger quantity of such victuals. But the absence of animal remains seems to stand against such symbolism, unless we postulate wrapping the dead in since-decayed hides could be read in this way.

We could also bore down further into the value and potency of daggers in the precise interaction between dagger, routine practice, corpse, burial site, and ritual activity. In particular, the burials with copper-alloy blades at Allerwash, Angerton, Lilburn South Steads, and Reaverhill were either only partial burials to start with or were disturbed following the decay of the flesh, and it seems that the blades were added or moved late in the mortuary activity rather than worn by the dead. At Allerwash, only bones from the pelvis and lower limbs were recovered. The excavators argued that '[o]nly the lower half of the skeleton was deposited, and at a time when it was already in a skeletal condition' (Newman and Miket 1973, 92), and that the skeleton had been arranged so that the pelvis was placed where the skull should be and a tibia lay above that (Figure 4.5). The dagger was placed where the hands might have been were this an intact crouched burial. While it is also possible that the other bones were removed some time after the body decayed, the absence of any small bones might support the excavators' analysis (Gamble and Fowler forthcoming). Gamble's 2011 re-analysis of the bones indicates that this was most likely not a female adult, as originally reported by Newman and Miket, but an adult who was probably male (Gamble and Fowler forthcoming). Indeed, it seems that the other bronze daggers (as opposed to knife-daggers) found with single burials in Britain so far assessed are with males (Needham 2011). While it is difficult to decipher the vagaries of the 1842 report, the skeleton at Angerton is described as mostly present but the skull was noted as

1. Masterton-style Flat Riveted Blade

N

1 metre
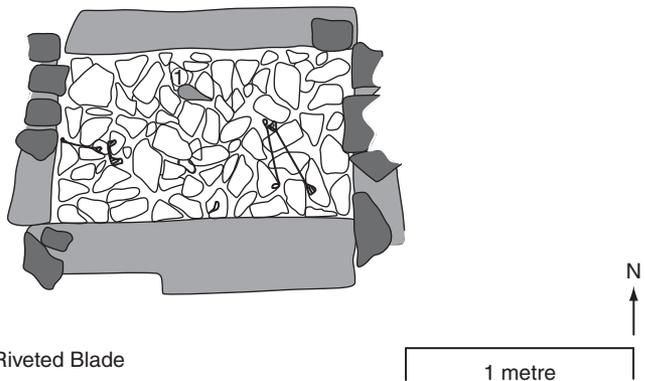
Figure 4.5 Burial with bronze dagger blade in a cist at Allerwash. Drawn by Sheila Severn Newton, after Newman and Miket (1973)

Figure 4.6 The contents of the cist at Lilburn South Steads (West Lilburn) preceding excavation

Source: Collingwood et al. (1946, plate VIII), reproduced courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne

missing (Cowen 1966, 226). At Lilburn South Steads (Figure 4.6) the cist was 'filled with a mixture of soil and gravel together with some large water-rounded stones', while charcoal was found throughout the fill along with a piece of 'chalk' 2cm wide. Two long bones were described as 'split' when found, and bones and artefacts showed signs of having been displaced since first interment: bones and sherds of the Beaker were found at different depths in the fill throughout the cist. Some bones were missing (basal skull bones, most of the mandible) but so were epiphyses to longbones, suggesting erosion was at least partly responsible. Nonetheless, someone had interfered with the remains but not removed (or indeed perhaps introduced) the bronze knife-dagger blade. Some of the bones of the man in his 30s who was buried at Reaverhill exhibited localized scorching, mainly along his left side. The bones were 'in disorder' when the cist was opened, and Gamble noted that some were burnt to a degree sufficient to produce white areas with transverse cracking (Gamble and Fowler forthcoming).

   The skeleton discovered in a cist at North Charlton was described as having the dagger lying on its chest (Tate 1891). The Bowchester blade was recovered

when sieving soil which had filled the cist. While it seems likely that the Reaver-hill dagger was hafted during burial due to the erosion 'ghost' at the base of the blade, it is unclear whether all of these 'prestigious' objects were complete when buried, or whether some were disarticulated or broken during funerary events (dagger pommels have been found without blades at some sites elsewhere (Woodward et al. 2005, 38), and heavily damaged dagger parts at others (Brück 2004*a*, 319–20)). There are numerous cases elsewhere where the traces of scabbards or wrappings encasing the blades have been indentified, suggesting that the shiny blades were not on display in the grave (Brück 2004a, 319). Woodward et al. (2005, 35–8) note that a third of a corpus of knife-daggers from southern England were evidently use-worn when deposited but that only 22 per cent of the daggers they examined were so worn. It is also open to question whether all knives and daggers from graves belonged to the deceased person, to others close to them or officiating at the funeral, and/or to the community at large or some section of the community. They may have played an important role in extended funerary rites, being brought into contact with the deceased as the cist was about to be sealed, cutting away and separating the dead from the living.

Bronze daggers can also be contextualized alongside flint knives, which appear in either burials associated with Food Vessels or, interestingly, more commonly in burials with no pottery, and arguably enter the funerary sphere around the same time as the bronze daggers. Indeed, flint knives have been found placed around the body of crouched burials (Table 4.5), and as unburnt items deposited with the cremated remains of the dead (discussed below). With 18 examples, flint knives are the most common tool type from the mortuary dataset, though there is considerable variation in size and shape. Most are much smaller than bronze dagger or knife-dagger blades. Some are blades which may have been used for cutting and scraping but were not finely and symmetrically crafted, but most are substantial symmetrical oval, leaf- or diamond-shaped blades. Several are impressive diamond-shaped blades like the Tarset dagger, for which there is no contextual information (Figure 1.3). As Butler (2005, 172) has argued, these would have required the specialist efforts of an experienced flint-knapper. The presence of flint knives in graves should be treated as just as significant as the deposition of copper-alloy blades. As with the bronze daggers, where the age and sex of the human remains buried with flint knives are known these tend to be adults and probably male. We could suggest that in some respects the fact that the blades had sharp edges was more important than the material from which they were made—but it is also notable that while copper-alloy daggers are not found in County Durham flint knives were common around the East Durham Plateau as well as in northern Northumberland throughout the Early Bronze Age (Map 4.3). The flows of bronze and jet do not seem to have been directed through the south of the region, then, and some distinctive local patterns emerge alongside a broadly shared ritual use of knives or daggers.
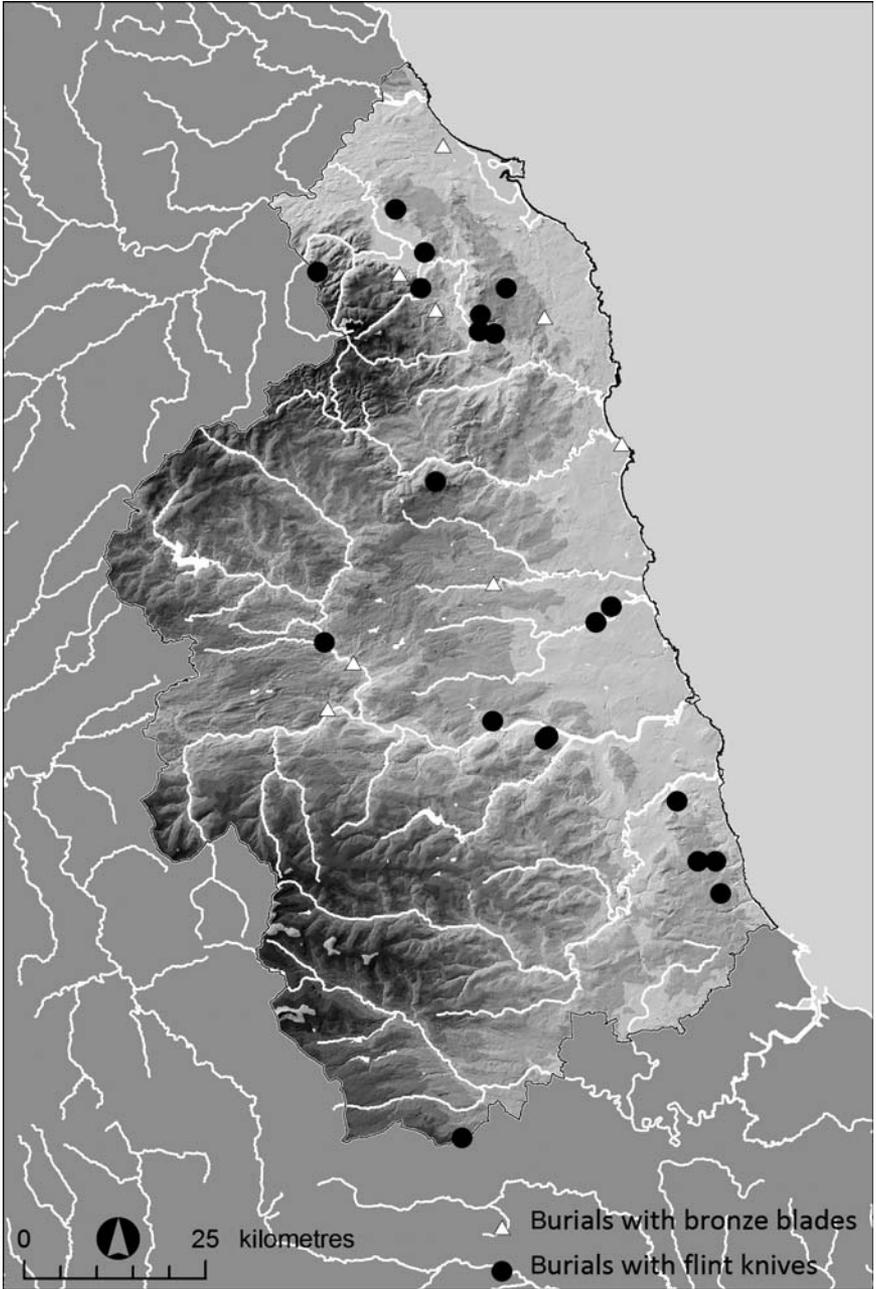
Map 4.3 Distribution of all burials with bronze daggers or flint knives

Table 4.5 Flint knives with crouched burials or in cists where no remains were recovered

Location	Flint knife description, length; other artefacts present	Cist length, orientation	Age and sex of body (orientation)	Notes
Batter Law round barrow	Oval plano-convex knife with fine retouch on blade, 10cm	1.12m, E–W	Adult male, c.35 (WRS)	Knife in front of knees
Bedlington cist 3	–	'large', ?	?	–
Bewes Hill	Retouched blade, 6cm	?	?	Depicted in Figure 1.3
Blawearie kerbed cairn cist B	Knife with bilateral invasive retouch, broken, 4 cm	0.8m, SE–NW	?	Found in cist along with jet necklace of 100 disc beads
Doddington	Mottled grey flint, blade on right side, retouched. 7cm. Flint flake, stitched hide	1m, E–W	Adult, c.24–30, male? (WRS)	Food vessel placed close to the head
Harehope Hill	Speckled grey flint, retouched on both faces, platform butt, 7cm	1.4m, NE–SW	?	Knife placed at NE end of cist
Hasting Hill cist 1	Translucent oval knife 6cm	0.9m, E–W	Adult male 40–55 (WRS) and see text	See Table 4.6 and text
How Tallon burial 2	Leaf-shaped knife with finely serrated edge, 7cm, and plano-convex scraper/knife, 5cm. 2 barbed and tanged arrowheads. Food Vessel sherds	(No cist), ?, E–W	Adult, male(?), 'elderly' with worn teeth, head to east	Objects 'close to the body'
Summerhill (Blaydon) cist 2	–	0.9m, NNE–SSW	Adult, male 26–30 (NNELE)	Knife placed behind the head
Trow Rocks	Plano-convex knife	1.2m, NNW–SSE	Adult, male? (SSERE)	Knife placed in front of face
Warkshaugh Farm barrow cist 1	Mottled grey knife. With Food Vessel.	1m, E–W	?	?

Burials with Beaker pottery *c.* 2200 BC–1850 BC

Various styles of Beaker pottery were deposited with the dead in the later third millennium and the first 150 years of the second (Tables 4.6 and 4.7; Map 4.4). Some of the trends evident among identifiably earlier Beaker burials continued

among the later ones; for instance, the burials at Clara Vale and Shipley practiced east–west orientations, as did the burials at Summerhill cist 4 and Hasting Hill cist 1. Both Clara Vale and Summerhill cist 4 were buried with heads to the east, lying on their left and facing south, again continuing earlier burial traditions. It is possible these are roughly contemporary with SN Beakers *c.*2250–2100 BC. Other vessel types are likely to be later (Table 4.7), and the burials in which they are found exhibit different orientations, including north–south.

The Hasting Hill cist 1 burial has an east–west orientation in common with earlier Beaker burials, but the orientation of head to the west, lying on the right-hand side is unusual for an adult male from earlier periods. The skeleton has now been dated to 2194–1977 BC (Ox-A 26255). The hands of this man in his 40s or 50s covered his face. This burial is of particular interest as it is the 'richest' in terms of the range and variety of grave goods, and because it included the remains of two other individuals (discussed below). The nature of these goods is fascinating. As well as the oval flint knife placed in front of his forearm and the Beaker in front of his face and hands, there was a bone pin behind his shoulders, which may have tied a garment or secured a pouch or 'shroud', an antler tine pick tip at the base of the cist, five periwinkle shells, fish vertebrae and teeth, bird-bones, and a pile of bones which were thought on discovery to be non-human and which on re-examination in 2011 included weathered bones from a human child around 5 years old and cremated human bone. There are various ways we could interpret this richly textured deposit, but it does not seem to incorporate insignia of high rank or prestigious items. The fish bones, bird bones, and shells may have been a bundle of potent materials, perhaps used by the man in life, perhaps strewn in his grave by mourners or a ritual specialist. They speak of the sea, the shore, and the sky. Bundles of materials like this feature in magical and spiritual acts recorded by ethnographers, such as 'medicine bundles' in North America (e.g. McAllister 1965). The antler tine may be part of this bundle or may have been broken from a tool used to carve out the pit in which the cist was built and left due its association with death and the dead. The child's bones may have been part of the bundle of potent materials, may have been intimate to the man in other ways, or may have been added to the cist at a later date. Further radiocarbon dating could delve further into this, but such multiple deposits raise the possibility that this cist was reopened, perhaps more than once, during the sequence of activity that resulted in a monumentalized burial ground on this hilltop (see below). It may be that especially good preservation is responsible for the survival of this faunal assemblage but as a whole this deposit suggests a highly ritualized funeral in which the deceased was orientated with his head to the west, prevented from seeing or showing his face, and sealed away. Specific substances from particular bodies and locales were assembled and placed in a specific configuration around the body, either during the funeral or later.
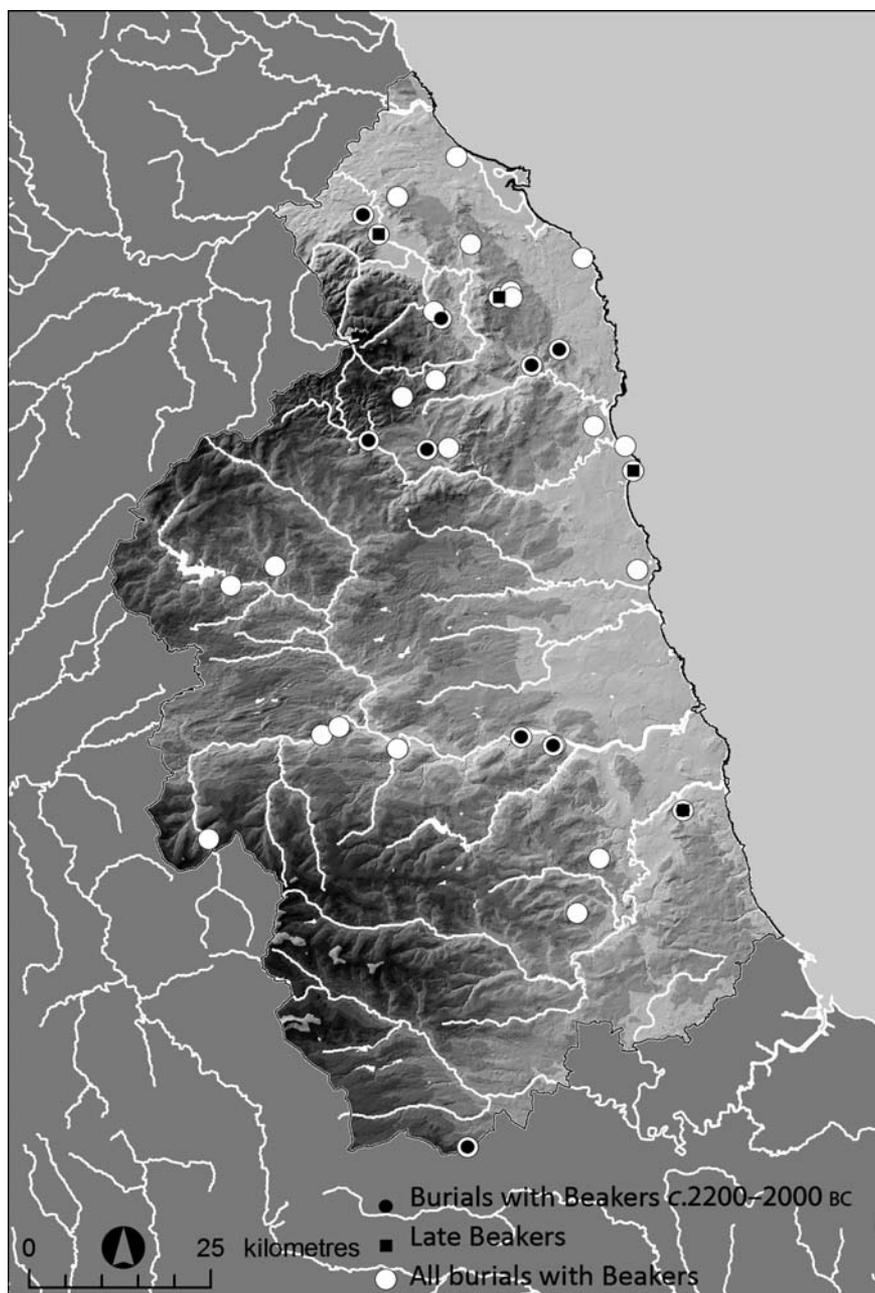
Map 4.4 Distribution of burials with Beaker pottery likely to date to *c.*2200–1850 BC (excluding SN Beakers)

Table 4.6 Key features of burial practices for Beaker burials which probably date to later than 2200 BC but earlier than 2000 BC

Location	Feature (length)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes)	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials	Artefacts
Clara Vale (Ryton)	Cist (1.1m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, male (? based on skull)	Beaker close under left arm (ELS)	Beaker LN (early series), N3
Ellsnook	Cist (0.69m), NW–SE	None recovered	–	Beaker at W end of cist, crushed	Beaker SMB, N/NR
Farnham	?	Not cremated	?	?	Beaker TMC
Hasting Hill cist 1 (Trechmann find 9)	Cist (0.9m), E–W	1 crouched, 1 cremated, 1 exposed	3, 1 adult male (40–55) 2194–1977 BC (mild osteoarthritis), 1 adult?, 1 child (5 years)	Beaker in front of face, arms raised, knife in front of forearm, pin behind shoulders, tine at base of cist (WRS)	Beaker ?HBSP N/NR, bone pin, flint knife, antler tine pick tip
Huntlaw Quarry	Cist (1.2m), ?	Crouched	1, ?, ?	Vessel close to skull	Beaker WC
Pace Hill	Pit (1.1m), NW–SE	No bone recovered	–	?	Beaker LN (earlier series)
Shipley	Cist (0.85m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, female (cut mark on L humerus)	Vessel behind head, ochre under head and near shoulder (WRS)	Beaker LN (earlier series), N4, 2 pellets of red ochre
Summerhill (Blaydon) cist 4	Cist (1.05m), E–W	1 crouched, 1 cremated	1, adolescent (18 years), female, 1, ?, ?	*Cannot verify correct remains*. Vessel behind head in NE corner (ELS)	Beaker HBSP

Table 4.7 Key features of burial practices for Beaker burials which probably date to between 2100 and 1850 BC

Location	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes)	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials	Artefacts
Chatton Sandyford cairn 1 grave 1	Grave (1.5m), N–S. Robbed/disturbed	None recovered	–	–	Beaker GSP, N/NR. 2 v-bored jet buttons in upcast (type 1, 2)
Chatton Sandyford cairn 1 grave 2	Grave (d2m)	None recovered	–	Vessel at north end of grave	Beaker GSP, N/NR
Chatton Sandyford cairn 1 grave 3	Grave (1.4m), N–S. Robbed/disturbed	None recovered	–	Vessel sherds found in upcast from robbing	Beaker WC?, S4/FV
Low Hauxley cist 1	Cist (0.6m), ?	Cremated	1, adult, ?	Bones not within vessel	Beaker GSP
Milfield North henge pit B	Grave pit (2.26m), SE–NW	No bone recovered	–	Scraper at base, pot sherds throughout fill	Flint scraper, Beaker sherds LN (late series)
Milfield North henge pit C	Pit (2.72m), E–W	No bone recovered	–	Charcoal layer under layer of large stones [2430–1970 BC]	Beaker GSP

While Hasting Hill cist 1 is unusual there are other deposits which hint at the value of a whole range of materials, each of which may just be the surviving fraction of a 'bundle'. Flint flakes are a common find in cists. Ochre (some-times known as 'ruddle' or 'reddle'), a strongly coloured red, orange, or yellow mineral, occurs locally to some burial sites, and has been found in pellets in a cist at Shipley next to the head and shoulders of a woman buried with a LN Beaker behind her head. She shared the same bodily orientation as the man from Hasting Hill cist 1, and her left humerus exhibits a cut mark. A piece of chalk was found in the cist with the woman buried with the knife-dagger, large v-perforated jet bead, and SN Beaker at Lilburn South Steads. In both these cases the minerals could have been used to colour the Beakers and/or the bodies. A lump of coal was found in the cist at Allerwash. Jet beads and buttons may have been spiritually charged components of such bundles as much as standard dress items—indeed, while they were dress items to some this is not to say that everyone used them in that way. All of these burials probably date to *c.*2200–2000 BC. Furthermore, two burials at How Tallon

were accompanied by hundreds of Grove Snail shells, and snail shells were also found strewn around cist 4 at Hasting Hill.

The graves at Chatton Sandyford belong to the group of north–south burials in northern Northumberland after 2250 BC that had distant affinities which were not shared widely within the rest of the region. The Beakers from graves 1 and 2 are extremely similar. Other complex burial grounds with north–south burials and jet ornaments emerged around the same time in the wider region, as at Harehope cairn, Peebleshire (Jobey 1980a; Fowler and Wilkin forthcoming). The burials at Milfield North henge also attest to a new place for late Beaker burials, while the cremated remains buried in a cist at Low Hauxley with a Beaker illustrate the intertwining of Beaker burial practices with a new way to transform the dead.

Uncremated burials with Food Vessel pottery, *c*.2150–1850 BC

Some time after *c*.2150 BC Food Vessel pottery was selected for deposition with the dead in some short cist burials (see Table 4.8; Map 4.5). The only burials for which local radiocarbon dates exist are with Urns and Vases. Well House Farm yielded an Urn and miniature Vase with a shoulder groove and lugs; the base of each vessel was marked with a cruciform arrangement of comb impressions three rows across. A fusiform jet or shale bead was found between the exterior faces of the cist slabs at the south corner of the cist, suggesting it had fallen in during or after the funeral (Figure 4.7). A charcoal sample from the stone packing between the cist slabs and the side of the pit gave a date in the range of 2200–1780 BC (GU1340: Gates 1981, 48). When dated, the bones

Figure 4.7 Urn and miniature Vase Food Vessels, jet bead, and flint from the cist at Well House Farm. Photograph courtesy of Andrew Parkin
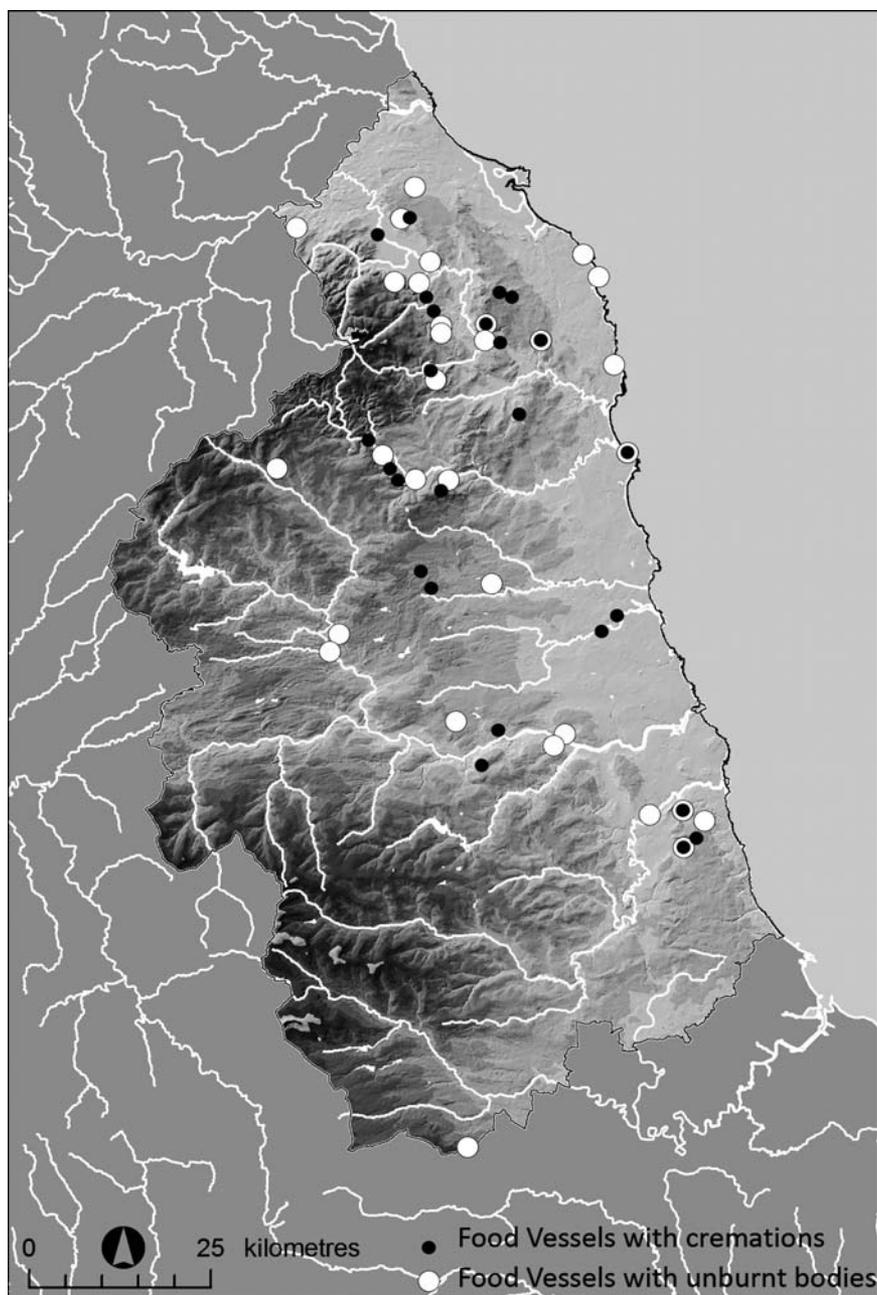
Map 4.5 Distribution of burials with Food Vessel pottery

Table 4.8 Key features of uncremated remains buried with Food Vessels, arranged in order: Bowls (BFV), Vases (VFV), Urns (FVU), then unclassified Food Vessels (FV) (only those deposits where at least feature orientation, type, and either dimensions, body position, or skeletal details are known have been included from a total of 50 burials of unburnt remains with Food Vessels in the overall dataset; all 32 of these burials were found in cists except Copt Hill grave 3 which was one of several features cut into the Neolithic round barrow)

Location	Feature (length)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes)	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials	Artefacts
Cheviot Walk Wood cist 1	Cist (1m), N–S	Disturbed	?	Sherds in upcast from disturbance	BFV
Dour Hill	Cist (1.4m), E–W	Skull fragments only. Disturbed by second burial in cist	1, child (6–9 months)	Hazelnut shell	BFV, VFV
Kyloe	Cist (0.72m), N–S	No bone recovered	–	Disturbed upon discovery, charcoal present	BFV, jet necklace (fusiform, spacer plates)
Dour Hill	Cist (1.4m), E–W	Possibly disturbed	1, child (c.11 years)	Sandy silt and gravel in fill	VFV, BFV
Benthall cist 2	Cist (0.85m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, female?	Pot in front of feet (WRS)	VFV
Blawearie cairn 1 cist A	Cist (1m), NW–SE	None recovered	–	?	VFV
Broomhill cist 1	Cist (0.9m), N–S	Skull fragments only recovered	1, child c.2 years, ?	Vessel near head, head to N	VFV
Doddington	Cist (1m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult (24–30?), male?	Vessel placed close to head (WRS)	VFV, flint knife, flake, stitched hide
Harbottle Peels cairn cist 2	Cist (1m), N–S	No bone recovered	–	?	VFV
Harbottle Peels cairn cist 3	Cist (1m), ENE–WSW	No bone recovered	–	Vessel in N corner of cist	VFV
Hasting Hill cist 2	Cist (0.75m), NNW–SSE	Crouched	1, adult, male	Hands and vessel in front of face, flint saw to rear of head, flint flake near feet (NNWRE)	VFV, flint saw, flint flake

Hasting Hill cist 3	Cist (0.65m), NW–SE	Crouched	1, child (1 year), ? [1931–1756 BC]	Vessel behind head, backfill limestone rubble and earth (SRE)	VFV, flint fragment, ox tooth
Hasting Hill cist 4	Cist (0.63m), E–W	Cremated	?	Bones and ceramic fragments intermixed	VFV fragments, Accessory Vessel, flint core, flint flake
How Tallon burial 2	Cist, ?	Not cremated	1, adult (50 years +), male?	Head to E, *bos* tooth and objects 'near to the bones'	VFV fragments, flint knife, barbed and tanged arrowhead, plano-convex scraper/knife, arrowhead
Pitland Hills, barrow 1, cist 1	Cist (1.3m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult (40–50 years?), male? (teeth worn flat)	L hand by side, R arm 'across the chest', head on hammer stone, vessel SW corner, clay fill (WRS)	VFV, hammerstone
Seafield Farm cist 1	Cist (1.1m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, male?	Arms by side, vessel in NW corner and in front of face (WLN)	VFV
Steeple Hill cist	Cist (1.2m), E–W	1 crouched, 1 cremated	2: 1 adult male, 1 child ? (cremated)	Head to W, vessels in front of chest, cremation in 1 vessel	2 VFV
Summerhill (Blaydon) cist 3	Cist (1m), NNE–SSW	Crouched	1, ?, ?	Vessel near skull, (NNELSE)	VFV
Wether Hill stone cist	Cist (?), E–W	No bone recovered	–	Barley grain [2020–1745 BC]	Fragments from 3 FV, inc 1 VFV
Well House Farm cist	Cist (1.1m), NE–SW	No bone recovered	–	Vessel S and NE corners, flint flake SW corner, bead S corner exterior, charcoal [2200–1780 BC]	FVU, Miniature VFV, 1 fusiform jet or shale bead
Great Tosson cist 1	Cist? N–S?	Crouched	1, adult, female?	Head to the S	FVU, jet button (type 6a)

(*Continued*)

Table 4.8 Continued

Location	Feature (length)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes)	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials	Artefacts
Great Tosson cist 2	Cist? N–S?	Crouched	1, adult, ?	Head to the S	FVU, jet button (type 5), antler pick
Harbottle Peels cairn cist 1	Cist (0.8m), NE–SW	No bone recovered	–	?	FV
Harehope Hill cist	Cist (1.4m), NE–SW	No bone recovered	–	?	Flint knife, FVU rim sherd
Copt Hill grave 3	Not given, but aligned ENE–WSW	Crouched	1, ?, ?	Vessel S of head, head to SW end of cist	FV
Fatfield barrow cist 2	Cist (?), SSW–NNE	Crouched	1, adult, ?	Head to SSW	FV, lost
Gains Law ring cairn cist 1	Cist (2m), N–S	Cremation, possibly also decayed burial not cremated	?	Flint knife found in layer of stones and boulders above cist cover slab	FV (one sherd of same vessel found in cist 2)
Gains Law ring cairn cist 2	Cist (0.6m) square	Cremation, possibly decayed burial not cremated	?	Only 1 scrap of bone which matches that from cist 1	One large sherd of FV matches vessel in cist 1
Howick cist 5	Cist (0.7m), NNE–SSW	None recovered	–	Charcoal, burnt clay, sandy fill	2 sherds FV, flint flakes
Seafield Farm cist 2	Cist (0.75m), NE–SW	Crouched?	1?, ?, ?	?	FV
Seafield Farm cist 3	Cist (0.7m), N–S	Crouched?	1?, ?, ?	?	FV
Warkshaugh Farm cist 1	Cist (1m), E–W	Not cremated	?	'river sand' in cist	FV, mottled grey flint knife

of an infant buried with a Vase in cist 3 at Hasting Hill produced a result of 1931–1756 BC.

Burials in cists with Food Vessels show greater diversity in orientation of the grave and placement of the body than earlier and possibly contemporary Beaker burials, though the comparison is problematic as it is not possible at present to separate out the Food Vessel burials into phases. Some of this variation is, however, clearly local, such as the six north–south burials with Food Vessels in northern Northumberland. Most of the rest have east–west or north-east–south-west orientations, extending the most common practice among Beaker burials in cists. There is also some variation in the objects deposited with the dead. Jet and bronze are rare, excepting the two north–south orientated northern Northumbrian examples, but flint knives and flakes are well represented. The burials are dispersed widely across the region except for the uplands of the North Pennines.

Burial with a battle axehead, *c.*1900–1700 BC

The burial from a cist at Seghill, accompanied with a quartzite battle axehead dated typologically to *c.*1900–1700 BC (Roe 1966) is a very rare find. Unfortunately little is known about the site, which was excavated in the 1860s. Objects of this type have been associated by archaeologists with prestige or special status (e.g. Sheridan 2007*c*, 111). If we were to draw an analogy with O'Shea's (1984) analyses of Great Plains chiefs, such enduring artefacts buried without (as far as we know) any other associated signs of 'wealth' may well have been emblems of a specific status. But we could question whether such an interpretation applies at the local and regional level here given that no other graves contain such objects, and also that while they required a great deal of effort to produce they tend to be made from large pebbles and not sourced from specific or distant outcrops (Fenton 1984). This axehead may have had a particular meaning and effect associated with its use (perhaps a weapon, perhaps a ceremonial tool for slaughtering cattle), but its inclusion in the grave is such a rarity and so little is known about the burial that it is difficult to articulate it suitably within the assemblage.

General patterns in the interment of crouched burials

I have not designated deposits without any period-diagnostic artefacts or radiocarbon dates to specific centuries. It may be possible to make suggestions about the likely date of some of the crouched burials without diagnostic artefacts based on their similarity to patterns that emerge during specific periods in the analysis above—for instance, shared orientation of the grave

and positioning of the body in that grave—but without any further means to confirm such suggestions these would be weak articulations. Were we able to locate these deposits within specific centuries they might have the potential to change the overall picture, for instance by indicating that patterns of orientation were more diverse in that period, or by establishing there was more crouched burial between 2250 and 2000 BC than currently evident. For instance, a bone from the skeleton of a man aged *c.*23–57 who had suffered a severely broken ankle (Gamble and Fowler forthcoming) at Hollybush Field was radiocarbon dated to 2279–2040 BC: clearly, we should not expect that all burials in that period were accompanied by durable artefacts. Table 4.9 illustrates some features of those crouched burials where there is good detail about the orientation of the body in the grave or cist but where no period-diagnostic artefacts were recovered. It should be noted that these are only a small portion of the 94 undated burials of unburnt remains (or where no bone survived) in cists or graves that are not accompanied by ceramics or any other diagnostic finds.

Including these 'undiagnostic' burials alongside crouched burials with Beakers and Food Vessels we can assess patterns in grave size, grave orientation, and body positioning at a general level across the entire period, placing the more specific patterns discussed above in wider context. Table 4.10 summarizes the patterns in cist or grave pit orientation and, where known, the positioning of the body within the grave. There is a clear preference for an east–west orientation among most burials, but this is especially so for Beakers and particularly SN Beakers *c.*2300–2100 BC: it is possible that many of the east–west burials without pottery also date to around this period, and that east–west burials with Food Vessels are among the earlier Food Vessel burials. We could suggest that cist orientation varied more by period (and to some extent sub-region: compare Maps 4.2 and 4.6) than by style of vessel or presence or absence of vessel. That said, while most Beaker east–west burials had the head to the east, most without Beakers had the head laid to the west, including all of the instances of burials without vessels where head position was recorded. These patterns suggest differentiation and/or change within a generally shared practice of cist alignment and bodily positioning. But one key similarity among inhumations with Beakers and with Food Vessels is that where the position was recorded the vessel was almost always placed next to the head (21 instances; 2 in front of chest, 1 second vessel by feet). One of the two burials with the vessel in front of the chest instead of the head, Steeple Hill, was unusual in that there were two Vase Food Vessels and one of them contained cremated remains. Connections were seemingly drawn between food, consumption, and the head during mortuary activities.

The size of cists containing inhumations varied, but most were small compared with the bodies they held (Chart 4.1). Burials with Beakers, Food Vessels, or daggers account for almost all of those cists over 1.2m in length, but

Table 4.9 Burials of uncremated bodies with no associated period-diagnostic artefacts but where orientation and body position is recorded (see also burials in Table 4.5 with flint knives but no diagnostic artefacts: Batter Law, Summerhill cist 2, and Trow Rocks)

Location	Feature (length)	Treatment	MNI, Age, Sex (notes)	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials	Artefacts
Fatfield barrow cist 1	Cist (?), SSW–NNE	Crouched	1, adult, ?	Head to SSW	–
Fatfield barrow cist 3	Cist (1m), SSW–NNE	Crouched	1, adult, male?	(SSWRW)	–
Grundstone Law cist	Cist (1.8m), E–W	Crouched, disarticulated	2 adult (1 40 years +, 1?), male (1, 1?)	Bones missing from crouched skeleton (ELS), additional bones or second burial present	–
Hasting Hill grave 1	Cist (1.2m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, female	Skull 'inclined upwards as though the intention had been to face the midday sun', hands in front of face (WRS)	–
Hollybush Field cist	Cist (1.15m), NE–SW	Crouched	1, adult (23–57), male (fractured and healed fibula, osteoarthritis) [2279–2040 BC]	Part filled with sand 'presumably brought from the North Tyne, ⅓ mile to the south' (NELSE)	None
Kirkhill pit C	Grave pit (1.68m), E–W	Crouched	Not specified	Awl near base of spine (WRS)	Bronze awl fragment
Spital Hill cairn 2 cist	Cist (1m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult (25–40 years?), male?	(WLN)	–
Warkworth cairn cist 7	Cist (1.2m), NE–SW	Crouched	1, adult, ?	Charcoal (NELS)	–
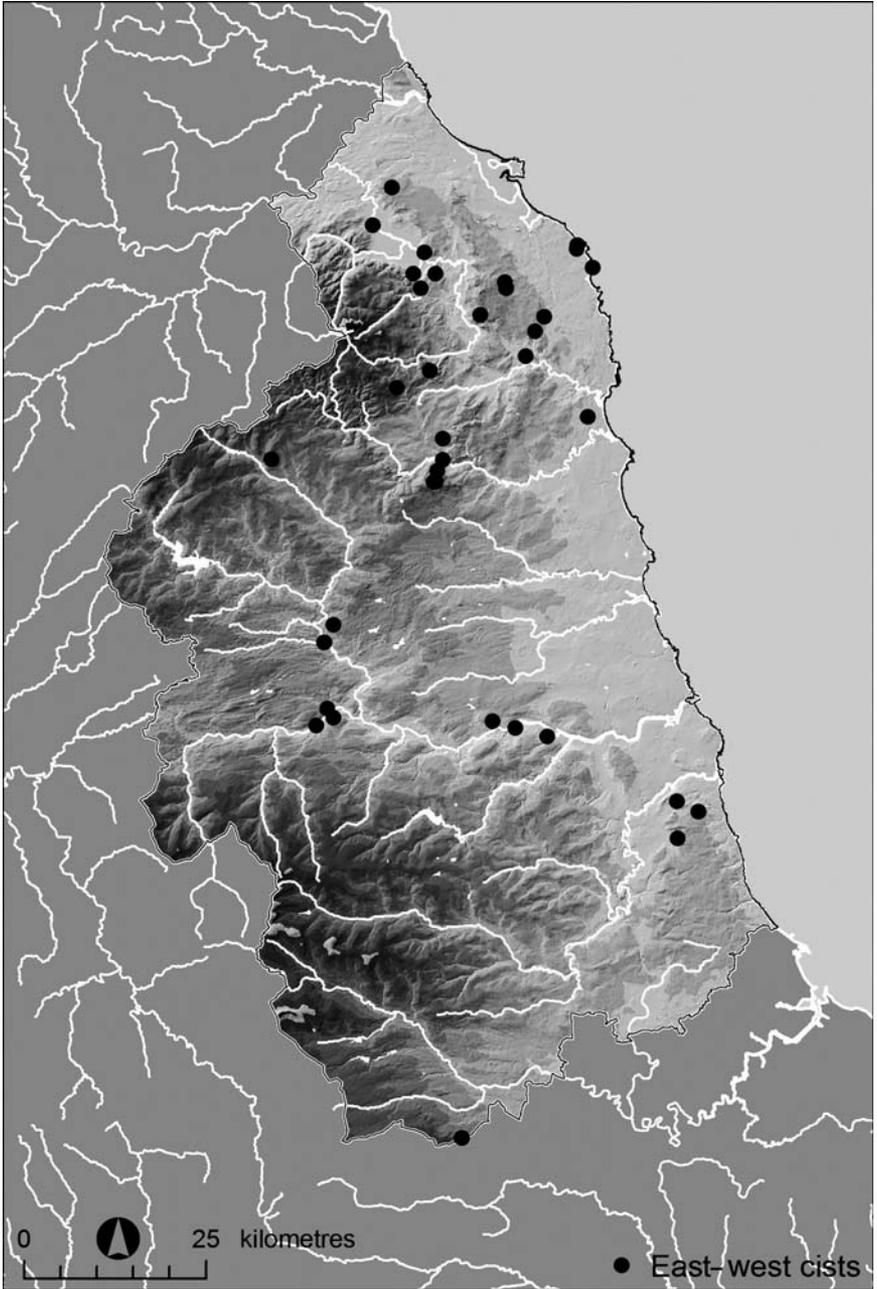
Map 4.6 Distribution of east–west cists

Table 4.10 The orientation of cists and grave pits for burials of unburnt bodies accompanied by Beakers (n = 24), Food Vessels (n = 32), and neither Beakers nor Food Vessels (n = 55)

Orientation	Head to the . . .	Beaker burials	Food Vessel burials	Burials without Beaker/Food Vessel
E–W	E	7	3	0
	W	3	5	6
	Unknown	4	7	8
	Total E–W =	**14**	**15**	**14**
ENE–WSW	ENE	0	0	0
	WSW	0	0	1
	Unknown	1	1	4
	Total ENE–WSW	**1**	**1**	**5**
N–S	N	0	1	0
	S	0	3	0
	Unknown	3	2	6
	Total N–S =	**3**	**6**	**6**
NE–SW	NE	0	1	2
	SW	1	2	0
	Unknown	0	2	8
	Total NE–SW	**1**	**5**	**10**
NNE–SSW	NNE	0	1	1
	SSW	0	1	2
	Unknown	0	0	2
	Total NNE–SSW	**0**	**2**	**5**
NW–SE	NW	0	0	2
	SE	1	0	0
	Unknown	3	2	8
	Total NW–SE	**4**	**2**	**10**
WNW–ESE	WNW	0	0	0
	ESE	0	0	1
	Unknown	1	0	1
	Total WNW–ESE	**1**	**0**	**2**
NNW–SSE	NNW	1	0	1
	SSE	0	0	1
	Unknown	0	1	1
	Total NNW–SSE	**1**	**1**	**3**

also for the majority of shorter cist burials (Chart 4.2). While adult burials were rarely placed in cists shorter than 1m, child burials were more often placed in cists over 1m in length than in smaller ones (Chart 4.3). When looking at cists from which no bone survives we can arguably infer that cists of less than 60cm in length would have contained child burials—though this risks dismissing the possibility of deposits of defleshed bones or even deposits of organic material other than human remains—but we can make no inference about whether larger cists devoid of bones upon discovery would have con-tained a child or an adult. There are only four certain burials of women in cists,

and these were all in the 80cm to 1.2m range, while the 21 cases of male (or probably male) burials include 12 in that size range plus 9 longer than 1.2m: there seems to be a trend in providing adult males with larger cists (Chart 4.4). While cist size may relate to body size *none* of these cists provided much room in which to place the body. Throughout, we could infer that there was a deliberate attempt to constrain the dead: they were placed in a cramped position from which it would not be easy for a living person to move, and covered with a very substantial cover slab. One of the largest cover slabs recorded was at Dour Hill, sealing the double or successive burial of two young children and perhaps suggesting particular anxiety and/or grief surrounding their deaths and this locale. Indeed, the burial site was scoured by flames before the cairn covering the cist was constructed, suggesting that the monument did not cover the cist when that was first constructed.
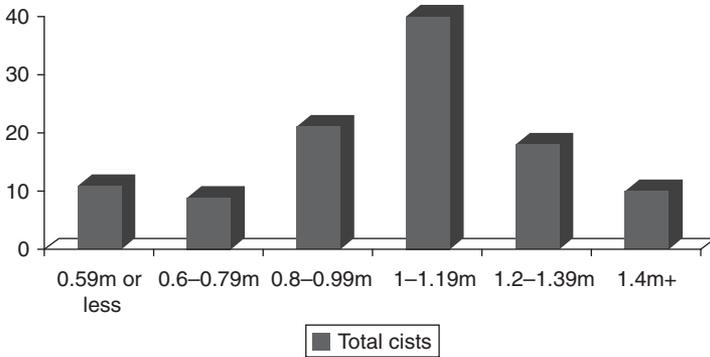
Chart 4.1 Lengths of cists either containing unburnt human remains or with no burnt human remains recovered (all artefact types and unaccompanied burials). N = 108
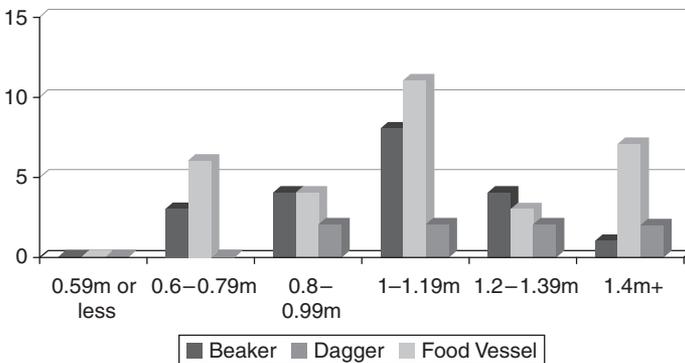
Chart 4.2 Lengths of cists containing Beaker, Food Vessel, or copper-alloy daggers with unburnt human remains. N = 61
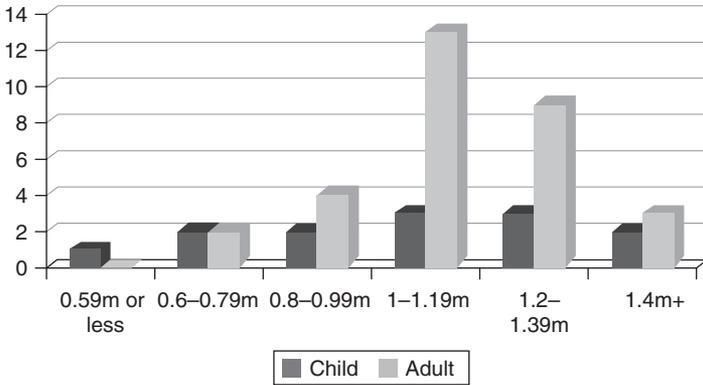
Chart 4.3 Comparison of length of cists containing the remains of adults and sub-adults. N = 43
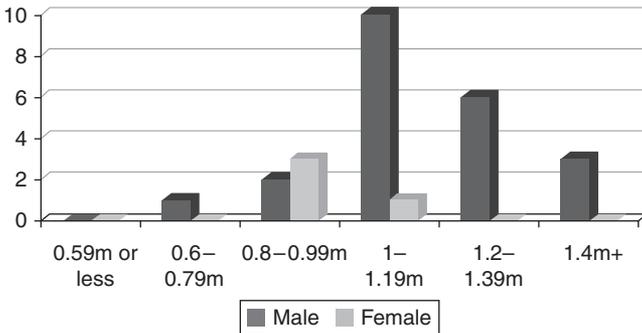
Chart 4.4 Comparison of cist length by sex. N = 26

It appears that most cists were not backfilled following the deposition of the body, leaving the decaying remains 'exposed' within the cist. There are 13 explicit mentions of backfilled cists for 45 Food Vessel burials compared with only five from 41 Beaker burials, suggesting this practice became more common over time. The joins between the side slabs of some cists were sealed with clay when found, suggesting conscious effort to prevent intrusions of soil, water, and so on into the cist and perhaps prevent essences, entities, or influences escaping the cists. Clay luting is reported for Angerton, Broomhill kerbed cairn cist 1, Haugh Head, North Charlton cist 2, Seafield Farm cists 1 and 6, Summerhill cist 4, Warkworth cairn cist 7, and a clay floor to the cist was reported at Benthall cist 2 (with embedded pebbles), and Lilburn South Steads (clay was also used to seal a vessel holding cremated remains at Broomhill and to line pits at Broomridge 2). It is notable that several of

these cists contained copper-alloy daggers, raising a question as to whether their survival was assisted by the sealing of these cists. Alternatively, it is possible daggers were placed in cists that had to be carefully sealed, or that clay sealing and copper alloy blades were spared erosion in these particular instances and that such blades, as well as such luting, were more widespread than we can accurately appreciate. Many of these burials were into the earth, but not *in* the earth: technically, it is not correct to describe them as inhumations. Some cists had stone slab flooring but others simply had earth floors. Overall, it seems likely the intention of those building these cists was to create a secure, sealed place to contain the remains of the dead while they decayed. Cist cover slabs were large and heavy, but not so large or heavy that several people who were so minded could not move them and observe or interfere with the remains. But if this happened frequently then it is notable that the bones were relatively seldom disturbed from highly standardized burial positions—at least as far as can be discerned from existing records.

Beyond 'inhumation'

It is likely that a simple division into inhumation and cremation oversimplifies the evidence—they are inversions that require unravelling or black boxes that need opening, and I want to reflect on this before examining cremation deposits. Michelle Gamble's re-analysis of the human bone from Hasting Hill cist 1 suggests that some of the bones from at least one child, roughly 5 years old, were weathered, underlining more recent suggestions of diversity in treatment of the corpse (e.g. Gibson 2007). The weathered bones were found in a pile of cremated human bone from at least one adult recovered from a reconstruction of the cist at Sunderland Museum in 2011. A pile of bone, presumably the same material, was noted by the excavator as 'some bird bones and a few calcined mammalian (non-human) bones' (Trechmann 1914, 150). Some animal bones were located among the material in 2011 and have yet to be studied. It is possible that the human bones were mixed in with the original contents of the cist as cremated bones are noted from other cists at the Hasting Hill barrow, but it seems very likely these bones originate from the site and probably from the cist. In either case, the weathered bones attest that some human remains were exposed to the elements before deposition. This is also suggested by the recovery of the inferior maxillas of a 7-year-old, a 30-year-old, an 18-year-old, and a 70-year-old, along with three more maxilla fragments with teeth 'scattered through the mound' (Coke Squance 1914, 174: the bone identifications are his). Thus, what was recorded as a single inhumation can be rearticulated as a crouched burial accompanied by the cremated bones of an adult and the exposed remains of a child, as well as

various other artefacts and materials discussed above. The cut-mark on the humerus from Shipley may hint at some modification of the corpse prior to burial. Furthermore, one of the very small cists at Howick held only skull fragments from a child, and a second the sand 'shadow' of a skull. Some small cists may have been used to bury only body parts, disarticulated bones, or scraps of bone. There are also issues of translation here. Cremated bone survives far better than bone which has not been cremated (Mays 2010, 314), and I have presumed that where no bone has been recovered from a cist or pit that any bone present was not cremated. This may skew the picture towards burials without cremation, and crouched burials in particular. In fact, it is possible that some cists never held human remains, or that these were later removed (cf. Jones and Riggott 2011, 258–9), particularly given the disturbed nature of the contents of cists such as at Reaverhill, Lilburn South Steads, Dour Hill, and perhaps Allerwash. Equally, while chemical intra-actions of bones and soil within burials may have dissolved human remains, there are some cases where this could be queried as the key factor is the absence of bones. For instance, any body buried at Kirkhaugh was placed on a limestone outcrop and covered with earth and stones (presumably also limestone). Limestone is more likely to preserve bone than the more acidic soils in which many of the cists were found, and it is interesting that only one gold basket ornament was recovered when these are usually paired (Needham in Fitzpatrick 2011).

The division of remains into those that have been burnt and those that have not is also problematic. Greenwell intriguingly noted

> The occurrence of charcoal, in greater or less quantities, in contact with the body . . . which I have found to exist in every instance since my attention was turned to the fact, not only in Yorkshire but in Northumberland and other places . . . The application of fire to the body was therefore one of the rites which was commonly practised in connection with burial . . . it appears then to have been considered sufficient that fire should be applied to the body, without reducing it completely to ashes. (Greenwell 1877, 29–30)

Greenwell specifically means sets of remains that would be classified as 'inhumations', and is suggesting that the bodies in question were passed through fire in a ritual purification—something that has rarely been suggested in subsequent discussions of British Early Bronze Age burials. Some instances of bones that indicate the body was poorly cremated have been discussed: for instance, Gibson (2007, 58) highlights the examples from Welsh St Donats, South Glamorgan, where arm and leg bones were missing from skeletons that had been burnt, but were still relatively complete. As Mizoguchi (1993, 231–2) notes, there are also cases of '*in situ*' cremations where bodies accompanied by a Collared Urn or Accessory Vessel seem to have been laid out in a crouched position within a pit and then set ablaze (e.g. Greenwell's barrow 86,

Goodmanham, Yorkshire (Greenwell 1877, 290–1)). Interestingly, Gamble's re-analysis revealed that some of the Reaverhill bones were scorched, and that some of the bones and teeth from the cist at Hexham Golf Course were cracked by heat, while some of the bones from West Wharmley were blackened by burning (Fowler and Gamble forthcoming). However, this scorching, cracking, and blackening probably result from events quite different than Greenwell envisaged: they could only have occurred once the bones were free of flesh. In each case the traces of heat were highly localized on particular areas of the bones examined. Both cists at Dilston Park contained small quantities of 'partially burnt bones' (Gibson 1906, 142). The bones have not been retained and cannot be re-analysed: it is unclear whether these are cremated bones (perhaps accompanying since-decayed crouched burials) or remains of the scorched bones of crouched burials.

In some cases it is clear from published details that fire affected burial cists or their contents directly—sometimes both. Some cists contained signs of burning such as charcoal within soils that seem to be deliberate 'backfills': at Bowchester a fill of gravelly soil including charcoal was noted. At Brandon Trechmann (1914, 132) noted the presence of charcoal and commented that slabs forming the cist showed 'some signs of fire in the interior and also at the top of the grave. Some of the bones also appear to have been partly calcined.' The cist, which held a skeleton and SN Beaker, was sealed beneath a low round mound suggesting that the burning pre-dated the mound. The same could be said for a cist at Debdon Farm cairn 1 where charcoal and 'burnt stone' were found within and around the cist cut partly into subsoil below the cairn. The series of small cists at Howick contained sandy fills with charcoal flecks and one had a 'burnt residue' attached to the underside of the cover slab (Waddington et al. 2005, 77). Two of the cists from a cemetery at Low Trewhitt North Moor held charcoal and fire-affected stones. At Pitland Hills barrow 1 cist 2 was filled to the brim with clay containing some small burnt stone fragments and charcoal. Summerhill cist 4, Blaydon, is particularly interesting: the joints of the cist were packed with small stones and clay lining, leading the excavator to conclude that sand filling the cist was a deliberate deposit. Charcoal and fragments of burnt bone were suspended in the sand covering the crouched inhumation, and the fill was topped by a layer of small pebbles. Re-analysis suggests that this burnt bone was cremated human bone (Gamble and Fowler forthcoming). Thus, this was a multiple burial deposit, in which some cremated remains and pyre debris were laid over either an unburnt corpse or the bones of a prior burial. At Well House Farm charcoal was found in among the packing stones between the cist and the walls of the pit into which it was constructed, and one of these stones is described as 'slightly reddened by burning' (Gates 1981, 47–8). The cist itself was filled with rock fragments and sand with some charcoal. At Dour Hill patches of soil from under the basal stones from a small cairn that surrounded and probably

covered the cist cover slab were 'burnt to a bright red colour, perhaps as a result of some ritual activity connected with the burial' (Jobey and Weyman 1977, 204). Several other cists contained charcoal but also thin layers of intrusive sands, silts, or soils suggesting later episodes of burning may have left some trace within cists. Even here, it is possible that this burning was prehistoric.

It seems likely, then, that fires were set in the immediate vicinity of some cists, and this can be seen most clearly *c.*2250–2000 BC. In some cases this must have happened after the bodies had been reduced to bones. Setting fires over corpses and/or cist graves might have been a feature of some mortuary rites, or other intercession years after the remains had been placed in the cist, or associated with clearing vegetation or later cremation pyres. In at least some cases where barrows or cairns covered the fire-affected deposits and features it seems clear that the bodies and/or their resting places were fired between the act of burial and the creation of the covering cairn or barrow. The introduction of burnt or burning materials to mortuary sites following the deposition of human remains has been noted elsewhere during the period, for instance at Trowse-with-Newton, Norfolk, where a hearth was used in the upper fill of a Beaker inhumation, and timbers elsewhere in the barrow structure and surrounding ditch were burnt (Healy 1982, 9–13), or at Tynings Farm South, Somerset, where burnt oak logs were incorporated into sequences of mortuary deposition and barrow construction (Lewis 2007). Hints that mortuary sites were burnt soon after the remains were buried, for instance, as well as the scene of later fires, ought to be seen in the light of the panoply of possible practices that could be brought to bear on the dead for much of the period. Even if bodies were not cremated, they might be burnt, or the bodies, persons, and/or death itself separated from the living through purifying fires. We will return to these issues in Chapters 5 and 6.

CREMATION DEPOSITS *c.*2200–1500 BC

Cremation deposits result from burning one or more bodies on a wooden pyre, bonfire, or other structure of fuels, and collecting up the bones and/or pyre debris, then burying these. Charcoal was found along with bone among most Early Bronze Age cremations from North-East England where details were recorded, so debris was not usually sifted out during the collection of bones. It is difficult to say whether cremated remains were buried more than extremely rarely between *c.*2500 and 2200 BC. Of the two sites where Beakers have been found with cremated remains that at Low Hauxley is a late Beaker, while the type of Beakers found with 'partially burnt bone' in the cists at Dilston Park were probably in circulation after *c.*2250 BC. Cremated bones
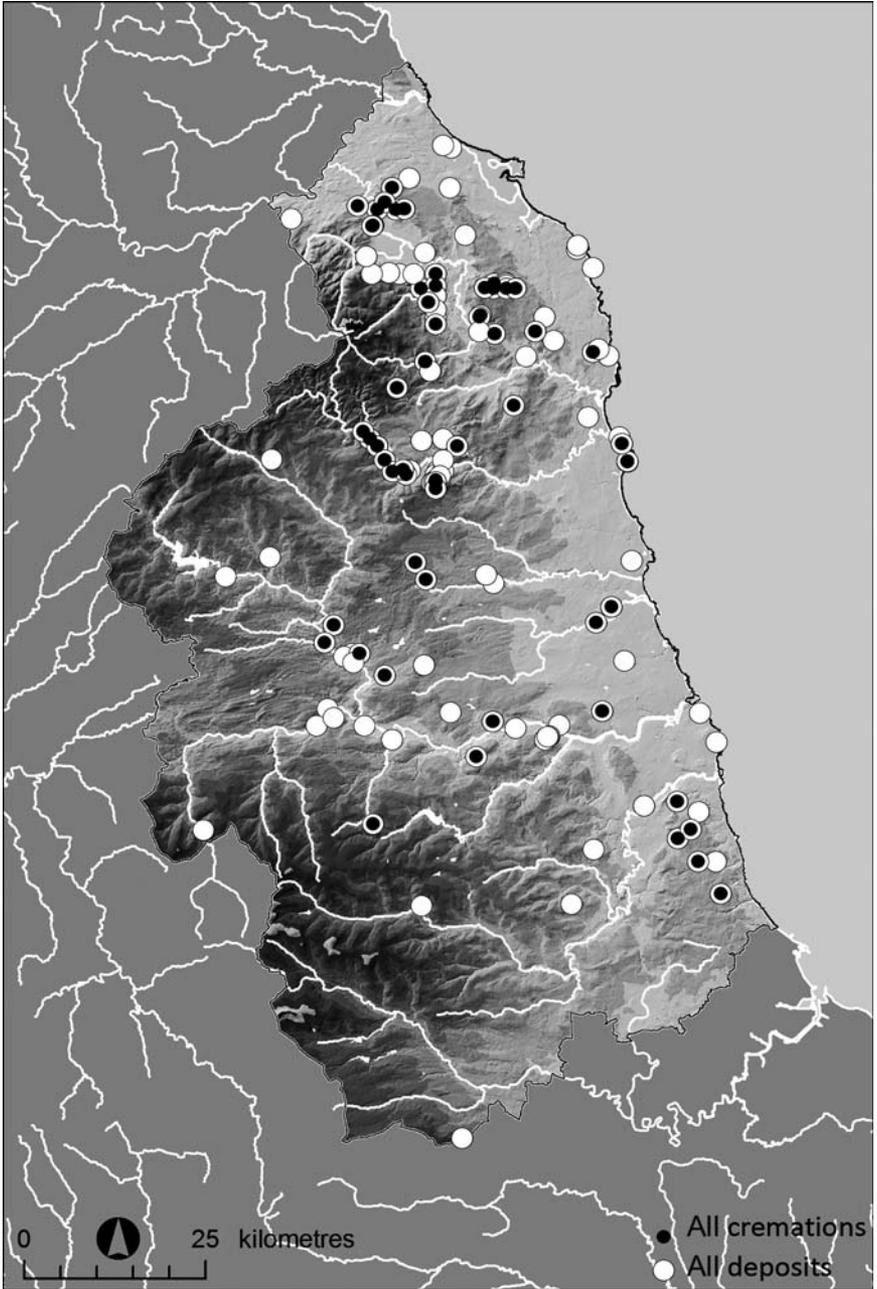
Map 4.7 Distribution of cremation deposits

associated with Food Vessels in Scotland have been dated to *c.*2150–1880 BC (Sheridan 2004, 268–9), but this is a small sample. Two dates obtained from cremated bone with Food Vessel Urns in Northumberland fall at 2025–1887 and 1889–1693 BC. A date of 2490–2200 BC, from cremated bone found in an Enlarged Food Urn at Turf Knowe North, is too early for this type of vessel; it could *perhaps* result from the later reburial of remains that had been disturbed, though in lieu of the final site report this is a speculative proposition. Nonetheless, if the date is valid it suggests some cremated remains 'were deposited or curated from the Chalcolithic onwards. Cremation was practised widely throughout the region (Map 4.7).

Burying cremated remains in cists, *c.*2100–1750 BC

Thirteen deposits of cremated bone were found in cists with Food Vessel pottery in North-East England: the remains of the dead were often still contained within stone even when they were also encased in a ceramic vessel (Table 4.11; Map 4.8). There were 28 cases where cremated remains were recovered from cists. Bowl Food Vessels, which are most common in Ireland and western Scotland, were rare in the region: only five have been recovered with mortuary deposits, four in cists and one in a stone-lined pit; two with cremated remains, and three probably with unburnt bodies. All come from northern Northumberland, three from the same cemetery at Cheviot Walk Wood. Seven cremations were deposited with Vases, one with an unidentified Food Vessel along with a fragmentary Accessory Vessel, and one with a fragmented Food Vessel, possibly a Bowl, as well as one with a GSP Beaker. The repeated use of Vases to accompany cremations deposited in cists contrasts with the use of Food Vessel Urns which were seldom placed in cists. Where cists were used to deposit cremated remains the length of the feature seems to have declined compared with crouched burials. An exception is the large stone-lined pit holding the Food Vessel Urn and a 'Neolithic-derivative' vessel at Whitton Hill henge 1, which could have contained an organic cist or coffin. Several of these deposits contained only scraps of cremated bone and the cists may have originally also held a crouched burial. For instance, the cist at Haugh Head is aligned east–west in conventional style, was the same size as cists containing crouched bodies (larger than some), and the vessel was tucked away in the corner of the cist. In this case the cremated bone could be interpreted as a token deposit, relics, trophies, or magically efficacious materials—or the bones of those close to the deceased who had died before them, associated with a second, unburnt burial, since decayed. The nature of the feature housing the Vase at Pace Hill is unknown, but it lies within a cemetery of small cists. Greenwell (1868, 196) reports that a jet necklace was 'strung
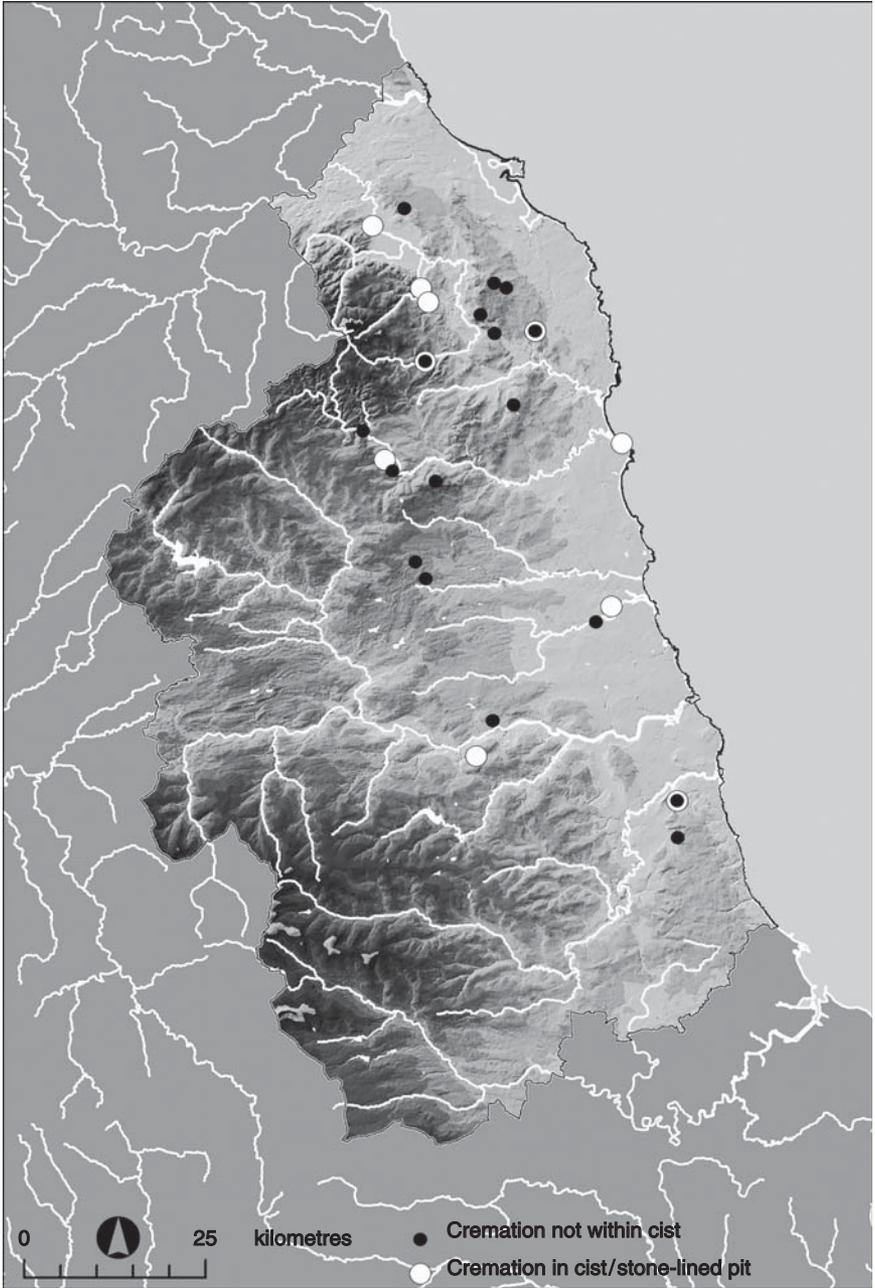
Map 4.8 Distribution of cremation deposits within cists or stone-lined pits

Table 4.11 All cremation deposits associated with Food Vessels within cists or stone-lined pits

Location	Feature (length/ square/diameter)	Treatment	MNI, Age, Sex (notes)	Arrangement, Materials	Artefacts
Bedlington cist 4	Cist ('small'), ?	Cremation	?	?	VFV
Broomhill cist	Cist (0.9m), NE–SW	Cremated	1 or 2, child(2), 1 c.7–8 years, ?	Two heaps of bone, one next to vessel fallen on side	VFV
Cheviot Walk Wood deposit 2	Pit (d.7m), stone cover slab	Cremated	1, adolescent, ? (500g)	Pit lined with stones, disturbed, vessel sherds	BFV
Cheviot Walk Wood deposit 4	Cist (1m), NE–SW. Disturbed	Cremated	2, adult (1) (30–40 years), child (1) (2–3 years) (550–700g)	Bones from adult charred and blackened, those from child white. Sherds of vessel only	BFV
Hasting Hill cist 4	Cist (0.63m), E–W	Cremated	?	Bones and ceramic fragments intermixed	VFV fragments, Accessory Vessel, flint core, flake
Hasting Hill stone-lined pit	Very small	Cremation	?	Bones within inverted urn filling pit	FVU
Haugh Head cist	Cist (1m), E–W	Token cremation, ? unburnt remains	1 or 2, ?, ?	Only 2 scraps of cremated bone—cist could have housed crouched burial too	VFV, flint arrowhead, flint projectile head or knife, 5 flakes
Holystone Common cairn 1 cist	Cist (0.6m), NW–SE	Cremated	?	Vessel in E corner of cist	VFV

Table 4.11 Continued

Location	Feature (length/ square/diameter)	Treatment	MNI, Age, Sex (notes)	Arrangement, Materials	Artefacts
Lilburn Tower Farm cist	Cist (0.85m), ?	Cremated	?	Burnt bone, charcoal and sherds throughout fill	VFV
South Charlton cairn deposit 8	Cist (s.2m)	Cremated	?	No charcoal	Miniature VFV
Turf Knowe North central cist	Cist (0.85m), N–S	Cremated	1, adult, female [1750–1530 BC]	Reuse of cist, pyre debris around vessel, bones in vessel	VFV, flint flakes and jet beads
Warden Law cist	Cist (s 0.3m)	Cremated	1, child (2–10), ? [2025–1887 BC] Possibly also 1, adult, ? (scraps)	Bone in inverted vessel. Adult provenance cannot be verified	FVU with cordon
Warkworth cairn cist 3	Cist (0.6m), ?	Cremated?	?	?	VFV
Whitton Hill henge 1 central pit	Pit (1.8m), NW–SE	Cremated	1, adult, male? [1889–1693 BC]	Bones in inverted vessel in lower fill of pit, charcoal, packing stones	FVU, small flint flake outside vessel

around the neck of the urn', suggesting an interesting equation of the vessel and the human body.

There are also 22 cremation deposits within cists or stone-lined pits which are not accompanied by any ceramics and which could, potentially, be contemporary with Food Vessels. Three of these have been dated and also fall within the period *c.*2100–1800 BC. One example was found in a cist eroding out of the sand dunes at Low Hauxley (Waddington 2010)—only the longbones and skull of an adult seem to have been selected from the pyre for deposition (or perhaps were ever burnt), and a radiocarbon date places the death during the period 2010–1875 BC. Most of these cists were still of a size and shape that they could have accommodated a complete body. Four were orientated east–west, two north–south, two north-west–south-east and one north-east–south-west. Any grave goods seem to have passed through the pyre: the only finds were burnt and fragmented flints; in one case enough remained to identify a knife blade.

Burying cremated remains in features other than cists, *c.*2000–1500 BC

Of 31 Food Vessel Urns, 22 were associated with cremated remains: none of these 22 were within short cists, two were in stone-lined pits or square cists and one was placed inverted on the cover slab of a cist. Brindley's research dates Irish Food Vessel Urns to *c.*2000–1740 BC (Brindley 2007, 274–81), and a new date of 1889–1693 BC has been obtained from cremated bone associated with an Food Vessel Urn at Whitton Hill henge 1. Three come from rock shelters, a category of site not used for burial earlier. A rare group of deposits are those within Enlarged Food Vessel Urns. Seven have been identified, all from Northumberland, only one contained any artefacts—an unburnt flint knife—all held cremated remains, four certainly held the remains of more than one individual, and all were placed in an inverted position. Five were buried in pits, one placed on the land surface in a rock shelter, and one on the cover slab of a cist. These seem to indicate a specific mode of practice which may have emerged towards the end of the period when Food Vessels were selected for funerary deposits. A cluster of Enlarged Food Vessel Urn burials occur around the Milfield Basin, but two other examples further south also follow the practice of inverted deposition.

In total, 28 cremation deposits placed in contexts other than cists were accompanied by Food Vessels of various kinds—as we have seen 22 of these were in Food Vessel Urns. The other six were all placed in pits at cairns, barrows, or natural mounds, and consist of two Vases, a Bowl, a miniature, and two unidentified Food Vessels. All 28 of these fall within a wider corpus of cremation deposits in features other than cists, with or without pottery, of

which there are 65 instances. Isolating the 28 of these which were not accompanied by pottery at all, we find that 26 of those were located at circular monuments (including cairns, barrows, and henges). This may well be a pattern influenced strongly by recent actants in the assemblage: cremation deposits are unlikely to be recovered if placed in pits in the landscape without a noticeable monument or cist. Furthermore, the vast majority of all the Early Bronze Age monuments are circular.

Eighteen burials of cremated remains included Collared Urns (*c*.2000–1550 BC): most were placed in pits but some were placed on the land surface or in fissures in rock and then covered with small cairns or barrows. Collared Urns often contained the fragmented and burnt remains of artefacts along with the cremated human bone, suggesting that bodies were dressed when placed on the pyre and/or that additional objects were placed on the pyre along with the dead: three contained burnt bone pins (one of these held the remains of four such pins), one the point of a bronze pin or awl, three held unburnt flints (two of which were knives), and one a burnt flint; one which lay in fragments was found with a broken whetstone, one held a lump of galena (lead ore), and at Ford barrow three jet beads and a jet button were placed around the rim of one Collared Urn rather than within it (Greenwell 1877, 407). These jet objects may even have been heirlooms by the time they were deposited. Two Collared Urns in the normal size range were accompanied by miniatures, there are five cases of Accessory Vessels accompanying Collared Urns in mortuary deposits, and no fewer than five deposits contained one or two miniature Collared Urns, in one case accompanied by an Accessory Vessel. The choice of vessel size does not seem to relate to age or sex or the number of individuals whose remains were present. Three of the cremation deposits clearly consisted of the remains of more than one individual and it is possible that some of the others did since most were excavated in the nineteenth century and the bones were not closely examined. Collared Urns have a very wide distribution across Britain and Ireland, but are less densely clustered in northern Britain than they are in Yorkshire, the Midlands, and the South-East (Longworth 1984, 82–3).

Only two burials of cremated remains in Cordoned Urns, dating to *c*.1800–1550 BC, are known from North-East England, though the Food Vessel Urn from Warden Law sports a clear cordon. All three of these vessels held the remains of children, two of these clearly being the remains of young children. Both Cordoned Urns are from Middle Gunnar Peak: one was in a rock-cut pit and one was disturbed when found but within a barrow. An unburnt bone knife was found in one vessel. The distribution of Cordoned Urns is heavily focused on Fife and the Lothians, and the presence of these few examples from North-East England may hint at some contacts in that direction.

There are also another 71 cremation deposits in features not accompanied by ceramics or other diagnostic artefacts. It is very difficult to provide reliable dates for cremation deposits not accompanied by such diagnostic vessels, and

some may be far earlier than 2200 BC, while others may be far later (Brück, pers. comm.). Both of these suggestions seem to be correct for Northumberland, as none of the small number of remains dated fall within the period *c.*2900–1400 BC: one example from what was probably a shallow pit at Whitton Hill henge 1 dated to 1426–1270 BC, while the mass cremation deposit of at least 24 people (identified on the basis of the number of right petrous portions), including 16 adults and four subadults, buried at the centre of Whitton Hill henge 2 dated to 1259–1026 BC (cf. Fowler and Gamble forthcoming). This deposit was capped with a large flat stone slab on top of which were placed five quartz pebbles. Perhaps the death of this many people required special mortuary practices in a special, ancient, place or perhaps sets of older remains were collected together and buried in a special event. Clearly cremation continued well beyond the Early Bronze Age and the monuments of the period continued to have meanings and effects that persisted even as they changed. Some of these cremation deposits contained artefacts: 10 included burnt flint flakes, blades, or knives and one a scraper; one contained a jet cup fragment and one a jet bead, suggesting a date between *c.*2200 and 1800 BC, and two cremation deposits from Turf Knowe North contained conjoining fragments of a bone or antler pin (highlighting the problems inherent in identifying 'a cremation deposit'). They derive from several kinds of contexts including spreads on the land surface under mounds, pits cut into the ground under mounds, pits within mounds, and cists.

Patterns in the contents of cremation deposits

While Collared Urns frequently contained objects along with human remains, most Food Vessel Urns and EFVUs did not. Those that did most commonly held flint knives. There is some diversity in the kinds of objects and materials deposited with cremated remains in the period. A burnt barbed and tanged arrowhead with its tip missing was found among the cremated bones of a 2–3-year-old child found within a Vase Food Vessel at Cheviot Walk Wood deposit 6. Burnt flint flakes occurred in 19 cases. Very occasionally animal remains have been identified among the burnt remains: a sheep tooth at Hasting Hill square cist 2 (and possible animal tooth fragments in the central cist at Turf Knowe North: McKinley 1998), the leg of a sheep or goat at Holystone Common cairn 2, cremation 1, and cockle and winkle shells at Low Hauxley cist 1. Some cists containing cremated bones had rounded pebble floors or clay lining, and some pits were lined with clay—again echoing practices associated with the burial of uncremated remains. Oak wood charcoal is common among the cremated remains, along with burnt earth and stones. We might suggest that the body could be accompanied on the pyre by a plethora of things and materials, but that it was not important to collect all of

these for deposition with the bones: we see only the fragments of jet cups and ornaments, bone and copper alloy pins, and shattered flint objects. If these were intended to accompany the dead in a transformative journey then much of that transformation took place on the pyre and it was not necessary to provide them with objects for deposition.

However, not all of the items placed in urns were burnt, and some deposits were accompanied by other unburnt objects. In five cases where a flint knife accompanied cremated remains, and one case where a bone knife did so, the knives showed no signs of fire damage—such knives were probably not placed on the funeral pyre. For Spital Hill cairn 7 cremation deposit 1, the report specifies that the knife was found at the top of the contents of the urn (Dixon 1892, 28). It is possible that the burnt knives (and bronze knives which did not survive the pyre) were also placed with the dead immediately prior to or during the cremation, again as part of a ritual severing of the dead from the living. The use of knives at cremations can be set alongside the inclusion of bronze daggers and flint knives with unburnt burials where, as outlined earlier, a number were introduced during the funerary rites at the point when the dead were secluded from the living, cutting at least some of the ties between them. It seems likely that knives were sometimes added *after* the dead had been transformed and marking the point at which those remains were covered up and removed from any further contact by the living. This practice had either endured or was recurrent during the broad period, suggesting some continuity in the ritual technologies through which the dead whose remains were buried were transformed. Furthermore, just as the ground above some cist burials seems to have been subjected to burning, so at Birkside Fell a burnt or burning plank was pushed over the Collared Urn containing cremated remains before the cairn was built—this sequence was probably a continuous event. Finally, at Low Hauxley (erosion cairn) the upper fill of ashwood charcoal is distinct from a lower fill of hazel wood charcoal and cremated bone, suggesting an episode of burning after the cremation but during the act of deposition.

It seems, then, that vessels of various types were selected for use in specific mortuary practices in which the cremated remains of the dead were buried. Bowl Food Vessels were rare except for at one cemetery (perhaps used by a particular kin group). There is some overlap in the features of the mortuary deposits containing Vases and Urns, but very large vessels were used in one very specific way. It is likely there was a gradually unfolding progression here from burial of unburnt bodies with pottery in cists (whether Beaker (from *c.*2450 BC), Vase Food Vessel (from *c.*2200 BC), or Food Vessel Urn (after *c.*1900 BC)) to burial of cremated bones in cists with vessels (rarely Beaker, sometimes Vase, more commonly Urn) or without, to burial of cremated bones in urns without cists. This latter category were often provided with a stone cover, whether upright or inverted, or flat stone slabs packed around the vessel in a pit. The shift from unburnt burial to cremation seems to go hand in

hand with the selection of larger ceramic vessels and the abandonment of cists. I will reflect on the significance of this in Chapter 6.

Beyond 'cremation'

McKinley (1997) and Downes (2005) have both suggested that the concept of a 'cremation deposit' is also in need of critical review, pointing out the need to distinguish between pyre sites, deposits of cremated bone, and deposition of other material from pyres. Ash and charcoal, sometimes containing tiny fragments of bone might have been collected from the pyre. Such debris has been recovered from Turf Knowe North in Northumberland (McKinley 1998). Deposits like this are likely to have been misunderstood or overlooked in older excavations, and suggest that we need to consider the treatment of all of the by-products of the cremation event and not simply focus on the bone. Generally, the weight of cremated bone recovered from the mortuary deposits was low. It is hard to say how often some bones were deliberately left on pyres or taken away but not deposited in the ground. Based on the low weights of many Bronze Age cremations, Joanna Brück (2004b; 2006) has suggested that sets of bones may have been divided up and shared among mourners. It seems likely that in some cases the cremated remains of the dead were carefully picked from pyre debris, winnowed or sifted from charcoal, or ground into smaller fragments following cremation. At Yeavering a Collared Urn was placed upside down in a flat-bottomed pit that was cut to snugly hold the vessel. A hole had been bored in the base of the vessel, perhaps before it had been fired, and very small fragments of bone were poured through this hole, forming a conical pile within the base of the pit. The vessel was packed in tightly with a soil matrix that was very rich in charcoal and also contained burnt pebbles—it seems likely in this case that bone was sorted from pyre debris, and at least some of this bone processed and poured into the vessel while some of the pyre debris was used to pack the pot in place and backfill the pit (Hope-Taylor 1977, 343–4).

But the cremation of an intact body in a funerary pyre may not account for all deposits where cremated bone has been recovered. Gibson (2007, 58) has suggested that pits with strong evidence for heat affecting the sides of the feature may have been either dug at what then became the site of the pyre or, given the small size of many of these pits, that defleshed bones may have been placed in what were sunken fire-pits as the flames burnt and as the fire was stoked and raked over. This seems possible in the case of the pit at the south-west perimeter of Blawearie kerbed cairn where around 100g of bone was recovered in a fill rich in charcoal from a pit with fire-reddened sides. In other cases pits might have been dug before pyres were built over them, and through the process of the cremation became filled with hot materials which scorched

their sides (Harding and Healy 2007, 237). For instance, Greenwell (1877, 426) describes a body as having been 'burnt on the spot and over the already existing hole' cut through the ground covered by a cairn on Holystone Common. If pyre debris was then sorted and artefacts and bones collected up, these could be placed within the pits, explaining deposits where pots containing bone nestled in layers of charred wood, ash, and bone (as at Cairnderry pit 1, Dumfries and Galloway, for instance: Cummings and Fowler 2007, 16–20). Cut marks have been identified on cremated bones from several Early Bronze Age sites in Scotland, suggesting that some bodies might have been defleshed or disarticulated before the bones were burnt (Duffy and MacGregor 2008, 76), though no cut marks were detected on any of the bones from the Tyne and Wear Museums Gamble examined in 2011. Finally, not all 'cremation' deposits can be confirmed to have contained human remains; for instance, the Collared Urn buried in a pit at Crawley Edge, County Durham, contained only small scraps of bone which may be unburnt animal bone and a small amount of oak charcoal in a local soil that was rich in phosphates (Boyer in Young and Welfare 1992, 43; Rackham in Young and Welfare 1992, 44). An oval ring of stones surrounded the area where this deposit took place and a low cairn covered it, and later a second oval of stones was abutted to this and a second cairn built—this feature covering and centred on a saddle quern fragment. These deposits appear votive in nature, offering up materials and objects associated with land clearance and agricultural production to the earth on a hillside littered with small clearance cairns (Johnston 2000). It is possible that the bone scraps in the vessel were human, but in either case the focus on deposition following an act of burning seems significant and suggests problems with the idea that all mortuary *deposits* are necessarily first and foremost funerary in nature.

UNPACKING 'MULTIPLE' BURIALS

From the entire dataset of 355 deposits there are 28 cases where the bones from more than one individual were certainly present in the same feature. Some of these cases consist of more than one deposit, and in 21 cases these were cremated bones. On the surface this would tend to reinforce the idea that single burial is the key characteristic of the period. However, as Gibson (2007) cautions, we need to look beyond this 'veneer' for many different reasons from the fact that most people's remains were not buried at all to the specific histories of treatment for bodies that seem to us or to our nineteenth- and twentieth-century predecessors, on the basis of the presence of the skeleton, to be intact, undisturbed single burials. The presentation of the complete singular body occurred at certain points in the funerary process or other mortuary

events at which the remains were deposited, and subsequently has to be interpreted as one passage in a longer narrative about the transformation of the dead, the community, and place. In many cases the dead were placed near to others, and in the same ways as others. Here I will set single burial in context by examining the variations on this theme and exceptions to it based on the human remains alone.

Successive deposition is the most likely explanation for two instances where the bones of more than one individual occur in the same cist at Dour Hill and at Grundstone Law, both in Northumberland. Close to the site of a long cairn on Dour Hill a large cist with an extremely large cover slab was used to bury either the body or some selected bones from a child about 11 years old accompanied by a Vase Food Vessel. Later the remains of an infant 6 to 9 months old and sherds from a Bowl Food Vessel were added—only the cranium and mandible were recovered during excavation. The first burial was severely disturbed and displaced by the second and so decayed that only tooth fragments remained from the first individual and only fragments of the vessel were left in the cist (Jobey and Weyman 1977). The cist was disturbed by forestry machinery when found, and some fragments of the Bowl Food Vessel were found in the disturbed area, so it is possible some further bones from the infant were displaced then, but it seems more likely (given the investigation of the site and detailed recording of the displaced archaeology by George Jobey, an experienced excavator and expert on prehistoric archaeology in the region) that either only an infant's skull was placed in the existing grave or that the rest of the bones decayed after deposition.

A 'tumulus' at Grundstone Law was excavated by a tenant farmer, a Mr Coulson, in 1862. He found a skeleton resting on a stone slab, which was the cover slab to a cist: '[h]e broke into the cist, but did not disturb the contents' (Greenwell and Embleton 1862, 35). Several years later excavation and analysis of the cist and all the human remains from the mound were carried out by Greenwell and a medical doctor, Embleton. The cist contained the crouched skeleton of what they identified as an adult male in his 40s, lying on its left side with head to the east and face turned to the south. Towards the south side of the cist (i.e. in front of this skeleton) they found several bones from a second individual including a radius which was standing on its end within the 'loamy matter' that encased the entire collection of bones in the cist. Greenwell and Embleton considered two possibilities: either Coulson had dropped some bones from the skeleton he found on the cist cover slab into the cist or the cist contained two burials, the few bones from one of which were included 'posteriorly to the decay of the body to which it belonged', and which were 'equally decomposed, as if they had been interred together, and subjected to similar influences'. The seemingly intact skeleton was interpreted as that of an adult of over 40 years of age based on the presence of anchylosis in the coccyx, and as male based on pelvic measurements. The remaining bones

interpreted as from a single adult male of over 30 based on the size of the bones, which consisted of 'an atlas, a scapula, a humerus, a radius, a tibia, and a fibula, all more or less broken, and two or three tarsal bones'. Successive deposition was clearly practised here by placing a second individual on the cover slab of an earlier cist. If some defleshed bones were interred with the body in that cist this may indicate further successive deposition or the inclusion of some 'cleaned' bones along with that body when it was buried.

There are a few other examples of the remains of two individuals in the same cist that may derive from simultaneous or successive deposition. A cist at High Buston contained numerous parts of the skeletons from two adults, one male, accompanied by an SN Beaker. Both adults may have been buried intact. Skeletal remains from a second individual were located in a grave of a skeleton at Copt Hill. At Steeple Hill a crouched burial in a cist was accompanied by two Vase Food Vessels, one of which contained cremated remains. It is not clear whether the fragmentary 'partially burnt' bones in the two cists at Dilston Park were the only human remains originally placed in the cists, which were large enough to accommodate crouched burials. The presence of bones from three individuals in cist 1 from Hasting Hill and the fragmentary remains of at least seven maxillae from the mound material also suggest far more diversity in the treatment of human remains after death than simply single burial; the site is a prime example of the limitations of focusing on the 'single' deposits of the dead at the expense of the larger narrative. Indeed, we need to consider sequences of burials at each site, and within each region in order to understand how one person might have related to others in the mortuary sphere.

The details of the cremated remains of more than one individual suggest another varied and complex set of practices. There are 21 cases where the cremated remains of more than one individual occur in the same feature, and in 19 of these 21 instances the bones were within the same deposit. Thirteen of these combined adult and child remains, but in a review of multiple cremations Petersen et al. (1974, 49) warned that the seeming prevalence of a combination of child and adult may be a bias caused by the visible difference in child and adult bones. Deposits combining multiple adults only or multiple children only will seldom have been identified as multiple cremations in earlier literature. Thus, it would be unwise to overemphasize the combination of child and adult in these deposits, but seems equally probable that the number of multiple cremation deposits was much higher than has been recorded: earlier excavators may not have looked at cremated bones very closely, and are unlikely to have sought duplicate bones in the warped, cracked, and fragmentary material. Nonetheless, the cremated bones of a child and an adult were deposited together in a notable number of cases.

The presence of the cremated remains from two or more individuals in the same urn in 11 cases, or in the same feature in another 12, raises several possibilities, each of which seems to have applied in at least some cases. Pyre

sites may have been used repeatedly, resulting in mixed residues including bones from several bodies. Ephemeral pyre sites are difficult to identify, and while there are a few cases of pits with fire-reddened sides in the corpus (which may indicate *in situ* pyres or fires into which bones were placed), none of these contain detailed reports on the bones found. Only one cist (Spital Hill cairn 7 cist 2) contained the cremated remains of more than one individual and fire-reddened soil and fire-cracked stones (Dixon 1892, 27–9): these were clearly dumped wholesale into the cist, suggesting that the pyre may have been situated on stony ground immediately nearby. If bodies were cremated at separate events on the same pyre site, and remains then collected up, we might expect to see differences in the processes that affected the bones and/or differences in the quantity of bone present from each individual. In some cases very different quantities of bone are evident: only one fragment of bone from Blawearie cairn 1 cist E was identified as from a child, while 1000g of adult bones were present (Hewitt and Beckensall 1996, 268). In other cases bones showed signs of different processes: while the adult's bones from cremation deposit 4 at Cheviot Walk Wood were scorched and blackened the child's bones were not (Stopford et al. 1985, 122). Other cases provide uncertain evidence, but in these two cases it seems likely that bones were collected together after different cremation events or mixed due to reuse of pyre sites. However, as Harding and Healy (2007, 230) point out in discussing examples from barrows 3 and 5 at Raunds, cremation deposits consisting of only a small amount of bone from a second individual could be explained in other ways—for instance, through disarticulated bone accompanying a corpse on a pyre.

In some cases it seems likely two or more bodies were cremated simultan-eously: for instance, cremated bones from three adults and a child were found in one urn at Kirkhill. The urn was excavated under laboratory conditions and the bones were described as 'being well intermixed when deposited in the urn' (Barlow and Wright in Miket 1974, 186). It is also possible that remains were commingled following two or more separate acts of cremation, in some cases allowing that some bones might be stored in a vessel for some time before others were added, and in other cases that features were reopened and bones added. This seems particularly likely in the cases of vessels where substantial amounts of bone are present from more than one individual.

There are a few cases where there is evidence for successive or simultaneous deposition of cremated remains in the same feature but not the same vessel. At Etal Moor barrow a pit contained two separate cremation deposits in Collared Urns, one associated with a miniature Collared Urn and the other with an Accessory Vessel. One Collared Urn contained the bones of an adult, a bronze pin shank, and a bone pin fragment, and stood upright at the west end of an oval pit, with the miniature Collared Urn between it and a stone slab dividing the pit in two. On the east side of this slab stood the other Collared Urn,

containing the second group of cremated bones and the Accessory Vessel. This arrangement suggests a single act of deposition for both vessels as part of a complex arrangement of vessels, bones, and stone in a pit cut into the ground and covered by a barrow which also yielded three more mortuary deposits (Greenwell 1877, 403–6). In other cases cremation deposits shared the same feature but were not placed in a ceramic container, as at Lilburn Hill Farm cist 1, where 12 discrete deposits of human bone were placed in a cist, each covered with a tiny cairn of three to five pebbles: the first seven located ran down the 'spine' of the cist in small pits in the soil, which, when excavated, yielded another five further down in the fill. The cist also contained a stone with carved rock art, and the stone used for the cover slab was also carved with rock art motifs. The account of the excavation refers to the carved stone in the cist as 'shaped like the apex of a pyramid' (Moffatt 1885, 222), and while I am not aware of any other instances of this in Britain the illustration of one face of this stone clearly depicts the kind of concentric rings common in Northumberland rock art. As with Etal Moor this unusual arrangement of cremation deposits in a cist suggests a very deliberate, structured act of deposition involving multiple human remains and stones. This is unlikely to be the culmination of a typical funeral.

CONCLUSION

Distinct practices, unfolding lines that cohered into traditions, emerged at different times in the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age. Over decades most of these practices became transformed and translated successively in new ways, through new media, new configurations, and new locations. Some took on a more local character than others, though this localization had a distant focus in the case of northern Northumberland after *c.*2200 BC. Some practices lasted much longer than others, and some of the material legacies left by some practices were more enduring than others. During some centuries there was relatively little diversity in depositional practice (e.g. before *c.*2200 BC, after 1700 BC) and in others there was significant diversity. Even within the time of greatest diversity distinct practices or strategies emerged. Some of these suggest differentiation among the dead, but the basis of that differentiation cannot be simply related to a single pattern in social organization. This is not to say that there were no differences in power or identity or no social divisions at the time. Certainly, variations in bodily orientation were meaningfully articulated with the selection of some artefacts, potentially related with different categories of person. Equally, the majority of burials appear to be adult males but there are women and children too, and the choice to bury could be related to a particular need to contain and cover these remains because they

were particularly potent, emotion-laden, powerful, and/or dangerous. Perhaps they could not be released into the cosmos but had to be restrained in potent, increasingly clearly demarcated places that could not be mistaken and which changed the texture of the locale. Or perhaps some had to be anchored in place in a specific way that should be remembered. As the practices differed it is possible that the reasons for deposition did too.

I have started to explore the idea that the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary deposits relate to a funerary process in which the identity of the deceased might be affirmed before being transformed, and have identified various ways that the dead were ritually separated from the living. In so doing I have used typologies, chronologies, and the results of osteological analyses of bones and radiocarbon dating in order to produce a particular arrangement, an assemblage with an specific shape and character. This has to some extent packed specific deposits together into black boxes like SN Beaker burials or cremations within cists, and I have argued this is a crucial step in understanding the workings, the innards, the intra-actions within, through, and beyond these black boxes. In the process of characterizing each deposit (including many not discussed explicitly in this chapter) I have amplified key features that are particularly effective in the wider assemblage, and reduced others (e.g. I have not discussed feature depth). In the process I have attended to past relations, and to the ways that the properties of deposits arose relationally from their place in the wider, unfolding, assemblage.

The activities I have focused on within this chapter set up the conditions for understanding specific stages in mortuary practices, particularly the rites of separation between the living and the recently deceased, and the transformation of the dead. While many of the phenomena I have drawn out also relate to rites of incorporation, in order to explore these more fully we need to turn to explore the emergence of funerary grounds, locating the dead in relation to one another, and location of the dead in the landscape. We should also not overlook deposits of pots, quernstone fragments, cup-marked stones, and other objects and materials at cairns and barrows which did not accompany human remains. Such practices will be considered in the next chapter, along with narratives of site development in order to shed further light on the relational emergence of persons, communities, things, materials, and places alongside one another.

5

Changing places, changing communities

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines how Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices were woven into and transformed places and landscapes in North-East England. Mortuary practices transformed locales just as they transformed the living and the dead: they could change the texture of such places temporarily, but could also leave an enduring material legacy which affected future interactions locally. This chapter explores the locations chosen for mortuary activity, including the funerary transformation of the recently deceased, burial, intercession with the dead, and production of cemeteries and mounds. It starts by describing the key features of landscapes of North-East England that became intertwined with mortuary activity, before outlining the patterns in where the dead were buried, using the chronological and typological inversions devised in Chapter 4. Next, it examines the changing character of places where the dead were assembled: sites with isolated burials, cemeteries, cairns, barrows, henges, and rock shelters. Finally, it delves into the composition of and evidence for other activities at some of these locales, situating the treatment of the dead within other practices. Throughout, it examines the changing relationships among the assembly of communities of living and dead human beings, places, routine and less frequent practices, plants and animals, earth, stone, and water. The chapter culminates in a discussion of death in the translation of place, landscape, and community which explores how some of the effects of past relationships, encapsulated in cairns, for instance, came to act recurrently in the landscape. As a whole, the chapter appreciates places and landscapes as unfolding assemblages textured by mortuary activities, and continues to unpack useful archaeological inversions about the character of mortuary sites in order to explore past relations.

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPES
OF NORTH-EAST ENGLAND

Landscape, environment, and places of inhabitation

The landscape of North-East England falls from the upland heights of the North Pennines and Cheviots in the west through river valleys and the Milfield Basin to rolling hills in the east, and finally coastal cliffs and rocky headlands with sandy beaches, estuaries, and river mouths by the sea. Caves and rock shelters can be found in the fell sandstones, and there are numerous rivers, streams (or burns), and rock outcrops. The geology of the North Pennines and the East Durham Plateau is mainly limestone, while that of the Cheviot Hills consists of hard igneous rocks, mainly granite and andesite. There are substantial gravel river terraces in some regions (e.g. the Milfield Basin in northern Northumberland). Over the thousands of years since the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age, and even within the period, soils were on the move, and we have to bear in mind an ongoing and sporadic process by which material from the uplands became displaced, land surfaces in some places were truncated and in others (or even in the same places at a different time) became buried under 'hillwash' in this dynamic assemblage. Importantly, while today there is a notable difference between the soils and land-uses of upland and more lowland areas, Tipping (2010, 178) explains that the prehistoric pollen record suggests there were soils easily capable of supporting agriculture in upland areas such as the sandstone hills on which sites like Chatton Sandyford or Blawearie were situated, though this is not to say that cereal crops were grown *throughout* the period in such places. The climate varied throughout the period, with palaeo-environmental evidence suggesting that precipitation levels were highest from centuries before *c*.2500 BC through to *c*.2200 BC (Tipping 2010, 170–1). This was a period of falling average temperatures and increasing frequencies of storms and floodwater; overall a wetter and cooler climate in Britain than previously, and with a particularly cold period *c*.2550–2330 BC (Passmore and Waddington 2012, 142). The landscape was probably vegetationally diverse, with alder and other wetland species predominating in river valleys, birch, oak, hazel, and other broadleaf species in woodlands on hillsides, and some grassland and cereal cultivation particularly after *c*.2200 BC (142–3, 195–6; Tipping 2010).

A layer of occupation debris found associated with *c*.200 sherds of AOC and LC Beaker pottery from Ross Links on the Northumbrian coast suggests a community inhabiting the coastal zone *c*.2500–2250 BC (Brewis and Buckley 1928; Tait 1965, 12–15). The debris was preserved in sand dunes over 2m deep, and based on further sand. The preservation conditions here are unusual, and such occupation debris elsewhere may well have been eroded and truncated, or covered under metres of soil and yet to be recovered. However,

the scarcity of such early Beaker styles in graves compared with subsequent SN Beakers is notable. Either the Ross Links occupation site was unusual at the time, or burial was very seldom practised by those using AOC and LC Beakers in the region. Waddington (2011, 296) has illustrated that some locales in the Milfield Basin were revisited repeatedly throughout the Neolithic and Chalcolithic into the Early Bronze Age, suggesting that at least in the lowlands early patterns of inhabitation and land use had an enduring effect on later ones. He envisions an expansion of settlement activity into the uplands of the Cheviots and the sandstone hills to the east of the Milfield Basin during the later third millennium, supporting the local palaeo-environmental record with parallels from County Durham and the North Yorks Moors, each of which provides evidence for localized deforestation (306). However, Tipping (2010, 173) warns that these examples are rare, and that there is little evidence for widespread deforestation in the pollen record. At the same time there is most evidence for cereal agriculture in the palaeo-environmental record *c*.2850–1150 BC in the form of *Hordeum* type pollen from the northern Cheviots, which Tipping interprets as derived from barley (2010, 173). At least some cereal agriculture took place in the uplands, then, and Tipping's analyses point to a pattern of dispersed settlement and low-level agriculture in fields among woodlands with few areas of open grassland (174–7). The harsher climate in the Chalcolithic may actually have been responsible for attracting further upland occupation by curtailing woodland growth. Livestock may have been grazed among woods and grasslands (and at times on cultivated fields), in both uplands and lowlands throughout the second and perhaps most of the third millennium BC.

Some small Neolithic and Chalcolithic timber-post structures, associated with what seems most likely to be the debris of routine practices, are known from northern Northumberland (Waddington 2011, 291–7). Excavations at Milfield village have discovered arrangements of postholes which may have supported structural elements of houses, at least one of which dates to *c*.2120–1880 BC (Passmore and Waddington 2012, 153). Waddington (2011, 295) points out that all are located on 'sand and gravel terraces in low-lying settings and less than 2km from a river' and cites overlapping densities in the distribution of stone tools. Few of the sites identified as unenclosed settlements of circular buildings on hillside platforms and terraces have been excavated, but some of those that have were built in the later Early Bronze Age. A house demarcated by a ring ditch at Lookout Plantation, near Etal, yielded charcoal samples from two postholes either side of a probable entrance (orientated to the south-west), both of which date to the Early Bronze Age (1920–1510 BC and 1890–1490 BC: Monaghan 1994, 37). Similar sites have been found in Peeblesshire and in Lanarkshire, including the cluster of 31 unenclosed house platforms on the lower slopes of a hill at Lintshie Gutter, Lanarkshire. The five that were excavated date from the earlier or mid-second millennium BC (Terry

1995), though the pottery from the site includes sherds from Cordoned Urns as well as plain bucket-shaped vessels which were probably in use throughout much of the second millennium. Other finds included a quernstone, a cup-marked stone, and a then-ancient and damaged Neolithic polished stone axehead found close to the entrance and perhaps fulfilling some magical or apotropaic purpose (cf. Edmonds 2012). These houses were all circular, built with wooden posts and on platforms that had been cut level into a hillside. It seems likely that by the early second millennium circular dwellings were part of the architectural repertoire in the region (Marshall and Waddington in Passmore and Waddington 2012, 191–5). Other occupation evidence is ephemeral and enigmatic, such as the pit-hearth radiocarbon dated to 2130–1770 BC and discovered underneath a burnt mound at Titlington Mount, Northumberland (Topping 1998). One or two carbonized remains each of barley, hazelnut shell, and wheat were identified from a sample of the associated land surface, and pollen from the site indicates this hearth was set in scrub woodland which saw clearance during the mid-second millennium (Huntley in Topping 1998; Innes in Topping 1998). This hearth was overlaid by a mound of burnt stones, charcoal, and black silts and set 4m from a stream: between the hearth and the stream a flat-bottomed pit or trough was dug. Various uses have been proposed for burnt mounds which result from using a trough and hot stone to boil water repeatedly, including as sweat lodges, cooking sites, and brewing technology (e.g. Barfield and Hodder 1987; Quinn and Moore 2007). Across the British Isles burnt mounds are common, though few have been located in North-East England (Cowley 1991, 119).

There is still much we do not know about the everyday inhabitation of the landscape, but it is clear that by *c*.2500 BC certain forms of agriculture had been practised in the region for around 1000 years: dairying, for instance, is implied by the composition of residues on Beaker as well as earlier pottery (Passmore and Waddington 2012, 297); cereals and chaff have been found in Neolithic pits in northern Northumberland; and seeds, nutshells (especially hazel), and fruitstones indicate gathering of 'wild' resources (Passmore and Waddington 2012)—probably within a carefully managed habitat in which at least hazel was encouraged (298). There is some evidence for terracing in the Cheviots associated with cereal cultivation *c*.1750–1500 BC at Brough (Passmore and Waddington 2012, 194). Cairnfields—hillsides littered with tens to hundreds of cairns often less than 2m in diameter—are found throughout the uplands of the region and often incorporate cairns that include mortuary deposits (Johnston 2000). These are difficult to date accurately, but probably emerge out of Early Bronze Age land clearance. Thus, the landscape was shaped in part by a long history of practices such as herding cattle, clearing and tending plots of land, growing cereal crops (probably in small field plots associated with settlement and, perhaps, in this period only a significant propositon after *c*.2200 BC—Stevens and Fuller 2012), maintaining stands of hazel and

possibly other nut- and fruit-bearing trees and other plants, collecting beeswax and honey, and perhaps the encouragement of reed beds and other activities that nurtured favoured partnerships with animals, plants, light, and water. Hunting, trapping, fishing, and fowling can also be imagined.

It is important, however, to add some caveats to this narrative. The settlement evidence is extremely partial and difficult to interpret, and upland and lowland have since experienced very different histories of land use making it difficult to conjoin the evidence for their settlement in prehistory. Alongside isolated round wooden or stone dwellings in the uplands, at least late in the period, we could imagine a range of ephemeral and substantial buildings in the lowland areas from which only footprints or spreads of comminuted occupation debris remain. Some settlements could have been occupied permanently by some people but temporarily by others—or settlements could have shifted frequently. Small-scale agriculture was perhaps practised throughout the period as part of a broader spectrum of subsistence activities, though perhaps varying in its emphasis on particular crops and animals and with increased evidence of tended plots of land later on. The dispersed settlement patterns and lack of clearly demarcated fields may indicate that intensive hierarchies and ranked differences are unlikely to have featured in relations of production, and there is no evidence for economic intensification, social nucleation, or substantial elaboration of the architecture of dwelling places. There is no clear evidence as to what systems of land tenure, sharing, belonging, ownership, or inheritance were operating. Nonetheless, agricultural products such as herd animals may well have been a source of strength for these communities, providing key oxygen to the bloodstream of the relations that extended well beyond local hills and valleys.

Other persistent places in northern Northumberland

Some places were inhabited continuously or recurrently and the traces of past interactions persisted in the changing nature of local places. As well as the formation of particular ecologies and topographies this extended to the production of places that archaeologists translate as 'monuments'. By 2500 BC the landscapes of North-East England already featured some monumental cairns and barrows. Copt Hill, County Durham, was reused as a locale for burial during the period (Young 1985), while the cist and probable cairn at Dour Hill (and two other round mounds) were situated within 250m of a Neolithic long cairn in northern Northumberland (Waddington et al. 1998). All of the Neolithic long cairns that have been identified lay high up above river valleys that cut down through the Cheviots (e.g. Dod Hill), Redesdale (Dour Hill chambered cairn, Bellshiel Law long cairn), or Tynedale (Devil's Lapful). Some of the unexcavated round mounds from the region (Map 5.1) may be Neolithic
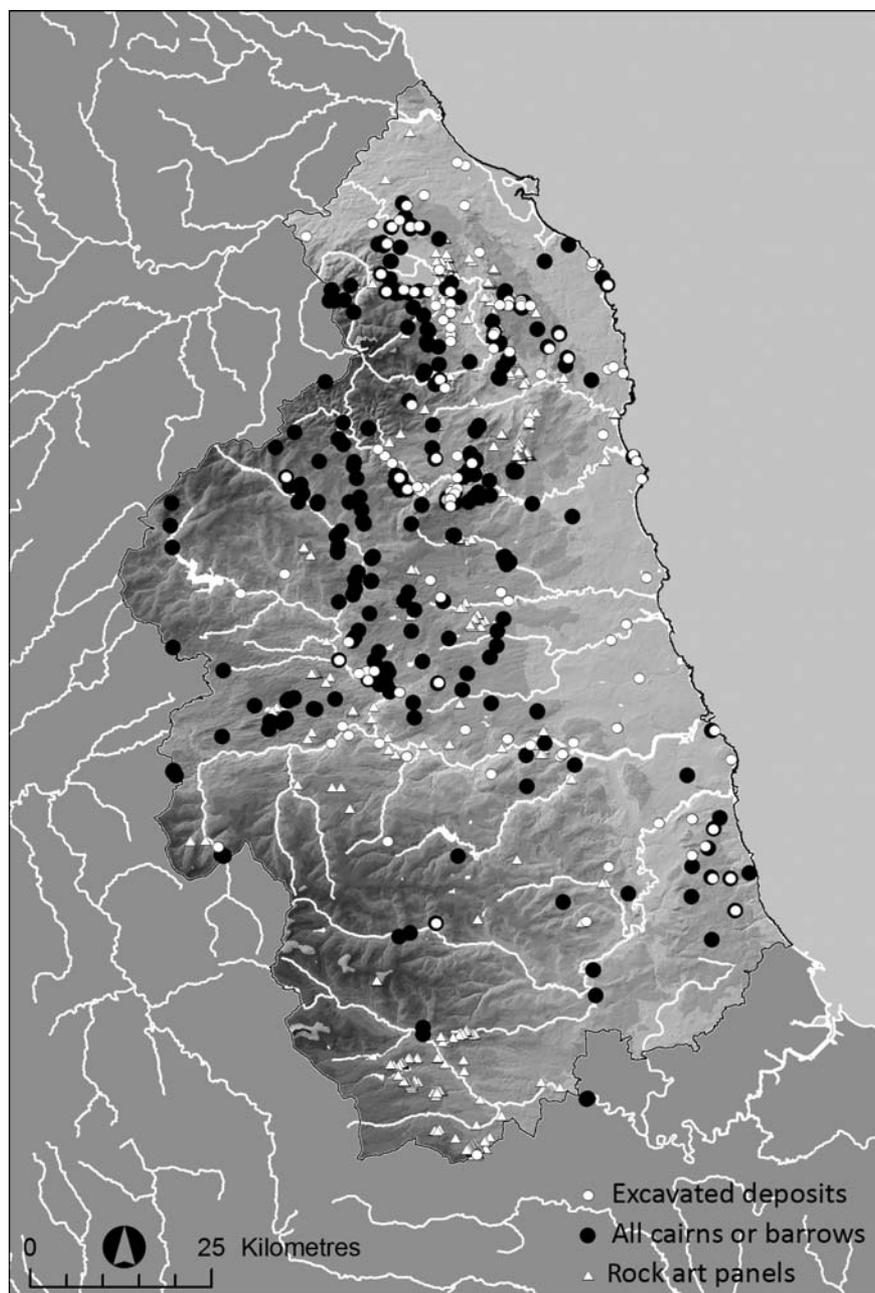
Map 5.1 Distribution of mortuary deposits included in the dataset, all other known cairns and barrows, and rock art panels

in date—as well as Copt Hill, a round barrow at Warden Law in Tyne and Wear dates to the Neolithic (Trechmann 1914, 163–6). With the exception of Dour Hill, these Neolithic monuments do not seem to have become a focus for Early Bronze Age burial grounds, even if the mounds themselves were reused as cemeteries.

Besides monuments that explicitly covered the remains of the dead, other monuments materialized during the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age in very specific parts of the landscape (Map 5.2). What is perhaps best described as an extended complex of circular monuments runs through the Milfield Basin in a generally north–south direction along the course of the rivers Til and Glen. Eight to ten small henges (less than 50m in diameter) have already been identified as part of this riverside complex which was also the site of timber circles, ring ditches, and probably barrows long since destroyed (e.g. the western and the eastern ring ditches at Yeavering: Hope-Taylor 1977). Richards (1996) has pointed out that the entrances to these henges run parallel with the passage of the nearby river, directing the movement of people from one site to another. Harding (2012) has stressed the role of henges around the confluence of the rivers Ure and Swale in Yorkshire as marking movement into the Pennines along a vital routeway to the west. He argues that these wove together the movement of people, water (they are located near clusters of springs as well as rivers), and, partly through the orientation of henge entrances, possibly celestial bodies. Indeed, monument complexes seem to occur in specific landscapes in northern Britain, marking major routeways (Noble 2006, 190–2), and the Milfield Basin indeed supplies a vital route through the landscape of North-East England and South-East Scotland (Waddington 2011, 305). Another major routeway through the hills connecting the Tyne with the Eden Valley (the route of the current A69 from Newcastle to Carlisle), and the east coast with the Solway Firth, is marked by a series of stone circles and barrows running westwards from near one of the sources of the River Irthing (Maps 5.1; 5.2).

While the large henges of Orkney may date from early in the third millennium, and those from Wessex from the middle of the millennium, excavations in Scotland have shown smaller henges were constructed sporadically across the late third and second millennia BC (Bradley 2011). Most of the ditch fills from the Northumbrian henges and associated ring ditches that have been excavated contain small sherds from large vessels which do not seem to be Grooved Ware (though this has been recovered within the basin from Late Neolithic occupation sites) and may mostly be what Millson et al. (2011) call 'Neolithic-derivative' vessels. The assemblage is varied, however, and some sherds of Grooved Ware and two of AOC Beaker were found at Yeavering during excavation of an Anglo-Saxon complex built over two large ring ditches and various other features including burials (Ferrell 1990), while Food Vessel sherds have also been found at the excavated henges (Gibson 2002). Charcoal
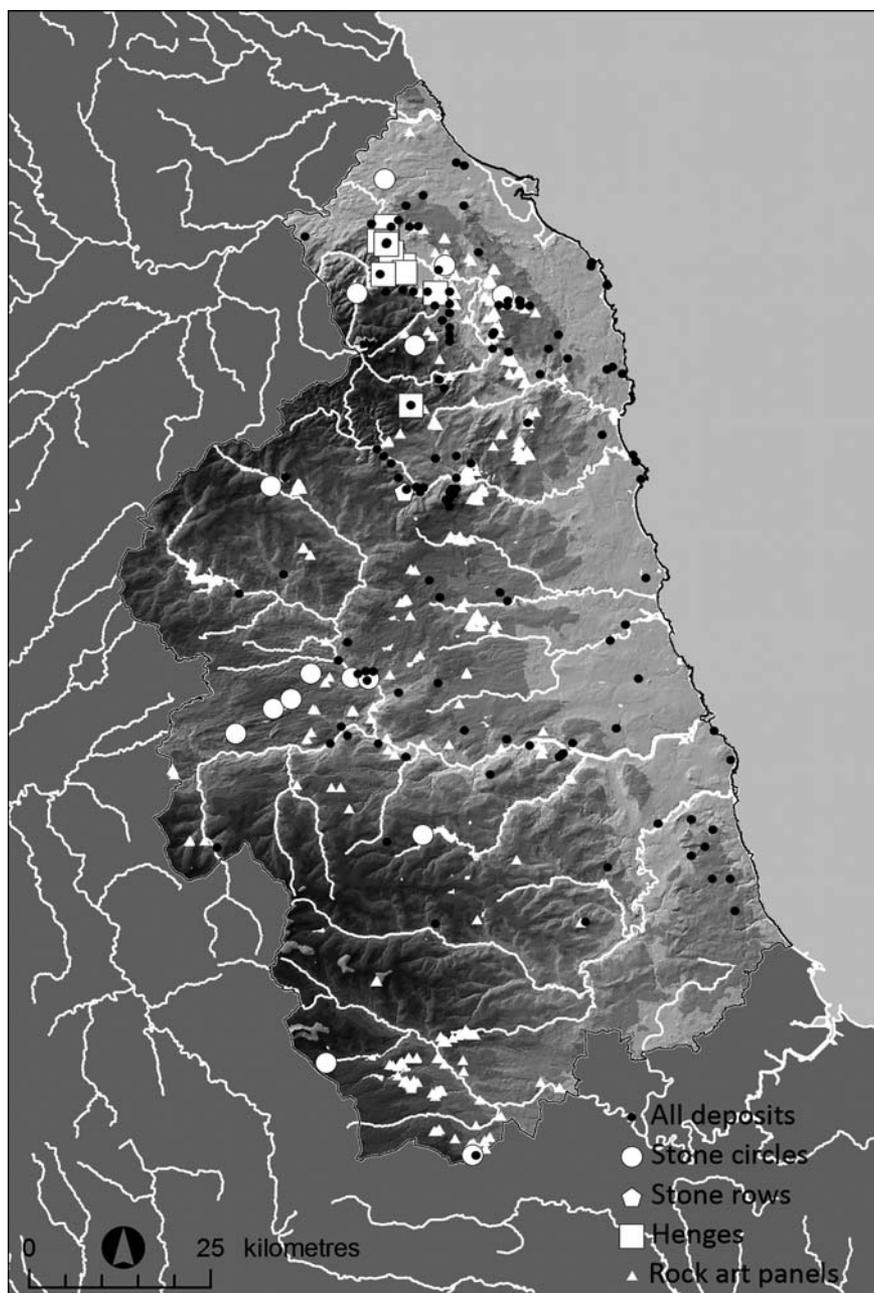
Map 5.2 Distribution of henges, stone circles, stone rows, rock art panels, and the mortuary deposits in the dataset

samples from the primary silts in a ditch terminal from Milfield North provided a date of 2300–2040 BC (Harding 1981, 134). Cremated bone from several features at the Whitton Hill henge (or site 1) and a ring ditch (here referred to as site 2 or henge 2), both with interior timber circles and exterior pits, was radiocarbon dated in research for this book, and can be combined with existing dates from these sites. The earliest date obtained during research for this book, 3361–3103 BC, comes from cremated bone found in the upper fill of the ditch at Whitton Hill henge 1. This fill consisted of soil, burnt hazelnuts, charcoal, and substantial chunks of burnt timber, and overlaid a thick layer of stone packing which covered the primary fills of the ditch. The timber charcoal was radiocarbon dated to 2300–1800 BC (BM-2265) and 2300–1980 BC (BM-2206). I would suggest that this fill relates to the reworking of an already ancient place which may originally have seen some burial of cremated remains in the later fourth millennium and the construction of the ditch and timber circle some time in the late third millennium. Cemeteries of cremated remains from the late fourth millennium are known from other regions, and have been found during the excavation of places that were enclosed by henges and/or palisade enclosures in the later Neolithic, as at Forteviot, Fife (Noble and Brophy 2011) and Stonehenge (Parker Pearson et al. 2009), and something similar may have existed here. The reworking of Whitton Hill henge 1 is itself difficult to date, jumbling together the enduring material legacies of previous activity. It is possible it was contemporary with the burial of the cremated remains of an adult, whose bones have now been radiocarbon dated to 1889–1693 BC, in a large pit at the centre of the site, but the burial of another set of cremated remains found in the south-east of the site and now dated to 1426–1270 BC, gives a sense of the extended duration over which burial was practised here intermittently (see Fowler and Gamble forthcoming). At present the assemblage is most closely knit around *c*.2300–2000 BC as the period when the henge ditches and banks were produced.

Most of the rock art in North-East England is clustered on hillsides around river valleys, including a notable concentration around the Milfield Basin (Map 5.1). The art is carved or pecked into the rock, and mainly consists of cup marks, cup-and-ring marks, and cup-and-ring marks with radial lines running from the centre through the circles and sometimes leading to a tail or merging into lines penetrating other rings. It is notoriously difficult to date rock art. Excavations at rock art sites in Kilmartin, Argyll, led Jones and Riggott (2011) to conclude that the art, which is similar to that in Northumberland, was carved *c*.2500–2400 BC, while others suggest that at least simple cup marks originate in the earlier Neolithic. Indeed, rock carving may have taken place in two or more periods (Waddington 2011, 300–2). It has been suggested that the placement of carvings on the sandstone hills immediately to the south and east of the Milfield Basin selected outcrops and boulders that

were intervisible, guiding movement along these hills and down towards the basin (Bradley 1997, figure 5.5). This might parallel the complex of henges guiding movement along the far bank of the River Till. Recent study also suggests that the radial lines of cup-and-ring mark motifs pointed out over the basin, often directly towards specific henges, standing stones, or other rock art panels (Lawson 2011). This could suggest either that henges enclosed places that were already earlier foci for gatherings, that henges and rock art were contemporary, or that the rock art traced a connection with densely inhabited places which were later commemorated by constructing henges. As Freedman et al. (2011) point out, interpretations of rock art often emphasize mobile hunting, gathering, or pastoral communities, yet there is good evidence for at least *some* sedentism and agriculture in prehistoric landscapes such as the Kilmartin Valley and, I think, North-East England. Like clusters of henges, densities of rock art accumulated around key routeways. But such landscapes may also have been densely inhabited by communities who practised a mixed subsistence economy. The degree and nature of mobility and sedentism in the later third millennium is still unclear, but may have been diverse.

Complex rock carvings such as cup-and-ring marks are arguably part of a series of closely related and evolving cosmological systems that emerged in the Later Neolithic and extended well into the Early Bronze Age. A circular arrangement of space dissected by a linear passage is a key feature of passage grave architecture (e.g. Robin 2010) and has affinities with the design of henges (Bradley 1997). Arguably such principles mutated into practices materialized in and supported by the architecture of some timber circles, stone circles, and other sites, such as recumbent stone circles in North-East Scotland (Welfare 2011) and Clava cairns in eastern Scotland (Bradley 2000). It is notable that south-westerly orientations were common among passage graves, recumbent stone circles, and Clava cairns—and, Jones and Watson (2011) have added, to decorated rock surfaces in Kilmartin. At the same time the *motifs* in Kilmartin were often orientated to the south-east. This is worth setting alongside the southerly direction that third-millennium burials faced in North-East England, with heads positioned either to the east or west, and the orientation of cremation deposits at the southerly quadrant of circular sites, particularly the south-east and south-west (discussed below). The cup-and-ring marked stones of Northumberland, the Northumbrian henge monuments, and even the stone-kerbed enclosures that became burial mounds, could all be seen as local translations and manifestations of some of the key features of cosmologies which endured and/or recurred for hundreds of years across various parts of Britain and Ireland.

Standing stones, alone, in small groups or rows and in circles, are also present in the region (Map 5.2), as are timber circles and ring ditches. Lines of pits running across the sand and gravel terraces of the Milfield Basin probably held timber posts (Miket 1981; Waddington 2011, 304). Some may date to the

later Neolithic, Chalcolithic, or Early Bronze Age (Passmore and Waddington 2012, 179), most are very long rows of posts which bear some resemblance to the Barleycroft post alignments, Cambridgeshire, which probably date from the later Bronze Age (Evans and Knight 2001), but also to the Eweford East pit alignment in East Lothian, dated to the early to mid-third millennium BC (Shearer and McLellan 2008, 53–68). As well as such long lines of single posts, shorter double rows of posts lie over 100m to the north of the north entrance to the Milfield North henge (Harding 1981). It is difficult to obtain reliable dates for the construction of standing stones and stone circles, but recent excavations at Duddo stone circle in northern Northumberland dated charcoal from the holes into which the stones were set to *c.*2200–1950 BC (Edwards et al. 2011, 340–1). The Duddo circle is set on rolling low hills and at present provides a very wide vista including views of the Cheviots to the east and the Lammermuir Hills to the far north (Figure 5.1). It is possible, though this is only tentative given the paucity of evidence for settlement in the region, that the circular forms of the stone and timber circles and the henges also reflected the circularity of dwellings, as has been suggested in Orkney (Richards 1990), at Durrington Walls, for Stonehenge, and elsewhere in the British Isles during the very end of the Neolithic and the Chalcolithic (Thomas 2010). Circular spaces were created at a variety of scales and perhaps for a variety of reasons.

These are some of the transformations to the Northumbrian landscape that pre-existed and/or emerged alongside the mortuary practices outlined in Chapter 4. These landscapes consisted of a rich panoply of different actants. These are most evident in northern Northumberland thanks in part to the landscape research that has been focused there, but other landscapes attracted similar actants, with the exception of the henges. For instance, the rock art is spread unevenly along hillsides forming upper river valleys, with two dense clusters up in the hills: one on the sandstone hills of northern Northumberland, and the other around Barningham Moor in the North Pennines. The landscape around North Tynedale is home to a series of stone circles, while

Figure 5.1 Duddo stone circle, looking east. Photograph by the author

Upper Coquetdale boasts nucleated barrow cemeteries and clusters of rock art panels (Map 5.2). Lines of becoming, drawing together, permeating and forming different entities throughout the region included herding and grazing, sowing and harvesting, gathering and hunting, dwelling in place, moving into and along river valleys, carving rocks, working on monuments, and increasingly, depositing the remains of the dead.

BURIALS WITHIN THE LANDSCAPE

Parameters for appreciating relationships within the landscape

We may in some places be able to locate the burial sites in relation to some of the find-spots and cairnfields that indicate land clearance, occupation, or agricultural practice. However, much of this evidence is difficult to date securely, complex, and patchy: further work could enhance this picture, but at present this assemblage will concentrate on the relation of mortuary sites to one another, to other contemporary or pre-existing monuments, and to key enduring landscape features like peaks, rock outcrops, bodies of water, and broad categories of landscape zones such as upland, coastal, or lowland. For the purposes of this study 'near' refers to within 500m and 'upland' refers to locations around or above 200m elevation. The term 'round mound' is used in preference to cairn or barrow since most of the monuments were assembled from some combination of earth and stone, and while most 'barrows' might have started as cairns and silted up over time it seems unlikely from examining their composition that any distinction between those with more or less stone was particularly significant beyond the presence or absence of a kerb.

Locating the dead: burials with Beakers *c.*2450–2100 BC

The earliest Beaker burials exhibit some variety in landscape location, though all seem likely to have been isolated burials at the time when they were deposited. There is little evidence that these deposits were usually accompanied by others in short periods of time (Table 5.1). The second Kirkhaugh barrow contained a cist *c.*60cm in length and built standing on the land surface, which was empty when excavated in the 1930s. A fragment of stone rubber, animal bones, and an antler tine were found next to the cist. It seems possible that this barrow originally covered a burial like that at Kirkhaugh mound 1 which was disturbed during the Early Bronze Age, and a small cist inserted. On the other hand, the entire monument might have been constructed after *c.*2150 BC. Kirkhaugh probably overlooked a key routeway

Table 5.1 Location of burial and type of site for deposits containing Beakers likely to date to *c.*2450–2200 BC: Low-Carinated or Mid-Carinated and Tall Short-Necked Beaker deposits

Site, Beaker type	Location	Type of site
Amble (TSN)	Coastal, near mouth of River Coquet	Isolated cist, but in area with at least 40 other known (undated) deposits
High Knowes cairnfield A cairn 2 (AOC, LC?)	Cheviot uplands; hillside, on slope above burn	Grave covered by small cairn (2m diameter); isolated burial (part of cairnfield but deposits from other features are later)
Kirkhaugh cairn 1 (AOC, LC/ MC?)	Upland river valley, on terrace above the NE bank of the South Tyne	Barrow (*c.*7.3m diameter)—a second barrow is located 400m away and covered a short cist with no human remains or diagnostic artefacts
North Hazelrigg (2 TSN)	Upland hillside, with view of Milfield Basin and Cheviots	Isolated cist
West Wharmley (TSN)	Hillside overlooking the south bank of the South Tyne, 3km from confluence with the North Tyne	Isolated cist

through the hills towards the area of the enclosure and stone circle at Long Meg and her Daughters, the Penrith henges, and beyond. A couple of rock art panels are located just across the river from the barrow, and the first of a series of six stone circles lies 14km to the north (Maps 4.1; 5.2). While overlooking the river valley it is also overshadowed by the higher hills immediately to the north.

An upland hillside location seems to be common for early burials and it is notable that none of the many excavated sites from lowland or lower hill areas have yet yielded deposits with such artefacts. We could suggest that those selected for deposition during this period were brought to the boundaries between the lowlands and the uplands, or in some cases taken well into the uplands as at High Knowes cairnfield A cairn 2, a probable close contemporary to Kirkhaugh. In general such early cairns and barrows seem to be dispersed rather than nucleated. They did not join an existing community of the dead, in that there were no other burials in these locations—though such places may have been used to scatter ashes or expose bodies. While most evidence for occupation (e.g. lithic scatters) has been recovered from the low-lying areas such as the Milfield Basin, given the overall picture of a patchwork landscape these burial sites may have been near places of occupation.

As a whole, most of the burials with SN Beakers were isolated burials (Table 5.2; Map 4.1), although two cists at Dilston Park were built in close proximity to one another and appear to be contemporary. Rayheugh provides

Table 5.2 Location of burial and type of site for deposits with SN Beakers, and Cartington, *c.*2300–2100 BC

Site, Beaker type	Location	Type of site
Altonside (SN)	River terrace	Isolated cist
Ancroft (SN)	Hillside, near confluence of three burns	Isolated cist
Bluebell Inn (SN)	Low hills above coast	Isolated cist
Brandon (SN)	Hillside	Isolated cist
Cartington (?)	Upland hillside near to head of stream	Isolated cist
Dilston Park cist A (3 SN)	Ridge along hillside, overlooking the confluence of Devil's Water and the Tyne	One of two cists
Dilston Park cist B (2 SN)	Ridge along hillside, overlooking the confluence of Devil's Water and the Tyne	One of two cists
High Buston (SN)	Low hills overlooking valley and coast	Isolated cist
Lilburn South Steads (SN)	Hillside near stream and with view of river	Isolated cist or part of dispersed cemetery
Rayheugh (SN?/ HBSP?)	Hilltop in uplands near stream	Circular kerb, round mound covering burial. 1 of at least 4 similar round mounds (15–18m diameter). Other 3 covered cists which yielded no finds
Rosebrough Moor cairn 1 cist (SN)	Hillside near stream	Single cist within mound (7.5m diameter). 400m from location of 3 round cairns, two with central burials (one with a miniature Collared Urn)
Sacriston (SN)	Hillside, near to head of stream	Isolated cist
Smalesmouth (SN)	Upland hillside overlooking North Tyne, near to confluence of stream with North Tyne	Isolated cist
Summerhill cist 1 (SN)	Hills near riverside	One of 4 cists within 400m
The Sneep (SN)	Upland river valley close to river	Isolated cist
Woodhorn (SN)	Low hills above coast	Isolated cist

an example of a mound constructed over a Beaker burial which may perhaps date to this period, but while the vessel meets the description of an SN or High-Bellied Beaker it did not survive the nineteenth century AD for analysis. The burials that can be most firmly attributed to this period were mainly located in riverine locations, or near to streams, sometimes on the edges of uplands. The heads of streams and confluences of streams or rivers seem to have been particularly favourable locales for burial.

Table 5.3 Landscape locations for cists containing burials with bronze daggers or knife-daggers

Site type	Upload	Coastal	Hillside	Hilltop	Near stream/ river	With view of river
Daggers (5)	0	1	2	1	3	3
Knife-daggers (3)	0	1	2	0	3	3

Locating burials with daggers and knife-daggers, *c*.2200–1950 BC

The set of burials in cists with daggers or knife-daggers is very small, but none are from upland locations, while six of the eight are close to streams or rivers (Table 5.3; Map 4.2). Reaverhill was situated on a low summit near to a stone circle, now destroyed, on a confluence of the North Tyne and Simonburn. None of the cists containing daggers were covered with substantial mounds that survived to recovery and none were within cemeteries, although Lilburn South Steads is within a landscape with (probably later) dispersed burials. Dagger burials fit with the pattern of earlier and contemporary Beaker burials, where the buried dead seem to have been isolated from one another. Only one of the knife-daggers was found in a cist that attracted later burials and a cairn made of beach pebbles, at Warkworth on a rocky headland to the south of the mouth of the River Coquet overlooking Coquet Island.

Unfolding locales and emerging communities of the dead: burials with Beakers *c*.2200–1850 BC

Although those deposits buried with other styles of Beaker that date to *c*.2200–2000 BC often shared similar features of landscape location with TSN and SN Beakers, these deposits more often became incorporated into cemeteries (Table 5.4). The other features in such cemeteries may, however, be decades or centuries later than these initial burials. Beaker burials from this period were often sited on hills overlooking rivers or lowland areas (Map 4.4).

Late Beakers accompanied bodies buried at locales of a type not previously used for Beaker burial, such as the Milfield Basin henges and ring ditches, or the area within the kerbed ring cairn at Chatton Sandyford (see Table 5.5). All of these monuments became burial grounds. The cist where cremated remains were buried with a GSP Beaker at Low Hauxley was covered by a small cairn in the vicinity of a series of other cist burials with small cairns.

Table 5.4 The location and type of site chosen for Beaker burials which probably date to 2200–2000 BC

Site, Beaker type	Location	Type of site
Clara Vale (LN early)	Hillside overlooking River Tyne	Isolated cist
Ellsnook (TMC)	Hillside near stream	Isolated cist
Farnham (TMC)	Upland hillside overlooking river valley	Uncertain—may be isolated or part of cemetery of pits and cists
Hasting Hill cist 1 (HBSP?)	Hilltop overlooking river valley	Probably isolated cist initially, later burials, round mound
Low Trewhitt cist 1 (SP)	On slope of hillside above a burn	Central cist within a round mound that contained two other cists
Pace Hill (LN early)	One of two distinctive natural mounds; hillside near stream, with view of river	Short graves within a cemetery of cists cut into natural knoll
Shipley (LN early)	Edge of plateaux close to the confluence of burn and river Aln	Isolated cist
Summerhill cist 4 (HBSP)	Hills near riverside	One of 4 cists within 400m

Table 5.5 Location and type of site chosen for burials with late Beakers, *c.*2100–1850 BC

Site, Beaker type	Landscape location	Type of site (final form); isolated or part of group	Location within site
Chatton Sandyford cairn 1 grave 1 (GSP)	Upland ridge near stream	Kerbed round cairn; one of two large cairns	Central
Chatton Sandyford cairn 1 grave 2 (GSP)	Upland ridge near stream	Kerbed round cairn; one of two large cairns	Just west of centre
Chatton Sandyford cairn 1 grave 3 (WC late)	Upland ridge near stream	Kerbed round cairn; one of two large cairns	South-east
Low Hauxley cist 1 (GSP)	Coastal	Cist; one of group of cists, most covered by cairns	N/a
Milfield North henge pit B (LN later)	River terrace	Timber circle, henge	2m south of centre
Milfield North henge pit C (GSP)	River terrace	Timber circle, henge	Centre

Unfolding locales and emerging communities of the dead: deposits with Food Vessels *c.*2150–1750 BC

As argued in Chapter 4, crouched inhumation in cists with Food Vessels probably dates to *c.*2150–1850 BC. These share similarities with Beaker and dagger burials from the same period in that a number are isolated cist burials,

a few coming from cemeteries and some found at round mounds (Table 5.6). Coastal locations emerged as suitable locales for crouched burials with Food Vessels. The coastal locations chosen may have been very specific, and developed into nucleated cemeteries. For instance, some of the largest aggregations of cist burials have been identified near to rocky headlands on the juncture between two bays, as at Amble, Warkworth, and Seahouses.

Cremated remains deposited with Food Vessels invariably clustered into burial grounds, most of which were located on hillsides and many of which were near a stream or river (Tables 5.7; 5.8; Map 4.5). Round mounds often accumulated and/or covered multiple deposits. Upland locales were becoming favoured over lowland or coastal ones as cists ceased to be used to contain the cremated remains of the dead. This preference for upland hillsides might indicate the need to provide a view for the dead or of the dead, and/or it may relate to increased density or frequency of inhabitation on upland hillsides. Enlarged Food Vessel Urns were buried at cairns and barrows, but also at a rock shelter and in a natural knoll, and one was placed inverted on the cover slab of a cist containing a burial with an SN Beaker at Rosebrough Moor cairn 1. They were always placed upside down, all are from northern Northumberland, and all but one are from hills or uplands (Map 5.3).

A set apart? Cremation deposits with Collared Urns

There were 18 mortuary deposits which contained Collared Urns (Map 5.4; Table 5.9). There are notable clusters of burials with Collared Urns at the north end of the Milfield Basin and in Upper Coquetdale; two of the landscapes where dense clusters of monuments accumulated by the end of the Early Bronze Age. Others have been found across the Kyloe Hills, and single examples from North Tynedale, Birkside Fell, and Crawley Edge, Weardale, in the North Pennines: as well as having upland locations these last two sites are both solo deposits with strong architectural similarities (see below). While there are nineteenth- and early twentieth-century accounts of what are probably Collared Urns from Tyne and Wear and County Durham, insufficient records of mortuary deposits associated with these could be located for analysis. Cremations within Collared Urns were rarely buried at sites containing Food Vessel pottery and never at sites where Beaker pottery was previously present. No cremations with Collared Urns have yet been found at the Milfield Basin henges.
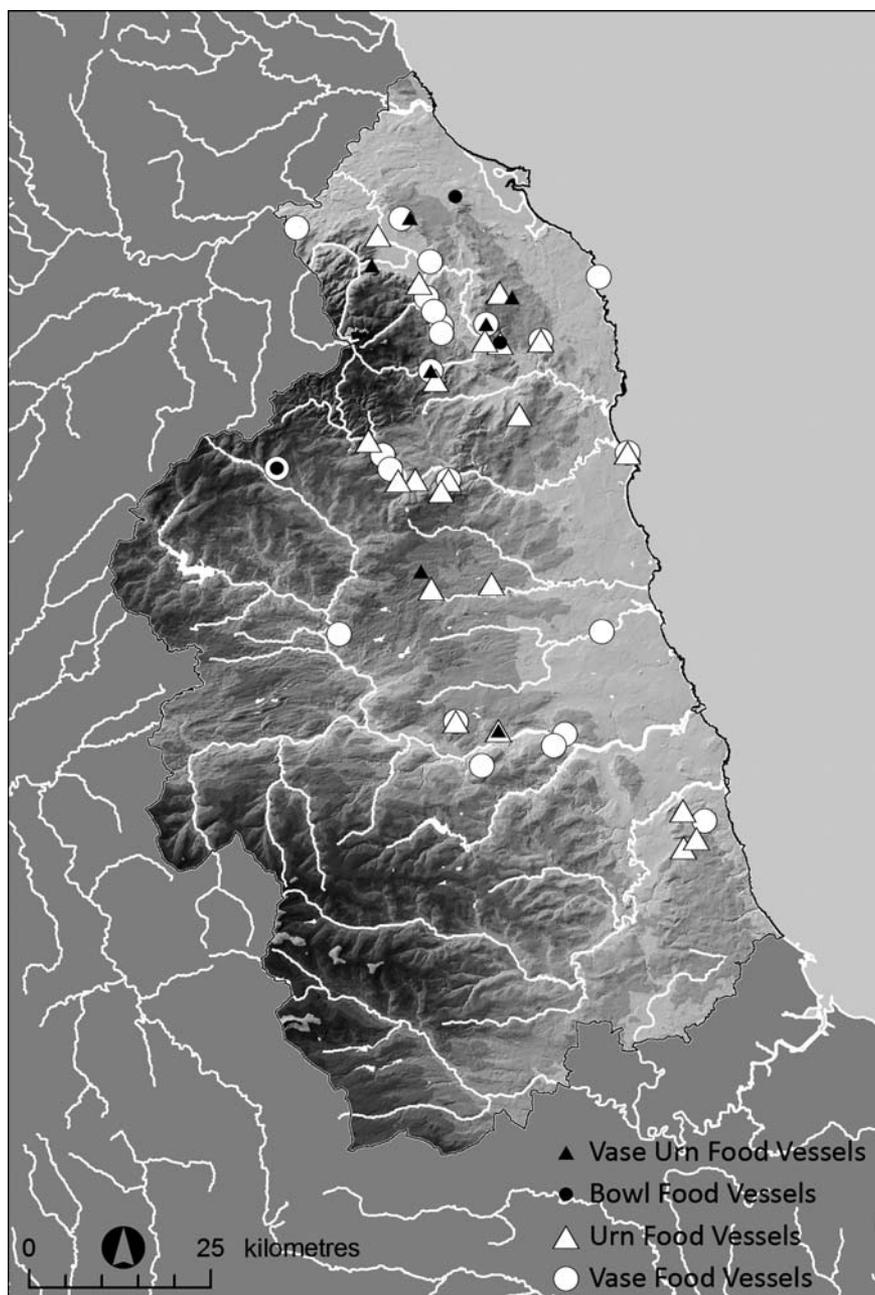
Map 5.3 Distribution of burials with various kinds of Food Vessel pottery

Table 5.6 Landscape locations for sites where this is known, and site type for *confirmed* crouched inhumations with Food Vessels within cists (n = 21)

Site type	Upland	Coastal	Hillside	Hilltop	Near stream/river	With view of river
Isolated cist (9)	3	4	5	3	4	5
Cist cemetery (3)	2	0	3	0	3	3
Round mound (8)	2	2	3	2	3	3
Oval mound (1)	1	0	0	1	0	1

Table 5.7 Landscape locations and site type for cists containing Food Vessels with cremated remains (n = 12)

Site type	Upland	Coastal	Hillside	Hilltop	Near stream/river	View of river	Other
Solo cist (3)	1	0	1	2	1	3	All on ridges with wide views
Cist and pit cemetery (2)	0	0	2	0	1	2	Both on ridges overlooking river valleys
Round mound (6)	1	1	3	2	4	6	
Henge (1)	0	0	0	0	1	0	

Table 5.8 Landscape locations and site type for mortuary deposits with Food Vessels and cremated remains not placed in cists (n = 24)

Site type	Upland	Coastal	Hillside	Hilltop	Near stream/river	View of river	Other
Cist and pit cemetery (8)	0	0	6	0	5	5	
Rock shelter (3)	3	0	3	0	3	2	
Round mound (13)	7	0	10	1	12	3	Includes Copt Hill

Unpacking black boxes: prestigious locales and ethnic boundaries

While the single cist burial with a bronze dagger at Reaverhill was located near to a stone circle, none of the other burials with bronze daggers were in the close proximity to such monuments, although two on the slopes of the Cheviots may have overlooked the activities in the Milfield Basin. Only in two cases (Warkworth, Chatton Sandyford) could it be argued that burials with
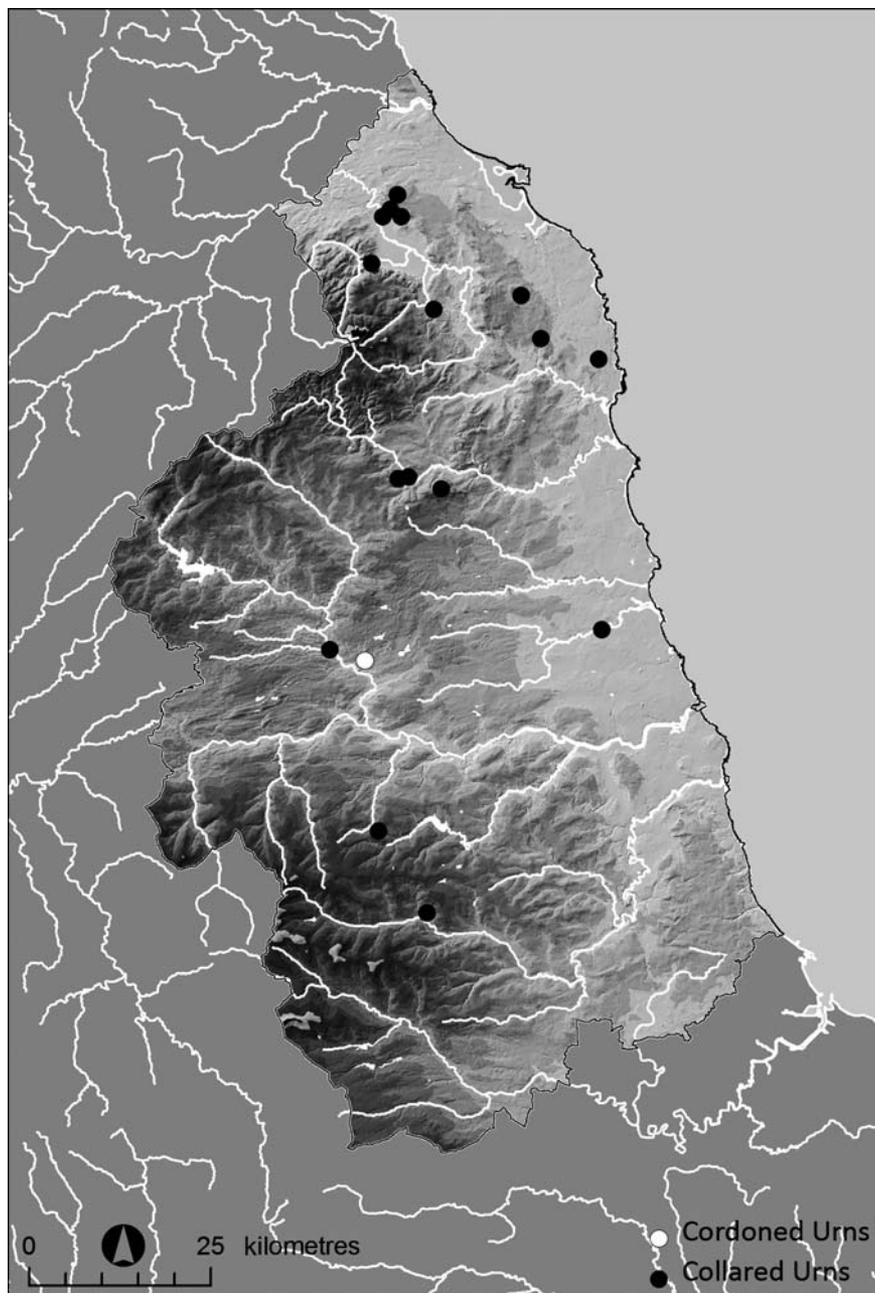
Map 5.4 Distribution of burials with Collared Urns or Cordoned Urns

Table 5.9 Locations of cremation deposits within Collared Urns, where exact landscape location known (n=14)

Site type	Upland	Coastal	Hillside	Hilltop	Near stream/river	View of river	Other
Pit (2)			2		1	1	
Ring, small cairn (2)	2				1	2	
Ring cairn (1)	1		1		1		
Round mound cemetery (9)	2		9		5	3	

'exotic' artefacts became a focal point for cemetery mounds. Very few burial grounds exhibit several burials with exotic or even multiple items, suggesting that it is difficult to articulate a strong narrative about lineages maintaining power through conspicuous funerary deposition. Cremation burials in Collared Urns from the north of Northumberland are perhaps an exception in that burnt fragments of bone or bronze pins are sometimes found in urns alongside burnt or unburnt flint knives and occasionally jet beads.

It is possible that Beaker pottery and Food Vessel pottery were adopted as markers of difference by moieties within a community, related to lineage distinctions or to differences between those marrying in and those born into a specific small group, *c.*2150–1850 BC. This might leave no clear spatial pattern locally if such groups of lineages repeatedly intermarried. Some patterns have been spotted elsewhere—for instance Pierpoint (1980, 247–8) noticed different choices in the orientation and grave positioning of bodies buried with Food Vessels between the Wolds and the Rudston area in Yorkshire. In each of these cases Food Vessel burials compared differently with nearby Beaker burials. In the Scottish Borders there is a clear separation between West Lothian where burial with Food Vessels is far more common than with Beakers, and the east of the Lothians where the opposite is true (Fowler and Wilkin forthcoming). I am not suggesting Beakers and Food Vessels were associated with some originary ethnicity, but it is possible that ceramics were sometimes caught up in local strategies marking out differences in local descent and community membership at differing scales. Some of these strategies might ultimately (even if fictively) have drawn on ancient ancestral narratives. The distinctiveness of the mortuary practices associated with Collared Urns, and the general spatial exclusivity of Collared Urns and Beaker deposits may also relate to distinctions within and between communities emerging after *c.*2000 BC and entangled with the decision of whether or not to cremate before deposition. Burial modes, including the selection of vessel types for the grave, seem to have become markedly distinct in the landscapes of northern Northumberland some time *c.*2000–1850 BC.

MORTUARY SITES WITHIN THE LANDSCAPE: CISTS, CEMETERIES, AND MOUNDS, AND THE LIVING LANDSCAPE

Isolated cists and early cemeteries

The location of many cists near to streams and rivers suggests that they could have been encountered on a regular basis. It appears that an increasing proportion of sites that at least *began* as isolated cists were located overlooking rivers throughout the later second millennium. The rivers overlooked by these burials were probably key routes of transportation as well as quotidian sources of water for people and animals. Inter visibility obviously works both ways, but it is easier to see a large stretch of water from a hillside than a small mound of earth or stones from beside a riverbank or a boat on the water. As Lewis (2007, 82) notes for barrows in South-West England, perhaps these were places to see *from*, rather than places to look at from afar. Since these burials do not seem to have been marked by significant mounds then such places were not marked out for future generations in any way we can presently detect.

Cairns and barrows; places and routeways

From *c.*2150 BC and certainly by *c.*2000 BC some locales were attracting sequences of burials. Divergent patterns in the use of place emerged. Where round mounds incorporated cremated remains with Food Vessels in cists these were visible from nearby rivers, as were isolated cists. Burials with jet artefacts and/or in cists or graves orientated north–south were clustered in northern Northumberland (Map 4.2). We can infer that by this time some people settled in these areas were maintaining long-distance connections (whether through mobility or a string of 'down-the-line' exchanges), and setting themselves apart from others in their burial practices. Perhaps some places became valued as burial grounds among the wider community, who brought the corpses of certain people and/or special objects to these places for transformation and deposition. None of the densest clusters of mounds occur in the immediate vicinity of the Milfield Basin monument complex. Subsequent agricultural activity may be partly responsible for this lacuna, and the cremation cemetery focused on a knoll in the basin at Yeavering seems to support the idea that mounds of whatever kind did form a focus for burial throughout the landscape in the second millennium BC. But across North-East England most barrows are on hills overlooking river valleys, and it appears that there were more barrows in Upper Coquetdale than in the Milfield Basin.

While monuments became clustered in both these landscapes, the precise configuration of each cluster varied significantly. There were arguably important differences in the histories, values, and meanings of where the dead were laid in each case.

There are few nucleated cemeteries of cairns or barrows (i.e. several monuments, each within *c.*100m of one another) in North-East England—Holystone Common, Upper Coquetdale, and Pitland Hills, North Tynedale, being exceptional—and no extended linear arrangements of barrows in close proximity. There are landscapes where barrows are clustered within *c.*400m of one another ('area cemeteries'), such as Howick Heugh, and barrows may line the tops of nearby hills, as in the Cheviots: here the distances between the mounds may be great, yet a sense of affinity was produced for those buried along the peaks. Sometimes barrows in a group were of similar dimensions: of only 10 barrows recorded at more than 16m in diameter, three were within a few hundred metres of each other at Rayheugh (Chart 5.1). At present it seems it was rare to construct monuments over burials on the tops of hills in the late third millennium, though few of the cairns on the summits of the Cheviots, for instance, have been properly excavated. Two that have are situated on the summit of Coldsmouth Hill right on the border with Scotland, and probably date from the start of the second millennium BC. The two cairns were set at either end of a ridge on the summit of the hill, *c.*100m apart. The southern cairn consisted of two 'belts' of large stones, the first was 4m in diameter and enclosed a central burial, the second created a perimeter 16m in diameter around the first burial and a second one to the south-west of the initial ring of stones which seem to have been displaced in that part of the monument when the second grave was dug—although it is possible that both burials were placed within the exterior ring of stones and this was the earliest feature. The northern cairn was also marked by two concentric rings of stones, but 10m and 11m in diameter and encasing a central cist which contained scraps of cremated bone and a plano-convex flint knife. A riveted fragment of
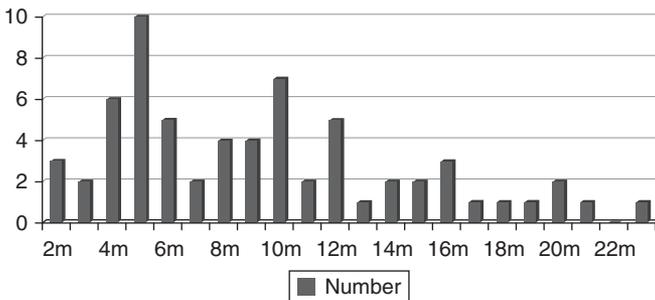
Chart 5.1 Diameters of barrows and cairns (or length if oval), rounded to nearest metre

a bronze blade was found on the ground beneath the cairn 1.6m west of the cist. These could not be described as rich burials, and the choice of the locale may have as much or more to do with religious ideas as with rank or status. Such summit cairns are often visible from neighbouring hills, upland valleys, and sometimes surrounding lowlands—and Topping (pers. comm.) has noted platforms that could be sites of Bronze Age occupation 500m from the summit of Coldsmouth Hill. Summit burials may have demonstrated an intercession between worlds on a vertical axis as the province of certain people in the community, perhaps particularly some of the dead.

Most mounds were not particularly large: 66 per cent were 10m in diameter or less when excavated (Chart 5.1). Field (1999) reports that very few cairns or barrows occupy the summits of hills, and while many are on 'bluffs, rivers or ledges above rivers, they invariably lie in the lee of higher ground' (1999, 37), as noted for Kirkhaugh above. In the uplands most mounds 'fall close to, or overlook, burns or springs' (37). These patterns seem to hold for the regions north of the Wansbeck in particular and are less clear around the Tyne (Map 5.1). In County Durham most of the barrows are also on the slopes of hills overlooking the main waterways, other than a group of barrows on the edges of the East Durham Plateau (Young 1980). Young points out that many of these were 'false crested' on terraces, so that they would be visible from valley floors in a way that barrows on the summits might not have been. Field (1999, 38) cites studies in other regions that have identified a close relationship between barrows and springs, streams, and rivers, while sink-holes on chalk hills also seem to have attracted round barrows (Woodward 2000, 125–6). Throughout the region the vast majority of sites, including barrows, were overlooking rivers and near water sources. Rivers are polyvalent. They are a source of life and water. They have many upland sources, starting as many streams with a fast early journey, meeting at confluences, and in later life there are fewer of them which pass into slower broader courses. They join the sea where their waters mingle with the undifferentiated and salty ocean. Rivers have a force and directionality that cannot be halted. They are a mechanism by which journeys may be undertaken—conjoining not only one place and another, but one identity and another, through life and into death, and, often, between worlds. Living, dying, and being buried overlooking the confluence of rivers and streams may have drawn on a range of such narratives.

In Field's (1999) view the positions of the mounds in Northumberland suggest the selection of well-draining slopes with good views: places suitable for cultivation and inhabitation but more broadly harmonious places to be. He compares this with Chinese *feng-shui*. Cosmology may be one of the factors in site location, but perhaps at the level of a general knowledge about the most effective and auspicious way to orientate a whole range of activities within the landscape. This need not mean that well-draining hillsides overlooking rivers were reserved for the dead, and we have to be mindful of the fact that further

barrows in lowland areas are likely to have been destroyed before recording began. The hillside burial places may have been locales where some of those people had lived and where it was deemed they should remain. If there was a pastoral transhumant element to this assemblage, then the placement of barrows at the junctures where major rivers exited the upland areas may have marked the homelands where some people lived all year round—they may have been visible growths of home, places where those returning might someday rest.

Mortuary locales and everyday places: special landscapes?

It is difficult to know whether special parts of the landscape were set aside for burial, whether clusters relate to more densely inhabited areas, and/or how closely they were situated next to the places of daily life. For instance, Young (1980, 3) notes that the barrows in the Wear Valley may be set back from the most suitable land for cultivation. This suggestion cannot be strongly articulated at present, but I imagine that some burials were not only near and overlooking water sources but at the edge of fields and pastures, and that some covered or were near to places where auspicious relations among the community of humans, animals, plants, and so on, had been enacted by one or some of the people buried there. In general, clusters of mortuary deposits are found in landscapes with other features from the broad period, whether rock art, stone circles, henges, or clusters of barrows, though the East Durham Plateau is a clear exception. This pattern may suggest particular foci for settlement, even if it has also been shaped by histories of subsequent land use and research. It is also temporally structured: of 25 burial sites which are not part of any evident clusters of site, six were cists with SN Beakers—i.e. 38 per cent of all SN Beaker burials. This reinforces the proposition that there was no or little attempt to cluster the dead together before *c.*2200 or 2100 BC. The dead rarely seem to have been placed at henges until after 2000 BC, though burials at or near to stone circles are evident from *c.*2200 BC, and burials began to cluster around the Milfield Basin from *c.*2150 BC.

At least during the Chalcolithic, and arguably during the Early Bronze Age, many of the dead might have been buried relatively near to where people lived and engaged in routine activities. When they were buried they were not incorporated into a local community of dead ancestors, but might have been bound to specific places frequented by the living or the places where the deceased had died. They were immersed within a living landscape, whether they were visited by human beings or not. There is little sense of a space for the dead, kept apart from other activities. From around *c.*2150 BC to around 1750 BC some of the buried dead seem to have aggregated at circular monuments which often became covered by mounds of stone and/or earth,

much as they may have lived in circular houses. Some of these burial grounds (such as Chatton Sandyford or Blawearie) may have initially been shrines and meeting places bringing together a host of entities from humans of differing kin groups to supernatural beings to animals, foodstuffs, exotic and magical items, and so on. But some of these burial monuments could also become so heavily integrated into the landscape they might be forgotten. At Turf Knowe North a round cairn *c*.4m in diameter with a central cist was overlain by a layer of what appears to have been ploughed soil. This was followed by a second cairn construction *c*.10m in diameter and centred in roughly the same place, incorporating a cist to the south-east of the original cairn (Figure 5.2). Plough-soil again covered the top of this second cairn, yielding fragments of Bronze Age pottery (Adams and Carne 1997, 9), and some of the cairn stones became scored with grooves 'all running in the same direction and all, apparently, caused by an extremely slow and heavy ard plough' (8). The dates obtained from cremated bone and charcoal, and substantiated by pot typology, indicate that the first cairn was built after 2200 BC and the second cairn was built between *c*.1800 and 1600 BC. In at least this case the dead were situated in landscapes that were repeatedly called back into agricultural use, and at least the second cairn was built in what seems to have been a field. Disturbed cremated bones might have been reburied by Bronze Age farmers. The association between ard-marks, ploughing, and the growth of barrows has also been noted in a range of Early Bronze Age contexts (e.g. Tarlow 1994). Finally, after *c*.1750 BC the remains of the dead were mainly either interred at or around such large circular mounds, or in small spaces that may have been constructed specially for the purpose of burying the cremated remains of only one or two people. Crawley Edge was located on land that became littered with small clearance cairns as a result of repeated agricultural activity and, as Johnston (2000; 2001) has argued more broadly, deposition of soils and organic things in pits under some of these small cairns may have been votive in nature and a key part of the cycle of give and take involved in agricultural exchanges among humans, plants, soil, water, sun, and so on.

UNFOLDING ENTANGLEMENTS OF MORTUARY PRACTICES AND PLACES

Congregations of the dead: round mounds, *c*.2200–1750 BC

As the accumulation of the dead in specific locales became increasingly common from *c*.2200 BC so it makes sense to discuss the location of each successive deposit in terms not only of the wider landscape but also of the local

Figure 5.2 The cairn at Turf Knowe North under excavation. Photograph courtesy of Archaeological Services Durham University

setting—the other burials, the monumental architecture, and complexes of monuments. In this section I will consider the sequences of activity at a series of sites, exploring the different histories of the places where the dead were interred, and the legacies that early activities embedded in the local assemblage and extended through time. While all of these sites fit the very general description of round mounds with successive deposits, the closer examination of their sequences illustrates quite different histories. One of the things a round mound may have signalled was the presence of a place where the remains of the dead were deposited, but there was significant variation in the exact materials used, finish to the monument, history of its development, and how it was used aside from depositing human remains there: each became a different haecceity. Some subsequent burials may have been placed close to earlier ones because the dead were deemed to share, for instance, lineage, but it is also possible that some deaths required the dead be transformed at and/or encased within special, potent locales where such mounds grew. In other cases, depositing human remains might have been necessary to achieve a particular effect in transforming a place. Increasingly throughout the period communities of the dead emerged through these sequences, so that subsequent burials effected a reincorporation of the recently deceased within a community of the ancestral dead. Yet there were differences in the degrees of separation between the ancestral dead and the recently deceased, and thus the nature of the 'ancestors'.

Enclosure and burial at Chatton Sandyford

At Chatton Sandyford (Figure 5.3) a loose arrangement of stakes was driven into the ground and formed the epicentre of a conflagration which spread dense charcoal in a 4m-diameter circle. A shallow grave was cut and (probably) a body interred—the grave was later 'robbed' but a GSP Beaker and two v-perforated jet buttons were found next to the grave in soil that had been thrown up from it. A low mound covered this grave, and Jobey (1968, 14) argues that a displaced oblong slab might have marked out the location of this grave. A deeper grave was cut next to this one and partly through its mound. This grave was also robbed and disturbed but contained a similar Beaker. A low mound had covered it. A further grave was cut 2m to the south-east of these two—this was robbed also, but contained sherds of a late WC Beaker. No bone survived from any of the burials, all of which were covered with the one round cairn. But all of this activity may post-date the enclosure of a circular space by a kerb of tightly placed standing stones supported by a platform ring of interior stones and rubble. The upcast from digging grave 3 seems to abut
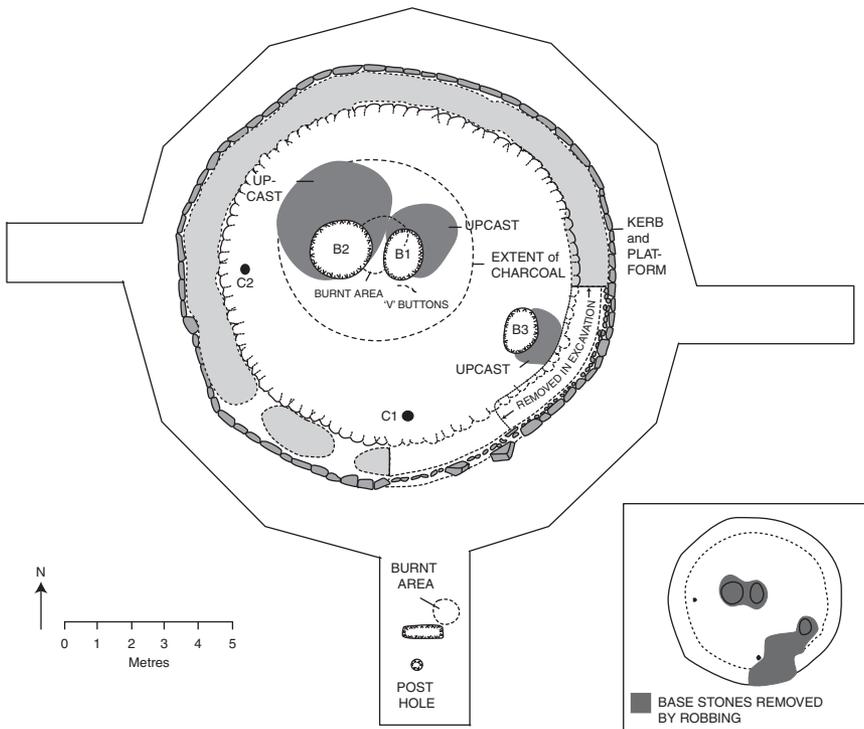
Figure 5.3 Key features at Chatton Sandyford cairn 1. Drawn by Sheila Severn Newton, after Jobey (1968)

the inside of this platform ring (Jobey 1968, fig. 3), thereby suggesting that at least this grave was dug when the kerb already stood. Two cremation deposits were inserted into the cairn, but did not penetrate the lowest course of cairnstones. One, within the southern perimeter of the kerb and platform, was placed within an inverted Food Vessel Urn—it was too fragmentary for analysis to yield any osteological information. Near this deposit an oblong slab decorated with cup marks was found among the cairn material, and this could have been a marker or cover for this burial. The other cremation was found within the westernmost perimeter of the enclosing wall, apparently originally held in an organic container and again too fragmentary for analysis. A burnt area less than 1m in diameter was located 3m south of the kerb, consisting of reddened soil and charcoal flecks but no burnt bone. The location was chosen repeatedly for burial and elaborated in the process, forming a physical community of the dead some time around 2050–1850 BC—though it may have had some significance as a space enclosed by a kerbed stone platform before any mortuary activity took place. We could distinguish the earlier 'pulse' of Beaker burials from the later cremation deposits, suggesting some close affinity between those in each group but that the monument might have housed the generalized ancestral dead when the first of the later burials was added.

From Beaker burial to round mound at Hasting Hill

At Hasting Hill (Figure 5.4) the excavator, Trechmann (1914, 135–57), indicates that the 12m-diameter barrow had a bowl-like profile, suggesting the perimeter area was more substantial than the interior, but mentions no kerb slabs. Founded on a limestone outcrop, the preservation of bone and antler at Hasting Hill is notably better than most of the other sites in North-East England. The earliest evidence includes a cist burial containing the adult dated to 2194–1977 BC, cremated bones from a second adult, and weathered bones from a child discussed in Chapter 4 (cist 1). Grave 1 held the crouched burial of a woman lying on her right side with the head to the west, and the skull 'inclined upwards as though the intention had been to face the midday sun' (1914, 153) with her hands placed in front of her face, like that of the man in cist 1. While she was buried in a rock-cut grave, stone slabs surrounded and covered her body. An antler pick and a crushed Vase Food Vessel were also recovered from the base of the cairn. The cairn might post-date the first cist and even the grave by decades or centuries, but even if it was contemporary with cist 1 and grave 1, other burials follow a different burial mode, were peripheral, and seem to be much later. Cist 3 lay to the north-east periphery of the area enclosed by the mound, and was set in a pit cut into the subsoil and bedrock, but also projected up into the mound. It was orientated north-east–south-west and contained the crouched remains of a year-old
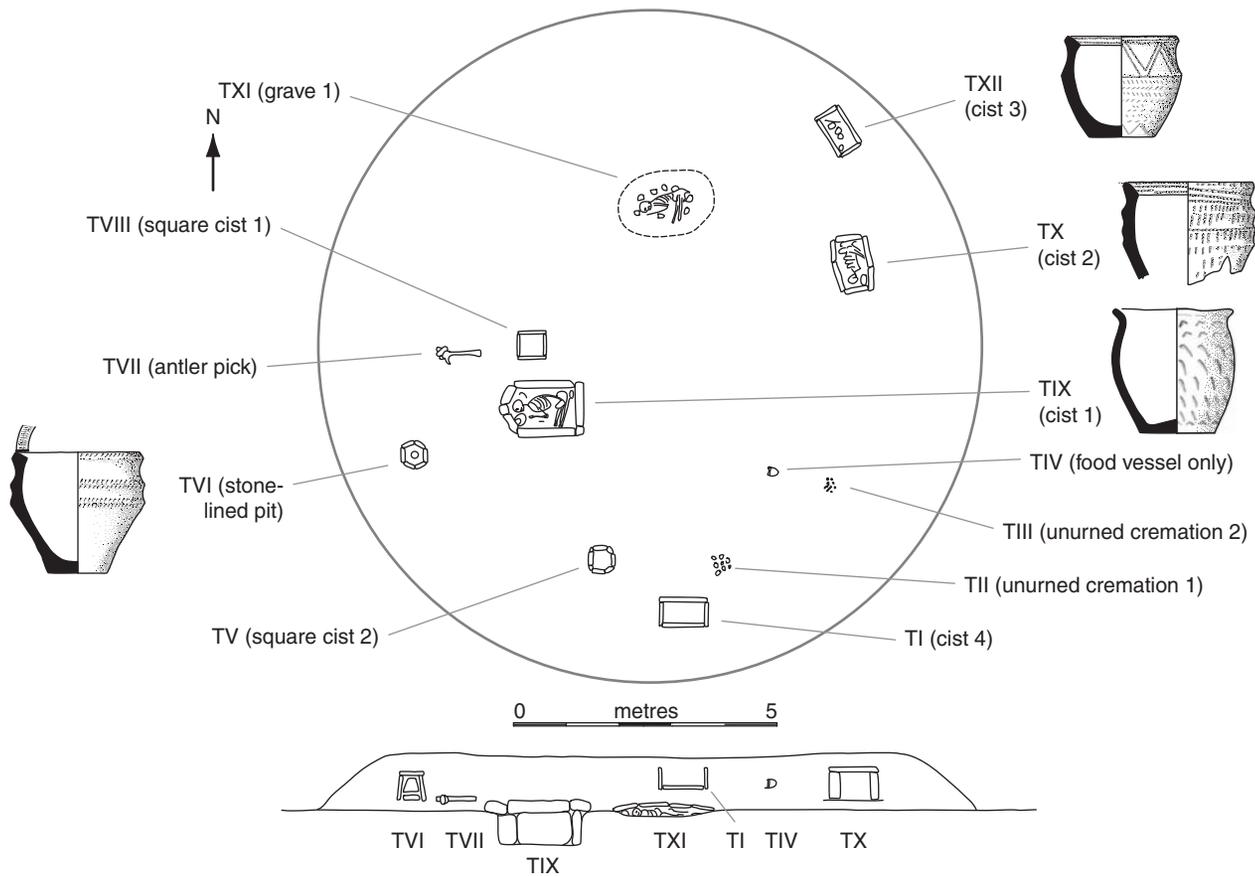
Figure 5.4 Hasting Hill round barrow. Drawn by Sheila Severn Newton, after Trechmann (1914), with additions after Clarke (1970) and Gibson (1978)

infant (Gamble and Fowler forthcoming *a*) whose bones have now been dated to 1931–1756 BC, lying with his or her head to the south on the right side and facing east. A small Vase Food Vessel was placed behind the head, while a flint and an ox tooth were found at an unspecified location in the cist. Cist 2 and the hexagonal cist are shown with their bases at the same level as the top of the cist 1 cover slab and the antler pick. Either these two cists were built standing on the old land surface while the mound was built around and over them—the mound is multi-phase—or they were inserted into it. Cist 2 was orientated east–west: the body of an older adult male lay on his right side with his head to the east and facing south and, again, his hands were placed in front of his face. He was buried with a similar bodily orientation to the infant in cist 3, but the positioning of his body also cited the placement of the hands seen in grave 1 and cist 1. A Vase Food Vessel was placed in front of his face, a flint saw to rear of his head and a flint flake near his feet. The hexagonal cist held an Food Vessel Urn, inverted over some cremated remains which could not be analysed. Importantly, Coke Squance (1914, 174), reporting on the bones, mentions seven human maxillae as 'scattered through the mound'. It seems curious that specifically maxillae should survive, but while there are some problems with some of Coke Squance's identifications (Gamble and Fowler forthcoming), he explicitly identifies certain teeth as present and it seems unlikely he would misidentify these remains. A further series of five mortuary deposits seem to be inserted into the mound: an east–west cist containing cremated remains, sherds of a Food Vessel, an Accessory Vessel, a flint core and a flint flake; two square cists containing cremated bones—in one case a sheep's tooth was identified among the bones and Coke Squance (173) noted 'the greater part' of the bones were human—and two cremation deposits without accompanying cists, one of which was probably originally in an Food Vessel Urn.

The practice of placing the hands in front of the face indicates a strong awareness of previous burial practices at the burial ground on the part of those carrying out at least two of the burials. This practice has only been noted at one other site in the region, Cist 4 from a dispersed cemetery at Summerhill in Tyne and Wear. The two men buried in this way at Hasting Hill were accompanied by different types of vessel—one a Beaker, one a Food Vessel—and the women had no durable grave goods. Furthermore, the burial in cist 2 has other affinities with the infant in cist 3, suggesting that each burial altered the practice from those before while acknowledging their presence. It is possible these burials occurred within a relatively short time-span *c.*2100–1900 BC, but also possible that there were distinct pulses of rare burial activity at a locale that was known to be a burial ground for centuries. As at Chatton Sandyford some might have been buried next to and in a parallel way as known predecessors or ancestors, while others may have been buried at a place associated with the generic dead of previous generations. The recovery of the human maxillae from within the mound hints that it may have seen deposits

of other human remains at certain times, though not buried within the body of the monument. This raises the possibility of yet further 'deposits', perhaps left on the surface of the mound. Very young children as well as adults were buried at the site, and there was significant diversity in mortuary treatments, perhaps even the exposure of human bodies in the vicinity, as suggested by the child's bones in cist 1. There are various ways we could interpret this monument, including as a place where potent people were buried and which subsequently became a suitable place to bury those whose deaths caused particular anxiety, and as the burial ground of a particular kin group.

Tree, circle, cists, and cremations at Blawearie

We can get a sense of some of the local features present at Blawearie (Figure 5.5) when it was selected as a locale for burial. Oak charcoal was strewn across the centre of the site before two pits were dug, one of which may have removed the roots of a tree growing at the centre of the site. Into this pit a cist was built; it was rifled before Greenwell's 1865 excavation and all we know is that it contained a vessel (Hewitt and Beckensall 1996, 257). The other pit formed a posthole for a wide post. A kerb of sandstone boulders with flat faces was constructed with either the tree or the pit at its centre. The possibility that a tree may have grown at the centre of the space selected for this kerbed cairn is intriguing. Harding and Healy (2007, 213–15) detail how two ring ditches at Raunds, Northamptonshire, were dug around trees. The trunk, bole and roots of a tree were buried with the root end sticking up into the air at the centre of a timber circle at Holme ('Seahenge'), Norfolk, dated by dendro-chronology to 2049 BC (Pryor 2001). It is possible that the practice of encircling trees (with ditches, posts, or with kerbs of stone) had a wide currency in the period. Trees, particularly oak trees, are long-lived, forming a connection with the past across human generations: growing, changing, living monuments. As Harding and Healy put it (2007, 215):

> Trees can stand for peoples, lineages and individuals; can symbolise relationship and descent; can be endowed with personality; and can provide a bridge between the earth in which they are rooted and the heavens to which they reach.

Burning such trees—or their limbs—in preparation for using the site as a monument and/or changing it from a kerb of stones centred around a tree to the locale for mortuary deposition could have been a highly charged activity. Alternatively, if the fire was not deliberate or auspicious, then the burning of this locale may itself have sparked the need or possibility for the monument and/or the deposition of a deceased member of the community at this place. What is clear is that the kerb of stones pre-dated at least some of the mortuary deposits and the cairn. At some point after the burning and the kerb construction a pit was dug through the central post-pit and a cist inserted. Five other
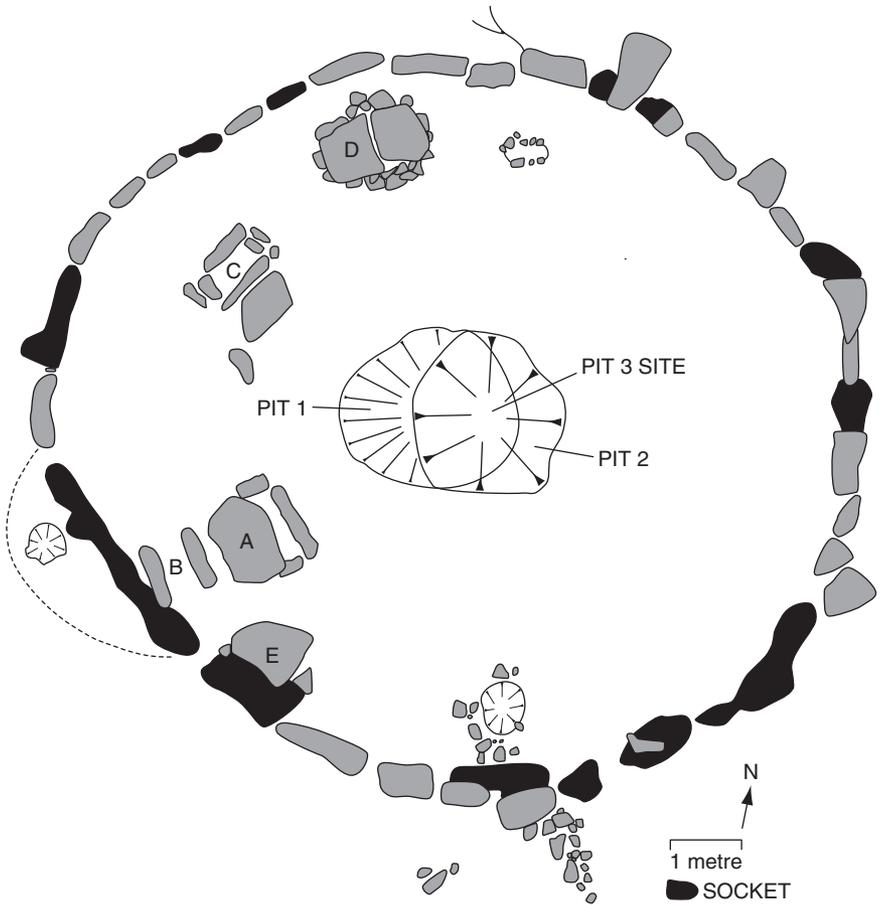
Figure 5.5 Blawearie. Drawn by Sheila Severn Newton, after Hewitt and Beckensall (1996)

cists were later constructed at the site, and three of these were built using slabs removed from the kerb of the cairn. One of these three, a cist 80 cm long by 70cm wide, contained a necklace of 100 jet beads and a small broken flint knife (cist B); another contained a Vase Food Vessel (cist A). No human remains survived from four of the cists, and since cremated remains survive elsewhere on the site it seems likely these cists did not contain cremated remains. The fifth cist (E), constructed using two kerbstones in a pit carved out from the socket of a removed kerbstone, was 1.07m long but contained only a small cluster of cremated bone in which were found five burnt shards of flint. Given its size this cist may have originally contained a crouched burial as well. At some point a cairn of rounded stones covered the cists and filled in the space

circumscribed by the kerb. It is not clear whether this occurred before or after the central cist was constructed or after some or all cists were built, but the excavators are clear that later pyre pits cut through this cairn. Kerbstones were also removed from the south-west perimeter of the kerb and a pit cut there. *In situ* burning reddened the sides of this pit which contained charcoal and burnt bone, suggesting this was the scene of a cremation pyre built over a pit or that disarticulated body parts or bones were burnt within this pit (cf. Gibson 2007, 58). A row of pebbles was arranged north–south within the pit, and *c*.100g of cremated human bone was found to the east of this line. The pit was filled with oak charcoal, 'cinder', and soil, and capped by a low cairn. A further set of cremated remains was buried in a pit that cut through the cairn at the south of the monument, just within the kerb. An Enlarged Food Vessel Urn was placed inverted at the base of the pit. It was filled with over 1 kg of cremated bone from two adults, one of which was identified as male (though the basis of this identification is not explained: Hewitt and Beckensall 1996, 268). No charcoal was recovered from the urn or feature, suggesting that this was not the site of the cremation pyre and that the bones were picked out from other pyre debris before inclusion in the vessel. The pit was backfilled with soil, and the cairn stones were 'rudely reinstated' (Hewitt and Beckensall 1996, 264).

There are no cists to the east side of the monument, perhaps suggesting that inhumations were kept to the west. Hewitt and Beckensall excavated one of a series of 10 small 'satellite' cairns all of which were located to the east of the site. One of these, 3.5m to the north-east of the kerbed cairn, covered a very similar feature to the pyre pit at the kerbed cairn: the sides were reddened, the fill contained oak charcoal and cremated bone. The pit was surrounded by a kerb forming 'an eccentric ellipse of sandstone boulders' (Hewitt and Beckensall 1996, 265), and capped with layers of flat stone slabs and a small cairn *c*.2m in diameter. The pyre pit just to the west of the monument and excavated once the kerbstones near by were removed is the only westerly cremation on site, and here the cremated remains are carefully left to the east of the north–south row of pebbles within the pit. The history of the site is one of the gradual, and again perhaps staggered, aggregation of a community of the dead. During one of the pulses of burial activity kerbstones were levered out of position and these fragments of the overall monument were redeployed in building containers for the bodies of the dead. We could suggest that at least these cist burials took place over a relatively short span of time—a few generations, say—and that the site had a biography known by the community of those using it to bury their dead.

A line and a circle at South Charlton

At South Charlton, Northumberland, a round mound was excavated in 1916 following concern over its erosion due to the encroachment of a sand quarry
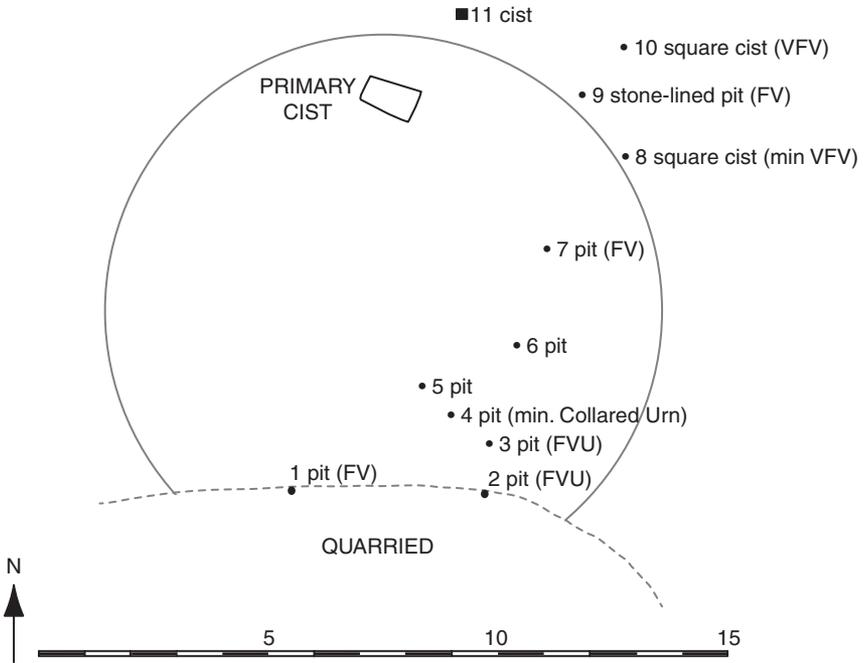
Figure 5.6 South Charlton barrow. Drawn by Sheila Severn Newton, after Hodgson (1917)

(Hodgson 1917, 125; Figure 5.6). The 13.5m-diameter barrow was located on a sandy knoll, below rising ground to north and north-east but with extensive views towards the south and west. Ten mortuary deposits were found in the body of the mound, only one of which was within a cist, and two other very small cists were found to the north-north-east and north-east of the mound. The report suggests that all of the mortuary features were cut into the sandy subsoil and covered by mound material including stones and earth (126). The cist found within the mound was *c*.6m north of the centre, 1.15m long and orientated east–west, and no mortuary features were found at the centre. No human remains or artefacts other than a flint flake were found in the cist. Of the nine pits within the area of the mound eight contained cremated bone—the presence or otherwise of bone is not mentioned for 'find 7' but it seems as though none was found, only a Food Vessel of some kind. Most of these features contained a Food Vessel—some vases, some urns (one miniature)—and one contained a miniature Collared Urn.

The two tiny cists found outside the perimeter of the cairn are especially interesting: no bone was found in either of them and they are no more than 30cm square. One of them ('find 10') held a Vase Food Vessel along with some fragments of charcoal, and continued the line of deposits extending across

the site in a north-east–south-west direction. It is possible that, rather than these two being later deposits or deposits next to a monument, the mound was later than *all* of the mortuary deposits and did not enclose these two. In either case it seems likely that the mound did not commemorate any one mortuary deposit—it may have been centred on some other activity which left no remains that were recovered in the 1916 excavation and it covered a series of burials. Furthermore, it is possible that not all of these deposits should be understood in terms of a funeral for a particular individual. Some or all may be votive in nature. Finally, the linear arrangement of most of the burials hints at people tracing or producing a linear relationship such as descent (cf. Garwood 2012).

Cist, conflagration, and cup-marked stones at Pitland Hills

Pitland Hills barrow 1 is one of a group of at least four neighbouring barrows on a hillside near the river in North Tynedale. An east–west pit was cut into the limestone bedrock, slabs of a cist 1.3m long were erected within and projecting above this, and were covered with a single stone slab. A body had been laid in a crouched position within the cist, on its right side, with its head to the west, and with its face turned to the south, '[t]he left hand was under the thigh, and the right arm across the chest' (Rome Hall 1887b, 253). Interestingly, given that the cairn material covering this burial yielded 17 cup-marked stones, a hammerstone lay underneath the skull. The skeletal remains were identified in the 1880s as those of a c.40–50-year-old, with 'the muscular markings of the ridge of the leg-bones, etc.' taken to denote the skeleton was male. A Vase Food Vessel was placed in the south-west corner of the cist. A round pit was found c.2.1m from cist 1 and on the same level, to the south-east of the cairn. It was covered with a stone slab and held 'a very large deposit of burnt bones' (Rome Hall 1887b, 253). The soil at the base of this pit was reddened and the fills contained charcoal, suggesting that a fire had been set in the pit or a pyre built over it. Next to the pit a second stone slab was found— this did not cover a pit, but the soil underneath was also reddened and rich in charcoal. Either funeral pyres were built and used here, or fires were set at the mortuary site and at least the one in the pit was used to directly burn human bones or body parts. These burials and episodes of burning seem to pre-date the mound. A second cist, much smaller than the first, lay 3.6m away from it in an unspecified direction and higher up in the mound. It was filled with a clayey soil rich in charcoal and burnt stone fragments but no bone or artefacts were recovered. A further mortuary deposit was inserted into the mound at a later date. This consisted of the cremated remains of 'a young child' placed within a 'cinerary urn' with 'with lozenge-shaped scorings made by a twisted thong' (Rome Hall 1887b, 252) inverted on a stone slab.

Rome Hall (1887*b*, 256) records that the south of the monument consisted of three courses of large stones while the north included large flat slabs (it is possible he is describing a kerb), and a passage ran from the east of the mound towards the centre through the cairn material. He notes that this passage had been blocked at some point, and a cup-marked stone placed at the entrance. His account suggests a complex sequence of activity at the locale—it is not clear whether the mortuary features were the first events, or whether they were pre-dated by a stone ring with a passage allowing access to the centre, but these each sound like separate activities to the mound construction, which may be contemporary with the placement of the second cist. Pitland Hills 1 illustrates a wide variety of mortuary practices within a single monument, suggesting that there was little concern to treat each body in a way affiliated to those before it. If ancestral lineage was generated or traced *throughout* the use of monuments like this, then co-presence was sufficient to do so, and bodily treatment related to other factors.

Mortuary deposits at henges, timber circles, and stone circles

I have suggested that at Chatton Sandyford and Blawearie burials may have converted special enclosures from powerful spaces with various uses to cemeteries and eventually mounds. Slightly larger circular enclosures in the lowlands of northern Northumberland were also the scenes of burials from around the same time: henges, ring ditches, and timber circles. The diameter of the kerbed or ringed monuments in the uplands varied, but Blawearie and Chatton Sandyford are both *c*.8–10m in diameter, as is Hasting Hill, while other mounds used as communal burial grounds such as Pitland Hills and Warkworth are in the region of *c*.12–15m (see Chart 5.1). By comparison the three henges clearly used for burial are 15m (Milfield North), 13.5m (Whitton Hill 1), and 7m in diameter (Whitton Hill site 2), and most of the remaining henges are around 20–25m in diameter. Furthermore, two robbed burials were buried in the space enclosed by a 5m-diameter ring ditch with a standing bank at High Knowes, one yielding fragments of Food Vessel Urn or Collared Urn, and there was a second ditched enclosure with an exterior bank like a henge near by, at which a fragment from a cup of jet or jet-like substance was recovered (Jobey 1981). The early second-millennium burials are not 'dead centre' at any of these circular enclosures—it seems as though the final stages of the funeral took place within the enclosure but that it was not important to place that particular individual at the exact centre of things. The burial nearest to the centre of both a henge and a concentric timber circle in the interior is Pit C at Milfield North, which yielded a radiocarbon date from charcoal of 2430–1970 BC and a GSP Beaker, but no human remains survived. Another burial close to the centre of a henge, or at least a ring ditch, and another

concentric ring of pits that could have contained posts, is that from Whitton Hill site 2. This was a mass cremation deposit dating to around 1250–1000 BC (Fowler and Gamble forthcoming). Another set of cremated remains was buried at Whitton Hill site 1 *c.*1400–1300 BC, and another found at Duddo stone circle dated to 1770–1610 BC. It seems that these ancient places retained an interest and were used sporadically for burial throughout the second millennium BC. But even if cremated remains were strewn here, such sites do not seem to have become the burial grounds of particular lineages.

There may be a difference between the burials placed at circular monuments that were still in use at the time of the burial, as might be suggested at Chatton Sandyford or Blawearie, and those placed at sites that had been there for centuries by 2000 BC, such as the henges. But taken together, it is clear that henges, stone circles, ring ditches, and cairns that begin life as circular kerbs of stone attracted burial deposits after 2000 BC. Indeed, rather than expecting that burial necessitated the construction of a monument, it may equally have been a change in the nature of the monument that required or followed the deposition of human remains. In the upland areas these burial sites were covered by cairns, and later deposition continued in following decades or centuries. It does not seem that this happened for several centuries in the river terraces where the ring ditches and henges are found, though it is possible that centuries of land use resulting in truncation of the ground may have destroyed such mounds and deposits.

Comparing cremations

Collared Urns were clearly primary deposits placed at the centre of cairns at Birkside Fell, Crawley Edge, Ford barrow, and Rosebrough Moor cairn 2, while the complex of three deposits each with Collared Urns at Etal Moor barrow were central and prior to its construction. Eleven of the 16 sites where Collared Urns were deposited included multiple mortuary deposits (and only in one case was more than deposit at these sites contained within a Collared Urn), while others were small cairns constructed over the deposit and a boundary of stones dedicated to a singular deposit, as at Birkside Fell and Crawley Edge. The two small cairns covering Collared Urns buried in pits at Birkside Fell and Crawley Edge are worth comparing in detail. In each case a Collared Urn was placed upright in a small pit at the centre of a space between 3m and 4m across delineated by small boulders. Stone slabs covered the vessel at Crawley Edge, while a burnt or burning plank was placed on top of the massive vessel at Birkside Fell (Figure 5.7). Small cairns then covered both features. A series of three small kerbed cairns, contiguous and in a row, at Millstone Hill on a spur across the slope of a hill in the uplands of northern Northumberland yielded cremated remains from their centre, and in one case

(a)

Kerbstones

Quartz kerbstones

Charcoal spread

N

1 metre

(b)

Burnt wood

Bone, charcoal, soil

Cremated bone
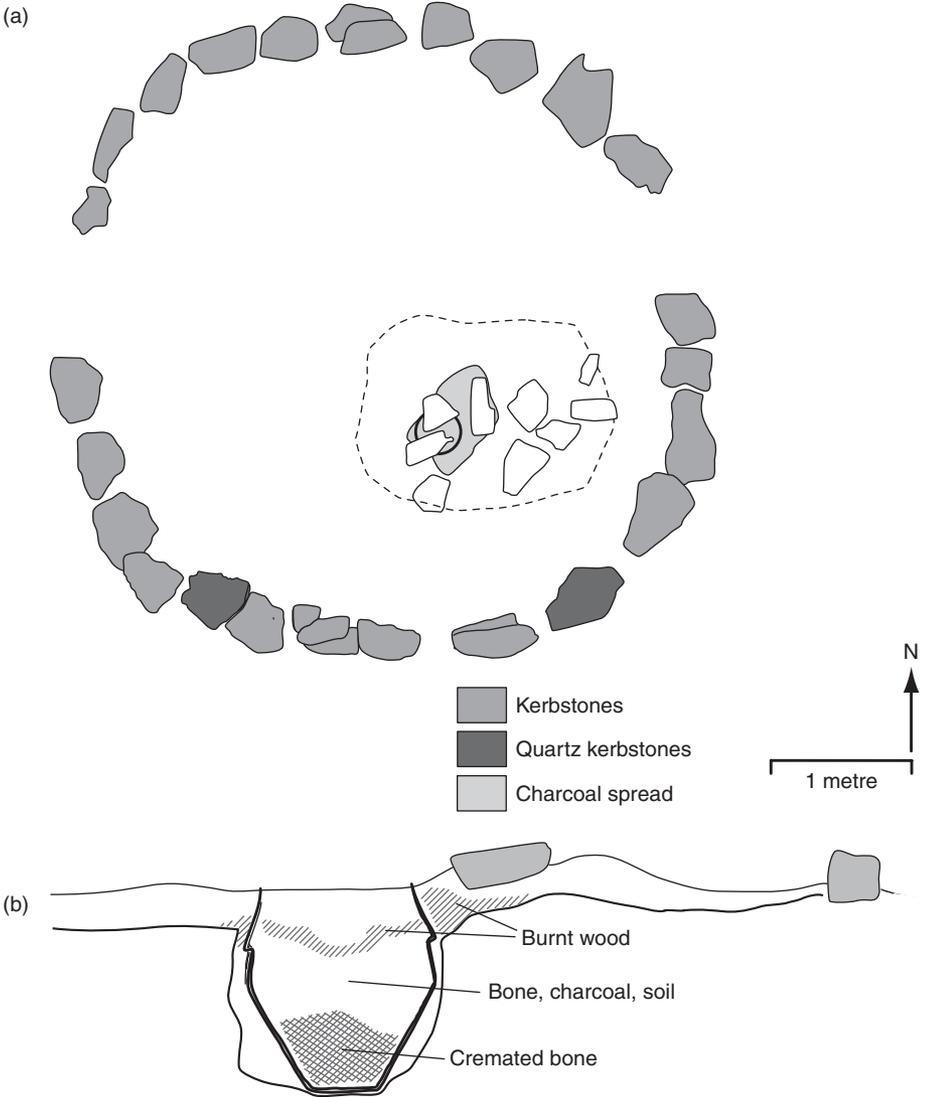
Figure 5.7 Cremation deposit at Birkside Fell: (a) Plan; (b) Section. Drawn by Sheila Severn Newton, after Tolan-Smith (2005)

fragments of 'cinerary urn' and bone were all that was left of the mortuary deposit after earlier disturbance. If this was Collared Urn pottery then this association of small cairns with a ring or kerb in upland locales may be to do with connections across highland landscapes rather than a local North Pennines pattern. Both sites could be close contemporaries: Birkside Fell has provided radiocarbon dates of 2035–1745 BC and 1965–1675 BC from

charcoal in the deposit, and while there are no dates from the deposits at Crawley Edge, charcoal from near the surface of the cairn was dated to 1880–1540 BC and 1994–1496 BC providing a loose *terminus ante quem*.

In all of the cases where the age of an individual from a central burial of cremated bone in a Collared Urn has been identified it has been from an adult, often a young adult, sometimes male, sometimes female. At Holystone Common cairn 2 the adolescent associated with a Collared Urn was buried 1.2m from the centre in a cairn 3m in diameter; neither at the centre nor the periphery. The adolescent at Broomhill round barrow cremation deposit 1 was one of seven cremations placed in a circle around a centrally positioned cist, which held the unburnt bones of a child accompanied by a Vase Food Vessel. Other deposits with Collared Urns were peripheral to the cairns: the mixed cremation of a 21-year-old female and a 1–2-year-old child was placed at the periphery of Howick Heugh ring cairn. Taken as a whole, this pattern could suggest that the placement of cremated remains with Collared Urns at cairns and barrows, particularly in the northern Northumbrian uplands, was age-graded with adults at the centre, adolescents within the cairn, and children at the periphery. Two factors run against this proposition: the presence of a child in the central cist at Broomhill, and the adult female with the child at the edge of Howick Heugh. However, the child at Broomhill is an earlier deposit, and part of a different strategy in mortuary practices—one to do with the use of cists and Food Vessels, not Collared Urns. The adult female at Howick Heugh is buried with a 1–2-year-old. Nonetheless, the sample size is small and this proposition remains weakly articulated.

The most common position for all cremation deposits at circular sites was central, but if we then consider the position of the remaining deposits the majority—45 out of 75, or 60 per cent—fall in a single quadrant of the compass, between the south-east and the south-west (Table 5.10). This is especially the case for cremation deposits which are not held within or accompanied by a vessel (33 out of 49, or 67 per cent). As discussed above, orientation to the south-west chimes well with a range of Late Neolithic, Chalcolithic, and Early Bronze Age monuments across northern Britain. It is also interesting that the only securely dated early second-millennium BC round house from Northumberland, Lookout Plantation, is orientated with its doorway to the south-west (Monaghan 1994). Vitally, most crouched burials in North-East England are turned on one side in the grave in order to face south, with the head either to the east or west. The persistence in 'facing south' among crouched burials is perhaps mirrored through the later place-ment of cremation deposits in the southern quadrant of burial sites. Since cremated remains cannot be laid out to 'face south', they were instead pos-itioned to the southerly quadrant of circular sites. Here they could take in the sunlight for most of the day, most of the year. This positioning of deposits at circular sites was not relevant for the crouched burials because they were often

Table 5.10 The location of cremation deposits at circular sites by type of vessel present where recorded, with the band of results from the southern quadrant highlighted

Location at circular site	Vase Food Vessel	Urn Food Vessel	Vase Urn	Collared Urn	Cordoned Urn	No vessel	Total
Central	2	3	1	6	1	11	24
North	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
NE	1	1	1	0	0	1	4
ENE	0	1	0	0	0	2	3
E	0	0	1	2	0	2	5
ESE	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
SE	0	2	0	1	0	8	11
SSE	0	0	1	0	0	7	8
S	0	2	0	1	1	6	10
SSW	1	1	0	0	0	4	6
SW	0	1	0	1	0	8	10
WSW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
W	0	1	0	0	0	3	4
WNW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NNW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	3	1	0	0	5	9
Total	4	15	5	11	2	60	97

the only deposit present and the body itself could be positioned within the grave or cist: the practice was an emergent property of a continued respect for a certain cosmological principle through a different funerary practice. Thus, we could suggest there was a recursive relationship between the treatment of the dead and the patterned placement of their remains at burial sites after *c*.2000 BC which coalesced with a particularly enduring and pervasive cosmological principle associated with the movement of the sun and the changing seasons that was often, though not always, invoked well into the second millennium BC. This line was becoming crystallized into what we might see as a 'structuring principle': a pervasive line passing through many haecceities, from crouched burials to cremations to domestic spaces and monuments. Finally, it is worth noting that this pattern may be further chronologically textured: as outlined in Chapter 4 some or many of these 'unurned' cremations may be from the end of the Early Bronze Age or the Middle Bronze Age.

I have discussed the locations where cremated remains were deposited within the landscape, and now where they were deposited at circular sites, but not where the bodies of the dead were cremated prior to deposition. Where cremated remains were placed in urns the place of cremation could be quite distant from the place of deposition, and in some cases, as argued in Chapter 4, some time could pass and further remains be added to the vessel before final deposition. While evidence for cremation pyres is rare, it seems as

though cremation occurred near to the location of deposition in at least some cases. The cremated remains of more than one individual, fire-reddened soil, and fire-cracked stones at Spital Hill cairn 7, cist 2 (Dixon 1892, 27–9), fit the description of a dump of pyre material. While this could conceivably be brought some distance, other cases suggest cremation occurred locally to the site of deposition. Burnt fragments of winkle and cockle among the cremated human remains from Low Hauxley cist 1 strongly suggest cremation on the beach near to the burial site. There are other cases where fire-reddened pit walls may suggest that pits were dug and pyres built over the top of them before they were lit or that bones were fed into fires within pits, though it is also possible that pits were ritually purified with intense fires before any human remains were deposited.

The composition and effects of mortuary monuments

Archaeologists have recently emphasized the importance of understanding sequences of activities other than burying the dead at sites like barrows and cairns (e.g. contributions to Last 2007; Jones 2005; Owoc 2001; 2005). Early Bronze Age mounds emerged out of the intra-actions within an assemblage of people, places, soil, turf, stone, perhaps the labour of animals, antler picks, baskets, hammerstones, and so on. In discussing Neolithic long cairns and barrows Lesley McFadyen (2007) has drawn a distinction between 'quick architecture' where people's bodies were needed to hold up stones on end while other stones were rested in place, for instance, and 'slow architecture' such as the orderly stacking of dry stone slabs. The pace of construction at the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age cairns and barrows in North-East England varied. The largest stone slabs were used for cist sides and particularly cist cover slabs, and also the stones set upright in sockets to form kerbs at sites like Chatton Sandyford and Blawearie. Several individuals (human or otherwise) probably co-operated in moving these. The infilling of cairns and mounds with stones and soil probably enchained larger numbers of people within the assemblage, and may have been a hasty and lively activity ending a funeral and/or creating a coherence around a community of the dead. In recent years a number of researchers have emphasized the importance of examining the properties of the substances in the architecture of Early Bronze Age cairns and barrows (Brittain 2004; 2007; Jones 2005; Lewis 2007; Owoc 2002; 2005; 2007; Nowakowski 2007). In some cases these studies have detected practices that draw to the fore (or, we could say, relationally produce) specific proper-ties, such as the structured use of coloured stones or soils, in meaningful ways. The translations that barrows and cairns from North-East England have undergone through excavation and recording in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries AD have reduced much of the detail of how these monuments were composed. Stone was almost always at the core of the monument, and much of the earth might have sedimented around this core, but earth and turf could

also have been used as construction materials. There are a few cases where we can tell that particular materials were selected or where alterations to existing mounds could be traced by excavators because of the differing materials used.

The southern cist in the cairn at Turf Knowe North consisted of four side slabs: two of the opposed slabs were from pink rounded edged andesite blocks, while the other two were of a grey stone. The ring of boulders delineating the area to be covered by a cairn at Birkside Fell included two quartz blocks, one in a south-easterly and another a south-westerly point of the ring. As well as the use of beach pebbles in cairns at Low Hauxley and Warkworth, at Benthall two cists were found in 'a mound which appears to consist of water-worn boulders, pebbles and sand' (Askew 1938, 150). One cist had a pebble floor, embedded in clay, the other a flooring of flat stone slabs. This second cist held the crouched remains of an adult, possibly female, lying on her right with her head to the west and facing south, accompanied by a Vase Food Vessel. Sand and earth were found around the remains. Several mounds are described as having layers of stone 'on top' of a mixture of earth and stone. At Low Hills, Easington, Trechmann (1914, 167–9) states that the core of the barrow was round and that a stony addition had been made to the western side. The core barrow was also rich in stones, but was made of 'tenacious yellow clay' while the addition consisted of 'black earthy soil'. A flint scraper and burnt and unburnt flint flakes and one pot sherd were recovered during the excavation of the barrow, though it is not specified whether these came from the earth soil or not. Hasting Hill was composed of earth and a range of colourful stones 'chiefly of magnesian limestone but also of red and yellow coal measure sandstone, whinstone, and various glacial erratics' (Trechmann 1914, 138).

In some cases it is possible to infer the passage of time between either mortuary deposits and monument construction or successive phases of monument elaboration. I have already outlined cases where burnt soil and stones were found in the upper fills of cists or below the lower courses of cairns covering cist burials in Chapter 4. Some burnt stones were also found in the Green Leighton barrow, and at Warkshaugh Farm the stones and earth in the north-east of the barrow were described as reddened by fire, though these may have been caused by localized short-term activities. The sequence of cairn construction, ploughing, reconstruction, and later ploughing at Turf Knowe North is also an indication that not all mortuary sites were revered and conserved, and a reminder that even the most enduring monuments survive only because the other forces in the assemblage constantly support them in doing so. At Wether Hill a timber cist set in a pit and packed in with large stones was dug out and the pit reused to construct a stone cist. No human remains survived, but the pit yielded two Beakers and radiocarbon dates from the wood are during the period *c.*2200–1900 BC, though the wood dated is oak. Three Food Vessels were placed in the cist and a carbonized grain of straight hulled barley from the fabric of one vessel was radiocarbon dated to

*c.*2020–1745 BC. There are no other examples of Beakers and Food Vessels deployed in the same feature, and it is possible that several generations passed before the site was modelled and reused. The later histories of these monuments could not be predicted when they were built. Indeed, all of the site histories and patterns in deposition within the landscape discussed in this chapter were contingent: had certain marriages, exchanges, births, and deaths not occurred when and how they did, or happened differently, then the resulting size, location, and nature of the burial site might have been rather different.

While the phenomenon I am exploring in this book means that I have only drawn into the assemblage sites where the remains of the dead are present, there are some cases of mounds where it is unclear whether the mound was intended to cover a mortuary deposit or some other feature. This is most evident for the smaller cairns in cairnfields, as discussed above and noticed by Johnston (2000). But at Murton Moor, County Durham, a round barrow *c.*12m in diameter and 1.2m high when it was excavated was centred around 'an enormous massive boulder of sandstone about three and a half feet in diameter, roughly spherical in shape', the top of which projected out of the barrow (Trechmann 1914, 167). A deposit of cremated bone, charcoal, and 'calcined' flint scraper was found with a (seemingly unburnt) flint knife 1m south of the centre of the barrow and less than a metre below its current surface. The boulder did not cover a burial and may have formed the initial impetus for the accumulation of earth and stone in this locale, which, perhaps much later, became an appropriate place to bury the dead. This site can perhaps be set alongside the suggestion of a monument constructed around a tree at Blawearie. In cases where specific trees or boulders or other local features were given special attention we can start thinking about things that are very hard to see in the assemblage: for instance, were these special entities, exceptional persons or other kinds of special beings known to be 'alive', animate, powerful? Was their power contained, harnessed, respected and/or closed down or redirected by these transformations—particularly if they were burnt or buried in the process? Were these acts part of a process of death and regrowth in which it was usual to situate human beings and rarer to situate non-human beings?

Some interesting inclusions to mound construction have also been detected. I have already noted the presence of human remains within the barrow material at Hasting Hill. There are several accounts of artefacts found in the earth of barrows, usually flints, but also a quartzite hammerstone at Rayheugh 1. In addition to the saddle quern in the packing around the cist at Turf Knowe North three fragments of flat sandstone 'worn quite smooth' from 'polishing or grinding' were found in the cairn material at Rayheugh 1 and 2, and Rosebrough Moor 1 (Greenwell 1877, 414–15, 417). At least 17 stones bearing rock art motifs (mostly cup marks but some elaborated with incised lines)

were recovered from the cairn material at Pitland Hills barrow 1, along with a quernstone fragment. None of the cup-marked stones from Pitland Hills are the complex cup-and-ring motifs seen on much of the rock art; they are rather single cup marks or groups of cup marks, and Rome Hall (1887*a*, 270) notes they are all carved from sandstone rather than the local limestone on which the cairn is situated. It is likely they were brought to the site from elsewhere. Two cup-marked stones in volcanic rock were also found in the packing around the cist slabs at the centre of the cairn at Turf Knowe North, as was a saddle quern (Adams and Carne 1997, 8). As well as being present at several cairns and barrows, cup-marked stones have also been found at Duddo stone circle (Edwards et al. 2011, 335, 338), and at Milfield South henge (Harding 1981, 97). Cup-marked stones may have been an important feature in the construction of many cairns and barrows in the region (Watson 2011), but they also appear in other contexts including domestic ones, as at Lintshie Gutter in Lanarkshire (Terry 1995). It is unclear exactly what uses, properties, and effects these objects had in the various differing local assemblages though O'Connor (2010) suggested people ground them out while reflecting on their relations with the dead and deposited them commemoratively. While some cist slabs in the region may have been detached from rock outcrops carved with cup-and-ring marks and other complex decorative elements these cases are extremely rare, and none yielded human remains or were recorded to a sufficient standard to be included in the dataset for this book. A pyramidal chunk of stone with cup-and-ring and a series of cup marks was found in a very unusual cist at Lilburn Hill Farm (Moffatt 1885).

Ultimately, while the specific properties of stone and earth emergent from these practices are undeniable, they overlapped and were put to similar effect. One difference lay in the surface, particularly the facade of the resulting monument. Stones were often drafted in for this role, first in the large monuments of the early second millennium and then the smaller cairns that followed them. But stones were also used to make rings and circles of various kinds, and these places then came to encapsulate the dead. The circular *form* was here arguably more important than the *substances* used: ditches were not dug in the uplands other than to form sockets for stones to stand in, whereas in the lowland areas circular ditches were carved out of the earth and left to silt up. The standing stones in the upland monuments were not of the same height as is likely for either the timber circles found at some of the lowland enclosures nor the stone circle at Duddo. These monuments were similar yet different, though it does not seem their difference can be summed up by a distinction between stone and wood or any other kind of material. It was arguably more an issue of form, scale, the local activities drafted into the narrative of site construction, and use.

It has often been suggested that Early Bronze Age round barrows were part of a technology of lineage and descent—and compelling arguments have been

made for other regions along these lines (e.g. Garwood 1991; 2003; 2007; 2012). Such an interpretation is certainly possible for some of the cist cemeteries and round mounds of North-East England, but there are some caveats. First, there is little emphasis on linearity in the arrangement of the burials, the line of burials across South Charlton being a notable exception. Rather, burials at cemeteries without mounds occur in closely nucleated groups arranged in a seemingly ad hoc manner, but given a lack of stratigraphic relationships any sequence is hard to detect. In some cases at circular sites later burials arguably radiated outwards from earlier burials in various and multiple directions (e.g. at Hasting Hill or Blawearie). Barrows were rarely arranged in linear cemeteries. Secondly, while some sequences of burials were clearly fairly rapid, with later deposits citing earlier ones in terms of the selection of grave goods or the orientation of graves, there were also later deposits which do not seem to show knowledge of what had gone on before. Cremation deposits without cists and especially those without cists or urns were invariably insertions at older monuments—if these made claims to ancestry then the ancestors were distant (cf. Barrett 1994, 127–8). Kinship or some other affinity may be inferred in the use of several burial grounds, for instance: in the recurrent placing of hands in front of the face at Hasting Hill; in shared cist orientation at Seafield Farm; or in shared styles of pottery at Cheviot Walk Wood. At Harbottle Peels (Greenwell barrow 202, Alwinton) the Food Vessels from cists 2 and 3 (Greenwell's burials 2 and 6) are extremely similar, as are those from cist 3 (Greenwell's burial 5) and the nearby cist at Holystone Common cairn 1. Neil Wilkin has also identified a close similarity between the form and decorative technique of the Food Vessel from Greenwell's burial 5 at Harbottle Peels and one from Camphouse Farm, Roxburghshire (Fowler and Wilkin forthcoming). The sites are not more than 30km apart, but the degree of similarity and crafting is such that Wilkin has suggested specialist potters making fine vessels for distribution. If so, then while choice of similar vessels for burials may indicate some familial affinity it may equally not. Nonetheless, in each of these cases at least some loose affiliation for the dead was produced through iterative action (cf. Jones 2001).

It has also been suggested that the various round monuments of the Early Bronze Age were special religious sites: *axes mundi* or centres of the cosmos which could also be points of transition, transformation, and communication between worlds. This is certainly possible in North-East England, and the body of the deceased was directed through the cosmos in an ordered fashion both prior to the construction of large complex monuments and through the placement of the dead at those monuments. It was perhaps not necessary to create a large and impressive circular monument to situate such an *axis mundi*: the same result might be effected by a circle of mourners around a cist, grave, or pyre, by a single ring of stones around a pit, or carrying the dead into a henge or stone circle. The positioning of bodies in graves or cremated

remains at stone circles, henges, and cairns may well have reiterated and extended cosmological principles that had wide currency and may in some cases have become entangled with particular attempts at hegemonic authority. But this does not mean that burial sites or circular monuments in North-East England were associated with elites or prestige, nor that they were necessarily centres for distant pilgrimage—they may well have been the scene of festivals, prestations, and gatherings among communities living in the region between the Tees and the Forth and across the hills to the west, for instance, or some smaller area within that. It is possible that some communities or sections of these communities were highly mobile—for instance, if animals were herded significant distances from homes set on the slopes of hills above rivers in the region. Gatherings at henges might have also brought together some people herding animals through the Milfield Basin with communities living there permanently, setting up opportunities for exchange and mediating any tension between the groups (cf. Fleming 1971, 161–3). This is not to deny that some places may have been more sacred than others to particular members of the community or scales of the community. Any communities that attempted to and were able to attain elevated positions after *c.*2200 BC would arguably have needed to have drawn on the plants, animals, tools, and substances of everyday life as much as and as part of any association with cosmological or spiritual potency. As much as mortuary practices were embedded in religious activities and beliefs, they were also embedded in everyday practices, places, and landscapes—as, I suspect, many of those religious activities and beliefs were too.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explored the relations that unfolded between places and mortuary practices within the period, bringing the architecture of these places and the changing landscapes and practices of everyday life into the assemblage. It would be wrong to frame all of the places examined in this chapter as primarily mortuary sites, and I have tried to set burial practices alongside routine activities, special gatherings, and enduring features of the landscape. To summarize, burials did not often cluster together before *c.*2100 BC: isolated cists fixed the dead in place but there is no evidence these places became particularly associated with the dead. There were no *local* communities of the ancestral dead. Isolated cist burials continued after this, but increasingly cist burials traced relations through time by clustering alongside existing burials. Some locales which became cemeteries or cairns incorporating communities of the dead may have had previous histories, being reconfigured as circular areas enclosed by low boundaries of stone or earth before burial took place.

The increased congregation of the dead after *c.*2100 BC may suggest a broad narrative of belonging tying the buried dead, and potentially the living, together in small groups through funerary practice. Where the sequences of burials at a site can be examined in detail it seems as though close connections, such as shared orientation and body position or very similar pottery, linked a few burials, but not always all of those buried at a site and often no more than three or four. Connections between kin and affines might have been traced in these cases, but if these burials were closely contemporary then these people may have shared ancestry without one being the direct ancestor of others. Burials with objects made from exotic materials, particularly jet, arguably attempted to celebrate the strength of relationships that extended to distant places, but were not buried repeatedly by lineages using a specific burial ground over several generations. Burials with Collared Urns in northern Northumberland may suggest a localized exception some time in the early second millennium, but the mounds in question also seldom received more than a few burials. Later burials at mounds do not seem to relate directly to earlier ones, suggesting that as time had passed the precise identities of the ancestral dead had been forgotten. Perhaps many ancient mounds were increasingly associated with a generic sense of belonging and ancestry during the early second millennium BC.

Both the bodies and objects within the funerary assemblages discussed in Chapter 4 and the forms and types of sites discussed in this chapter are 'iterative assemblages' that were then brought within 'gathering assemblages' (Lucas 2012, 200). That is, they both reflected back upon and extended forwards particular practices, forming codes and categories in the process, and also embedded those things, bodies, materials, and practices in place, leaving a legacy on the landscape. Some of those material legacies were short-lived, as with cist burials without mounds. Others might have had an impact that is difficult for us to see, such as cist burials with small mounds which did not attract further deposition. Even substantial mounds could be reduced and ploughed over, as at Turf Knowe North. But some of those legacies, those 'frozen accidents' in the unfolding material histories of the landscape, were enduring in a way that demanded further interest. The legacies of practices, worked through the repeated reiteration of those practices, also have to be set alongside the material legacies: such practices changed and brought people back to existing monuments but from a different position in a renewed assemblage. Old mounds had changed: they had become overgrown, perhaps, or slumped or settled, emerged from woods into open ground or fields or receded from fields into scrub or woodlands. In some cases perhaps they had ceased to be the troubling places where people known personally to the living had undergone rituals intended to secure an auspicious future for them and others, but perhaps retained (or later regained) their power as places where the recently deceased could be safely incorporated into a community of the distant

dead. But it has to be stressed that in each case this could all have happened differently, and that, in fact, there is no singular pattern throughout the region, even within the same valley or along the same range of hills. The landscape unfolded relationally, and there is much we are still to see clearly: the patterns of subsistence activities and of woodland growth and clearance, patterns in the expansion and contraction of particular kin groups and shifting settlement patterns, and so on, all of which will have affected the uses and reuses of mortuary monuments as much as religious beliefs, cosmological principles, or the negotiation of 'social' and 'political' relations. In the next chapter I will explore the relations that lie behind the inversions and patterns, drawing out key haecceities in an analysis of the extended assemblage of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England.

6

Themes Emerging from Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age Mortuary Practices in North-East England

INTRODUCTION: SCALE, INVERSION, AND RELATIONALITY

So far it could be argued—though I think unfairly—that there is little necessarily relational about the analysis of human remains, mortuary deposits, mortuary sites, and their landscape settings pursued in Chapters 4 and 5. It is certainly the case that I have deployed 'inversions' whereby burials, artefacts, materials, and sites are accorded to certain types or traditions. Yet I also argued in Chapters 1 and 2 that such inversions are necessarily a valuable starting point for archaeological interpretation, a *sine qua non* for appreciating the diverse relationships that formed and comprised past people, practices, places, things, and ideas. Well-articulated inversions identify ongoing relations which had significant effects in the past. It would be a mistake to confuse these inversions with single and fixed categories that hold the same form or meaning eternally, but it would be equally erroneous to see them as solely products of the archaeological imagination that do not relate to past assemblages and experiences: in Latour's terms these are factishes: they are fabricated, but they are useful, effective constructions. Artefacts, and types of artefacts, do not consist of singular lines of becoming, however. A pot may be shaped somewhat like certain Beakers that pre-exist it, but also like a Food Vessel, and be decorated in a way unusual for either form. The artefact and the type or tradition emerge in different ways and at different scales, but in relation to one another (cf. Jones 2007, 78–84). Artefacts, and artefact traditions or types, are haecceities: entities which consist of the bundled concretion of specific intersecting 'lines' of becoming. In this chapter I trace the lines of becoming that emerge from appreciating the various relations that comprise each of the phenomena identified in earlier chapters, offering an account of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices that is fully relational and realist.

At this point I need to briefly address the issue of scale and pattern. The object typologies instrumental in tracing sequences of practice in Chapters 4 and 5 help articulate a particular patterning to time. By operating at the level of three counties in North-East England I have participated in an inversion within space. Both of these are major factors in the phenomenon that extends as I investigate it. Producing chronologies which allocate all burials with, say, a certain style of Beaker to specific centuries without a comprehensive suite of absolute dates for the burials from each period ultimately affects the way that sequence and change can be appreciated, and the patterns that emerge. It is possible that some deposits, some practices, were a hundred years earlier or later than I can perceive given the current formulation of things, and thus crossed these divides. I have tried to highlight this where it is most relevant, and to acknowledge the overlapping chronologies of several types of objects and burial modes within specific centuries. A chronology based on typology also makes it difficult to discuss change within the currency of the type, and gives the impression of radical changes as watersheds arising between periods. In some cases radical changes may well have occurred, but it is difficult to confirm this for most of the assemblage I am working with at present. I have had to appeal to a wider range of dated evidence well beyond the region, and this extends the assemblage ever outwards, tying in other assemblages along with their complexities and complications. This raises a problem with the spatial inversion. While I can discuss patterns within the region, and to some extent identify these to certain periods, I do so by inferring that these developments are roughly contemporary with those elsewhere. This has even resulted in the rejection of the radiocarbon date GU-9524 from cremated bone as giving a date for the EFVU that contained it at Turf Knowe North. Thus, the chronology is relational, as we negotiate different effects with radiocarbon dates, strata, the source material (heartwood, twig, or bone?), and the laboratory equipment (e.g. in the case of BM-2206, BM-2265, and BM-2266 from Whitton Hill site 1, all of which had to be recalculated after problems at the laboratory were realized). Despite these issues, starting from these inversions allows us to appreciate some important temporal and spatial patterns—these patterns appear fuzzily, but they appear nonetheless. There are certain times when a phenomenon appears across a broad expanse of space, but is spread thinly, and times when other phenomena cluster densely in particular locales.

Indeed, scale, like everything else, is emergent from the assemblage. I suggested in Chapter 2 that assemblages have different 'regions', and that some features of these regions do not extend through to the present. Thus, we cannot converse with Early Bronze Age people. Scale is a matter of engagement rather than the physical size of any 'object' we study: when we investigate a kerbed cairn or a particular burial with a bronze dagger we may actually operate across scales, considering comparators elsewhere and how well this deposit fits in with a broader pattern. The object, the entity, the

assemblage is therefore multi-scalar and shifts scales in ways that make it what it is (cf. Latour 2005, 183–90). Thus, the way that a bronze dagger transcends scales in any given engagement is one of its key relational properties. The levels of complexity and detail are potentially no different in dealing with a single burial than dealing with an entire landscape (Latour 2005; cf. Strathern 1991), and we continually follow lines of inquiry and connection across scales, across nested and interwoven assemblages which are regions of larger assemblages.

For instance, the earliest Beaker burials are spread thinly across a very large area, and only a few are present in North-East England. Across the entire area where early Beakers are present they had many varied effects: this 'Beaker phenomenon' was part of local, unpredictable, and varied assemblages giving rise to differing effects. The patterns in how such phenomena unfold are messy and spatially discontinuous—they may even be fractal in nature, retaining some similarity in their distribution or rate of expansion across different scales—and rely on emergent as well as pre-existing relations, such as the presence of monument complexes or other factors appealing to and/or ex-cluding those involved with the earliest Beaker-associated practices. Since we know that the North-East of England was inhabited in the centuries before the earliest Beaker burials we know that mortuary practices which left no deposits of human remains took place. Since there are few of these early burials we know that the 'invisible' practices must have continued for many. Thus, we cannot be certain how much of an effect at certain scales of time and space the single act of burial at Kirkhaugh, for instance, had. It left an enduring material legacy in its locality through the mound that was constructed, and perhaps it had an impact on the history of mortuary practices in the region. We can see any single event like this as a 'frozen accident' (cf. Buchanan 2001, 17, 55 *inter alia*) which had historical effects even if we cannot detect their nature and extent. We can at least say that Kirkhaugh indicates that part of the region had been drawn into a wider phenomenon, albeit extremely weakly. This burial may have been very effective in the short term as a religious or magical transformation of the dead and of the place. But it was not replicated in the region, and the adherence of other early Beaker burials to a short cist design suggests a quite different influence within the entanglement coalescing be-tween the living, the dead, things, materials, and places in North-East England. The emergent phenomenon—short cist burial—spiralled from Northumber-land to North-East Scotland to Yorkshire and beyond, leaving legacies of practice for hundreds of years in those and neighbouring regions. The impact of these burials on the local landscape across the area was arguably slight in comparison to burials with mounds and collective burial grounds which mostly post-date 2200–2100 BC, but the burial practices endured extensively throughout the region for hundreds of years.

Apparently the proposition that the unfolding patterns in burial practices are fractal could be tested mathematically (Brown et al. 2005). But it is perhaps

less important to identify what 'type' of pattern we see and more significant to consider the myriad forces, entities, and relations unfolding along with that pattern. It seems that what emerges from the assemblage is a pattern whereby rare and 'rich' burials occur infrequently and irregularly at many different scales of analysis, and that each time a new phenomenon appears it becomes unevenly distributed from the outset at any scale. This is arguably a result of the 'critical state' of human relations in which extreme variation is always possible, rather than an underlying picture of progressive social evolution or hierarchical social structure. It underlines the unpredictability of relations and the multiplicity of forces and entities at work in, say, the life, death, and burial of any single person or collection of people. The messy, fuzzy pattern is not predictable or inevitable from the outset, then, but neither is it random. It is historical. It results from many millions of contingent interactions, including human decisions. Of course, the nature and degree of differentiation did vary, and the legacy of past relations often entangled successive generations (of people, things, plants, and animals) in new ways. But in the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age of North-East England such entanglements were diverse and do not appear to have often resulted in escalating, competitive hierarchies. This may have happened in some landscapes at some times in the final centuries of the third millennium and the first centuries of the second, or it may not: at present this proposition is weakly articulated in the assemblage of this study. Good description is needed to explore how relations were differentiated.

Operating at the scales of time and space available to us as archaeologists we can seldom perceive a direct connection between single intra-actions and long-term consequences even though we can infer such connections existed. We can, however, describe the relations constitutive of those patterns, and can trace the unfolding impact of accumulated 'frozen accidents' left by specific events on things, materials, places, people, and practices. I will explore the course of these unfolding, historic, and contingent patterns throughout this chapter as I trace the emergence and contingent histories of specific haecceities and arrive at a 'good description' (Borić and Strathern 2010) of the past regions of the assemblage I am studying.

STRONGLY AND WEAKLY ARTICULATING INVERSIONS: TEASING OUT LINES AND MODES OF BECOMING FROM MORTUARY PRACTICES

Each burial is an assemblage, and it is a haecceity. Each haecceity is unique, but is constituted out of bundles of practices, materials, forms, and places that are becoming. Each of these bundled aspects extends off through other burials

located in similar places, or given a similar orientation, size, shape, or content. Thus, a burial with an SN Beaker is connected with other burials with similar Beakers through the assemblage. A Beaker becomes what it is in a similar way to other similar Beakers, both throughout the assemblage and in specific regions. Certainly this proposition circulates through the region where we are at present, but, we think, it pertains to relations that were vibrant in prehistoric regions of the assemblage too, and our typo-chronologies attempt to articulate this. But if we are to say that two burials with SN Beakers share further properties then we need to identify other ways that they were and are becoming along parallel paths. If there is any validity to the idea that SN Beakers were effective as a specific kind of artefact related to certain identities, beliefs, practices, we would expect them to be used consistently with respect to other features of mortuary practices. If the inversion 'burials with SN Beakers' is coherent, then, it must consist of multiple similarities, intertwined through multiple burials. Some of the inversions operating in this study consist of many similar haecceities—similar bundles of things, materials, forms, places, and practices—as with SN Beaker burials. These inversions appear strongly as a coherent region in the assemblage. Other inversions are less clear, less coherent, suggesting that a wider range of lines of becoming passed through and drew along those objects.

Indeed, some of the haecceities explored in this assemblage are tightly bundled while others are looser, sharing several practices, several lines of becoming with many other burial modes (Table 6.1). Burial in a short cist with an SN Beaker was a wide-ranging practice with a significant legacy for following *practices*, even if the specific cist *burials* themselves did not have an impact on the placement of subsequent burials that we can see. Other inversions could be broken down into smaller inversions which would be more internally consistent: burials with Food Vessel Urns display greater similarity to one another if we separate those with cremated remains from those without. Here we move from the vessel typology to the treatment of the body in order to refine the inversion, and to appreciate *in relation*, the specific events, assemblages, haecceities, which we have attended to through the shorthand of that inversion. Cremated human remains buried in cists without pottery also seem to constitute a clear group of deposits which were often covered by cairns in a nucleated cemetery with other cists and cairns. Yet these inversions have no *singular* point of origin: they result from the intra-actions among plural features of the assemblage in which they are entangled. For instance, cremating the body would destroy any jet and bronze items on the pyre, making it very difficult to be certain about the full extent of bronze dagger use and this may in part explain why the inversion of uncremated burials with daggers appears so well instantiated. Inversions involving landscape location may be the product of subsequent histories of land use as much as patterns of

Table 6.1 Relations bundled within specific inversions (dominant patterns—for full picture see Chapters 4 and 5; terms in brackets denote less common features)

Inversion/probable date range	Treatment of body	Bodily orientation	Artefacts (rarer)	Feature	MNI, age at death	Nearby burials	Monuments	Landscape location; distribution
AOC LC/MC Beaker (n=2) *c.*2450–2150 BC	Inhumation?	Unclear	**Arrowhead**; others	**Grave/ surface**	?	**Isolated**	**Round mound**	Upland near waterway; sparse
TSN Beaker (n=3) *c.*2300–2200 BC	**Crouched burial**	SE–NW, SW–NE	**1 or 2 Beakers only**	Cist	1, only 1 adult known	Isolated	None	Varied; sparse
SN Beaker (n=19) *c.*2250–2050 BC	**Crouched burial**	E–W (SE–NW)	**1 or 2 Beakers only**	Cist	Mainly 1 mainly adult	Isolated (pair)	None	**Hillside**, often near water; **riverine or coastal**; widespread except uplands
LN (earlier) Beaker (n=3) 2200–2000 BC	Crouched burial	E–W or SE–NW	Beaker only (ochre)	Cist	1, **adult** where known (2)	Isolated or group	None	**Hillside overlooking waterway**; riverine, sparse
HBSP Beaker (n=2) *c.*2250–1950 BC	**Crouched burial +cremation**	E–W	**Beaker** (flint)	Cist	**1 adult, plus 1 or 2 MNI**	Isolated or group	None or round mound	Varied; sparse
Bronze dagger (n=5) *c.*2200–1950 BC	**Incomplete/ disturbed**	ENE–WSW to NE–SW	**Dagger only**	Cist	**1, adult**	**Isolated**	None	**Mainly riverine; north of the Tyne**
Bronze knife-dagger (n=3) *c.*2200–1650 BC	Mainly crouched burial	ENE–WSW to N–S	**Beaker/ FV, flint (jet)**	Cist	1, adult	Isolated (group)	None (round mound)	Hillside, near to river (coast)
North–south cists and graves (19) *c.*2200–1750 BC	Mainly inhumation, but varied	N–S	**Late Beakers, FV (jet)**	Cist (grave)	Mainly 1, mainly adult	Varied	Cemetery, kerbed enclosure, mound	Varied; **clustered in north Northumberland**

Bowl Food Vessel (n=5) *c.*2150–1950 BC	Cremation (? crouched burial)	Varied	Vessel only, (jet)	Cist	1 (2), child or adolescent, 1 adult	Group or isolated	Mainly none	Hillside near stream; mainly riverine, all in northern Northumberland
GSP Beaker (n=4) *c.*2000–1700 BC	Crouched? (cremation)	E–W or N–S	Beaker (jet, flint, bone pin)	Grave or cist	Varied	Mainly part of group	kerbed enclosure, mound, henge	Varied; mainly low hills within 10km of the coast, sparse
Vase Food Vessel (n=26) *c.*2150–1700 BC	Crouched inhumation or cremation	Any	1 or 2 vessels (jet, flint)	Cist	1(2), adult or child	Isolated or group	Round mounds (including kerbed), none	**Hillside with river view**; widespread, rarer in mid-Northumberland and County Durham
Cremations without vessels in cists (n=22) *c.*2100–1800 BC	Cremation	N/a (cists E–W to N–S)	**Burnt flint fragments only**	Cist	1–3, child and/or adult	**Group**	**Round mounds**	**Hillside near stream**; riverine, hillside, and coastal; dispersed, mainly in north
Food Vessel Urn (n=25) *c.*2000–1750 BC	Cremation (inhumation)	Cists NE–SW, E–W; pits round	1 to 3 vessels, flint, jet	Pit [crem]; Cist [not crem]	1?, adult and child	Highly varied	Highly varied	Hillside near stream, some in cists coastal or riverside;

(Continued)

Table 6.1 Continued

Inversion/probable date range	Treatment of body	Bodily orientation	Artefacts (rarer)	Feature	MNI, age at death	Nearby burials	Monuments	Landscape location; distribution
								throughout east of region
EFVU (n=7) *c.*2000–1700 BC	**Cremation**	N/a	**Vessel only** (flint)	Pit	**MNI 1 or 2, mainly adult (children)**	**Part of group**	**Round mound or rock shelter**	**Hillside near stream with river view; riverine and hillside,** North of the Tyne
Collared Urn (16) *c.*2000–1550 BC	**Cremation**	Varied/ round	1 or 2 vessels; pins, flint (bronze awl, jet)	**Pit (land surface)**	**MNI 1–4, adult, sometimes accompanied by child**	Varied (mound group)	**Round mound, ring cairn**	Often hillside and river or with river view; throughout region except SE and far W. Densest in northern Northumberland
Accessory Vessel (6) *c.*2000–1550 BC	**Cremation**	Varied/ round	**Vessel of another type**	Varied	?	Varied (mound group)	Mainly round mounds	Hills, hilltops
Cordoned Urn (2) *c.*1800–1550 BC	**Cremation**	Round	Vessel (bone knife)	Pit	**MNI 1, Child**	Unclear	Round mound	Hillside/escarpment edge North Tynedale
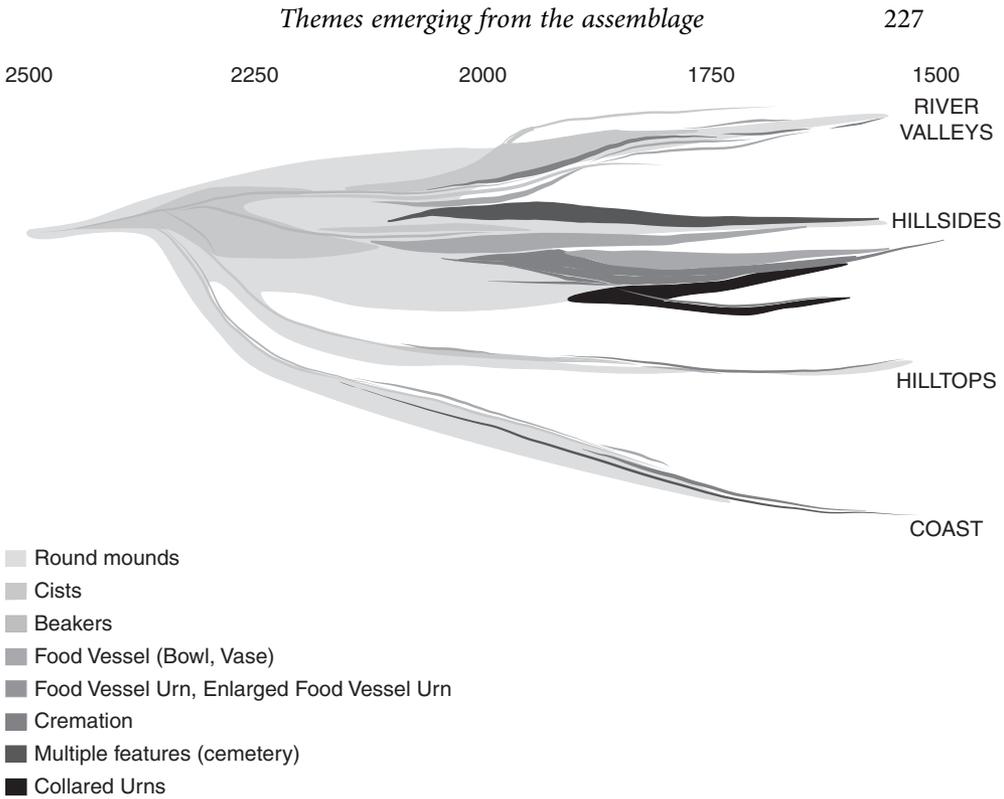
Figure 6.1 Unfolding features of mortuary deposits in North-East England, *c.*2500–1500 BC

Early Bronze Age activity. There is the problem of equifinality: two different combinations of entities, forces, and processes could result in the construction of a round mound and it is not necessarily possible to decide between them from a present position. But some inversions are more weakly articulated than others: these inversions may not endure for long, having little effect on the wider assemblage, and their status as haecceities may be in doubt. Much has not survived its translation through the extended assemblage to today, and we might suspect that jet and copper alloy, bone and fabric artefacts were more numerous, and the burials 'richer' than they appear today. Some of the key features of these inversions would have been apparent to and intended by the people burying the dead over 3500 years ago. Those features were potentially negotiable, and would inevitably change as new lines of becoming, new ways of being and doing things, arose. Figure 6.1 traces the path of some of these key inversions over time, setting the scene for a discussion of the emergence and dissipation of specific lines of becoming in the rest of this chapter.

EMERGENT CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Importantly, I argued in Chapter 2 that we should not reify lines as the best formulation to grasp becoming: a barrow may be better understood as a swelling or mounding (Ingold 2010, 255), for instance, though how long it continues to swell (before, say, being ploughed over or becoming covered in alluvium) depends on ongoing as well as past relations. Yet as a way to grasp the temporal relations of *practices* the image of lines that are becoming is very useful, particularly if we acknowledge these are not straight lines but tangles that can divide, entwine, and head in multiple directions. Comprehending practices as lines in becoming can also assist in making sense of change and continuity. While archaeologists often discuss the reasons why change happens, they say less about how and why continuity occurs (cf. Robb 2007). Continuity is partly a result of repetition in practice and citation of previous acts (Jones 2007), but also in part due to the persisting force of relations that constitute things, materials, and places. It is not only human practices which are ongoing: the many non-human forces and entities in the assemblage also persist in their activities, changing as the relations among them change and as new entities and forces emerge from or are encompassed by the assemblage. Continuity unfolds, *emerges*, as much as change does. Indeed, it is impossible to say exactly when a 'tradition' starts—by its very definition the first time someone is buried with a Food Vessel in a cist it is not a tradition, but is it when two or three or five people have been buried in the same way? Continuities emerged most evidently in the use of short cists with SN Beakers and then with Vase Food Vessels, and in the construction of mounds over groups of burials. Archaeologists make inversions of traditions, but these traditions and inversions are themselves haecceities. Each burial or mound draws along with it the aspects of its configuration it shares with previous similar deposits, and as such a haecceity at the level of a tradition emerges. Haecceities that are traditions rub along with other haecceities, such as places: for instance, the haecceity of 'linear barrow cemeteries' may share space with the haecceity of Barrow Hills, Oxfordshire.

Emergent practices form lines that are becoming contingently, but as they gather force through repetition so these lines may become integral to an entanglement: the other lines become so entwined with this one that they come to depend on its existence (cf. Hodder 2012). Over time some practices become very forceful, or heavily integrated into different regions of an assemblage; archaeologists have often recognized these as manifesting structuring principles. Examples include the orientation of the dead to face south, and the emphasis on circularity at monuments and perhaps in dwelling space. Principles structuring action were entangled with specific things, materials, and practices: human bodies, stone cists, stone and earth mounds or enclosures,

and the rising and setting sun at certain seasons of the year. But equally, things, materials, and practices depended on these principles: if the principles lost their force then these practices might not continue—and it was even possible that existing monuments might be broken up and the past undone. Indeed, some of the lines in an entangled bundle may fall away entirely and others take their place. We see this in the emergence of the cosmological principle that bodies should face south: from very early on it was integral to crouched burial in cists. But even when cists fell out of use, and bodies were burnt before deposition, the principle continued, entangling other practices, such as the placement of the dead in relation to a burial ground. Cists or graves and intact bodies were not as integral to this principle as it might once have appeared.

Practices that are becoming are bundled up within assemblages like bodies, cists, and cairns, which are bound into other assemblages. They are also haecceities, or bundles of other lines, extending across time and space. As argued in Chapter 2, time is emergent from the assemblage. Cist burials were practised throughout the late third and into the early second millennium BC and created a particular temporal field during this period, then were seemingly abandoned. But the lines bound up in cist burial did not end there: some were redirected into cremation deposition practices, but others persisted through the enduring and unfolding matter of the cists that had been built. These cists resurfaced at other points in wider assemblages—for instance, the chance surfacing of cists during modern agriculture, quarrying, and construction has brought many of the lines becoming through cist burials into new assemblages such as antiquarian and archaeological studies. Continuity emerges through various different events and processes, then: the ongoing physical and chemical relations that allow things to persist even as they change and the repetition of the same or reinvention of similar practices are vital, but so too are other intra-actions within the assemblage, such as decisions not to destroy burial grounds, the rise of other practices that bring ancient remains to light, the engagements of the archaeologist.

HAECCEITIES EMERGING FROM CHALCOLITHIC AND EARLY BRONZE AGE MORTUARY PRACTICES

In the remainder of the chapter I draw out particular features of past mortuary practices as bundled lines of becoming, or haecceities. These are some of the key themes that emerge from, and give shape to, the assemblage of 'Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England' that I think allow us to tell something useful about the prehistoric past. I have divided this into two broad strands: changing rituals of personal transformation and changing people, things, and places.

Changing rituals of personal transformation

I have argued that mortuary practices bring about the ritualized transform-
ation of persons: the deceased and the living undertake the funeral together,
but each is situated differently from the other. The most obvious bundled line
connecting all of the mortuary deposits is that of the rite of passage. This line
draws together the living, the dead, and what we would see as supernatural
forces but were probably quite natural where past people were located in the
assemblage. Rites of passage are absolutely concerned with becoming, focusing
attention on change and transformation at the same time as ensuring that
relations continue beyond or despite death. As argued in Chapter 3, while
funerals have pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal phases we should not
divide the media of mortuary deposits into those present at this or that
phase: the body, for instance, passes through all three, and certain objects
may be introduced in order to conjoin the different phases, and may also be
removed at any point of transformation. The funeral forms an entire narrative,
and media introduced in one phase are transformed or removed in later
phases. The nature of this line changed during the Chalcolithic and Early
Bronze Age, and I will trace some of the key changes in this section.

Funerary sequences and locations

The earliest people whose bodies were buried with Beakers (Kirkhaugh, High
Knowes) were taken to places where there were no pre-existing monuments,
near to routeways through uplands. They seem to have been buried in graves
and/or organic containers, and were accompanied by a plethora of objects
including arrows or arrowheads. Some of these objects may have been made
especially for the grave, and the debitage from their production collected up
and placed with the body. The bodies were then covered with earth and stones,
leaving small upstanding monuments. They were not joined in their mounds
by other dead bodies, and many generations may have passed before others
were buried near by. Any reincorporation of the dead into a new community
happened unseen, deferred, away from the living. They were not joined by any
immediate descendants, and there does not seem to have been a concern with
establishing links of local ancestry between the dead. Lines passing through
the burial assemblage connected them, perhaps, with distant assemblages,
distant communities. Their bodies may have been disturbed soon after depos-
ition, but this is weakly articulated in the current assemblage.

   Other Beaker burials *c.*2300–2000 BC were rather different in nature. Their
bodies were on hillsides inter visible with rivers and valleys, possibly buried

near to where people lived. They may have been buried among places of routine life or at the peripheries of such places. Their bodies were not adorned with any enduring media, but were tightly contracted and squeezed into short stone cists. At Cartington a body was laid on bracken in a wooden log coffin, perhaps wrapped in hide, and lowered into a cist which was then sealed: organic wrappings and 'bedding' for the dead might be inferred in other cases. The cists were often designed to orientate the body east–west and during the funeral the faces of the dead were turned towards the south. Variation in whether the head was to the east or the west and whether the body lay on its left or right side probably followed a principle of sexual differentiation that was becoming current across Britain. Beakers were often placed near to the head, and sometimes two or three Beakers accompanied a single body. In some cases, as at Hollybush Field, no ceramic vessel accompanied the dead, and it seems likely that in others flint knives were placed near the body. Sometimes the grave was shared by more than one body, as at High Buston, suggesting either successive use, or shared funerals, or simultaneous burial. The short cists held the dead immobile, enclosing them finally with a large covering slab. The cists were not usually filled with earth (though sometimes a little seeped in over the millennia), potentially allowing the living to open cists and monitor for decay. At Brandon, Low Trewhitt North Moor, and possibly elsewhere, an act of burning took place above the cist, scorching earth and stones within the cist. At Brandon some of the bones too were scorched. At both these sites barrows sealed the cists, but in most cases there is little surviving evidence as to whether a mound was present. The vicinity of the cist at Brandon was probably set on fire when the bones were already free from flesh but before the barrow was built. This may suggest an extended funerary sequence, that mound construction was part of a second phase of activity associated with transforming the places where the dead had been buried, or that the area had been left to overgrow and when it was cleared the discovery of the cist necessitated it be covered with a mound. At Summerhill cist 4 burnt bone and charcoal in the upper fills of the cist suggest deposition of a second mortuary deposit, and the reuse of some cists. Early in the funerary sequence, then, the body was wrapped and contained, and seemingly left to decay gradually for some time in a liminal state. Later, some of the dead were seared away from the living in a dramatic event at the burial site. Further remains might be added to the cist. Finally, in some cases the dead were again contained in a stony and/or earthy growth, a small mound. At Low Trewhitt this mound covered three cists, and at Dilston Park two cists were within 100m of each other, but generally these early burials were not incorporated into a nearby community of the dead. A few became incorporated into cemeteries, as at the headland around Amble.

Burials with bronze daggers were relatively rare, and seem to date to *c.*2200–1950 BC. The remains of the dead, all adults, were often brought

to riverside locations where no previous burials are known, and buried in a cist. Several of these cists were thoroughly sealed with clay along the joins. Most were not crouched burials when found, and in these cases it seems that partial remains were buried and/or that decayed bodies were disturbed by later activity. At Allerwash the remains of a heavily decayed body were deposited on a bed of rushes, and a copper-alloy dagger and a lump of coal placed beside them. As with some of the earlier and contemporary Beaker burials, the disturbed bones of the man buried with a bronze blade at Reaverhill were scorched by fire. Burials with daggers, or with flint knives, were seldom accompanied with pottery (only 3 out of 18 instances), highlighting the very selective provision of the dead with artefacts during the funeral. Flint blades were buried with children as well as with adults. At Hasting Hill an adult man was accompanied by the cremated remains of a second adult and a child. At least two of those buried with blades were women. All were placed in cists longer than 80cm, often with roughly north-east–south-west to east–west orientations common at the time. While most of these cists remained as isolated burials in the landscape (including most with copper-alloy blades), others attracted further burials, gathering a community of the dead around them. For the most part burials were isolated and the reintegration of the dead into a new community would have been gradual, or was never physically accomplished in the landscape of the living. If these people passed on to join a community of ancestors (and they may not have done so), these ancestors were all around them in ways that were not just materialized through burying the dead, and any act of reincorporation may have been left to the agency of those ancestors.

Many of the same practices also flowed through the funerals of those buried in a crouched position in short cists with Food Vessel pottery *c.*2150–1750 BC. A wide range of landscape locations was chosen, though hillsides overlooking rivers were still preferred. As with Beaker burials, Food Vessels were almost always placed near to the head, suggesting that similar ritual practices were widely known and observed. In one of the two cases where pots were not placed by the head there were two vessels and one held a cremation: rituals were adapted to specific circumstances. Some of the dead seem to have been adorned with jet necklaces or worn clothing fitted with jet buttons, or been accompanied by bags tied with such buttons. Again, cists were small and bodies were laid on one side, but mostly facing south. However, more of these cists were backfilled with soils, sand, clay, and/or stones than previously. There are a few instances of burning at the sites of cists (e.g. at Well House Farm). In a couple of instances more than one body was buried in the same cist: at Dour Hill a second child burial (possibly just of a skull) seems to have disturbed an earlier one, though it is possible both were buried together and later disturbed, while at Steeple Hill one of two Food Vessels placed in front of the chest of the crouched burial of a man contained the cremated remains of a child. Dour Hill also displays burning above and around the cist before a mound was built over

it. Communities of the dead sometimes grew up around earlier burials during this period, potentially the burial grounds of specific local communities. These cemeteries rarely included burials with early Beaker pottery—they rather focused on earlier Food Vessel-associated burials or cists containing cremated remains but no ceramics. There were sometimes several burials which shared the same mode or very similar artefacts, creating affinities among the dead, as at Hasting Hill. Mounds were often built over groups of cists. Increasingly, then, the mortuary rites lead towards the reincorporation of the recently dead into a local and growing community of the dead.

Late Beaker burials (*c.*2100–1850 BC) involved different funerary displays to earlier ones. Some bodies were now adorned with or accompanied by jet buttons. At Chatton Sandyford and Milfield North Henge the bodies were brought into spaces marked out by circular enclosures: a henge ditch and timber circle, a stone kerb. The dead were brought into bounded spaces where their identities were transformed, any public events affirming their pre-existing identities giving way to liminal rites of transformation. Deep, large graves were dug, and the bodies interred directly in the earth or in organic containers since disintegrated. In some cases there seems to have been a close affinity between the dead, as in the likely shared burial modes and choice of Beaker styles at Chatton Sandyford. In at least the uplands these enclosures, which probably had historical and religious meaning aside from their uses as burial grounds, were eventually covered with mounds after a series of burials had formed the nucleus of a community of the dead. But there was diversity in the nature of burials at henges and other enclosed spaces, and in the use of late Beakers. In one case, a body was cremated.

The rapid transformation of the dead through cremation was perhaps practised throughout the third millennium BC, but only in the last centuries were the cremated bones of the dead buried, an activity which rose to dominate the burial record for much of the second millennium BC. Fire permeates and transforms the body during cremation, and this may be associated with the idea that the body is purified and its soft materials radically changed or dissolved away. Immersion in the earth is also commonly associated with purification and the transformation of the body: both fire and earth could purify and eat away the polluting flesh of the dead (Eliade 1957). But it is notable that most burials in cists were *not* actually immersed in earth, particularly before *c.*2150 BC. Cists created sealed voids, sometimes sealed with clay and often made by carefully and closely fitting stone slabs together. The transformation of the body was, if anything, deferred through cist burial, unless the remains were cremated first. I would suggest that there is a clear distinction between permeating and transforming bodily boundaries through fire and encasing an intact body in a stone chamber and leaving it there to decay slowly. It is notable that in the centuries before cremation became common the vicinities of some cists were burnt, and the dead were increasingly

encased in the materials of the earth: there was an increasing trend towards purifying the body through the media of 'earth' or fire at the grave, which paved the way for the deposition of cremated remains in cists. The relational properties of fire and earth, cist and bodies, were changing, as the assembly of funerary practices and materials changed. Yet the switch from burying un-cremated bodies to cremation did not change funerals entirely or immediately. It is notable that the earlier cremation deposits were also placed in cists, and it seems that cremations were not interred directly in the earth until the very end of the period. Not only did cists continue to be used *c.*2100–1800 BC, for cremated remains without an enduring vessel or with a Bowl or Vase Food Vessel, but many were 'full-sized' short cists. Interestingly, in the Middle Bronze Age in Lower Austria following centuries of inhumation the earliest cremated bones were laid out in full-sized graves, and objects positioned within the grave much as they had been for uncremated burials (Sørensen and Rebay 2008). Often these graves were a built stone structure, and in some cases they were built over the pyre site. It is more difficult to say in North-East England how much the deposition of the cremated remains in these short cists varied from the arrangements of objects with uncremated remains since so few grave goods survive in either case, but the chronological patterning suggests that some semblance of the old practices were maintained when cremated remains were first deposited. Objects that had previously been placed around the body in the grave may now have been placed around the body on the pyre, and sometimes the burnt fragments of these artefacts were buried along with the cremated bones. Eventually, cists would be abandoned and cremated remains either buried in Food Vessel Urns, Collared or Cordoned Urns, or in other containers that have left no trace other than that they bundled the bones together.

The cremated bones of the dead were more likely to be buried at a locale where the dead were already present than not. In at least this sense the rites of reincorporation could be linked to the act of deposition. At the same time not all bones were collected up and aspects of the body had already been redistrib-uted through the cosmos by burning. Some reincorporation may have taken place during the act of cremation, then, including as the bones mingled on the pyre site with those from any previous bodies burnt there or in cases where more than one body was cremated at a single event. When the bones were collected up they might also be combined with the bones of those who had been cremated some time before and stored in an urn. But increasingly through the mid-second millennium they were commingled with the earth, at a time when agrarian practices produced more enduring legacies. Furthermore, the remains of those buried after cremation were often lodged at sites that had been used for crouched burials generations earlier. If they were incorporated into ancestral communities, these may increasingly have been distant and generic ancestors.

I would suggest that many of these Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age funerals involved successive, incremental transformations which could be combined in varying ways. While the narrative above articulates general patterns, there was diversity within each period. Furthermore, not all of these events are necessarily funerary, or only funerary, in nature and effect, and local configurations of these broadly patterned practices had different effects from one another. In the following subsections I explore some of the recurrent themes from the preceding account that emerged and dissipated through the mortuary practices of the period.

Dressing the dead

The dead may well have been dressed for the grave or pyre, but only in rare cases did they wear highly durable objects—bone pins, jet necklaces, jet buttons, a gold ornament. Some badly damaged mortuary deposits or stray finds have yielded other personal ornaments which may be from the Bronze Age, such as the faience bead from Yeavering, two large amber beads or 'terminals' from Simonside (Cowen 1966), a rim fragment apparently from a cup made of jet or a jet-like material from a banked enclosure at High Knowes, and 13 gold beads from Redesdale. It is notable how few of the earlier Beaker burials were buried with any jet or bronze artefacts—indeed, how uniformly simple their grave goods were—by comparison with those buried in the same manner but with Food Vessel pottery, or with later Beakers. Even then, most graves were not heavily provisioned with tools, ornaments, or weapons. The remains of bone pins sometimes survived later funeral pyres, and jet and bronze objects might have been more common but would seldom persist through the flames and heat. Dressing the dead may have affirmed their identities in life at the outset of the funeral, but may also have been part of their liminal transformation, projecting forwards a desired identity for them through to the phase of the ritual when it was hoped they would be incorporated into the community of the dead or a new state of existence. For a few, durable bodily ornaments, along with tools or weapons, played a vital role in that transformation or conveyance: for others organic dress, ornaments, tools, and even weapons *may* have played that role, but this proposition has rarely had a significant effect on present interpretations and it is notable that where organic remains survive these have been scraps of stitched hide, a log coffin, wood cists, antler picks, bone pins, rushes, and bracken.

Directing the dead

The vast majority of the dead were directed to face south. This suggests adherence to a particular force or principle which was closely interwoven

with the practice of crouched inhumation from the outset, and which became transferred to other practices. This southerly direction might have various and multiple connotations. The southerly direction was the one that allowed the dead to face the sunlight for most of the year, and given the emphasis on placing the head to the east this combination might have been designed to bind the dead to the rising sun for as much of the year as possible. Placing the head to the west while facing south may also have been connected with the south-westerly orientation of monuments across northern Britain at the time and in preceding centuries, orientations marking solstices and the changing seasons. With the upsurge in burying cremated bones towards and after 2000 BC an increased number of burials were placed in the southerly quadrant of round burial grounds, maintaining and extending this principle. The dead whose remains we have recovered were also directed on a vertical axis: their bodies, or their bones, were placed under the earth. If they were cremated their bodily matter was transformed and some of it dispersed into the sky. While burial embedded people within particular places, then, it also directed them towards certain zones of the cosmos. We only see those who were directed underground, but many more were directed towards the sky or perhaps down rivers to the sea, and we have little to go on as to whether the remains of the dead were retained among the living.

Feeding the dead, giving gifts

Pots were often placed near to the head of crouched burials, then came to accompany or contain cremated remains in cists, and then finally to contain those cremated remains, sometimes of multiple individuals. At least 47 crouched inhumations were accompanied by fired clay vessels (including 7 female, 10 male; 5 subadult, 23 adult) which were present in another 42 cists or graves where no bone survived, and vessels accompanied or contained 60 out of 143 cremations. Before *c.*2000 BC almost all of the ceramic vessels chosen for deposition with the dead were relatively small—mostly around or below 20cm tall—the kinds of pots that could be used for serving, and raised to the lips directly or supported by one hand while spooning contents with the other. Lipid analysis of Beakers from other regions in Britain suggest that they often contained dairy products (Šoberl et al. 2009, 9). Perhaps the dead were even provided with milk to sustain them following some projected future rebirth. After *c.*2000 BC most vessels were still around or less than 20cm tall, but some were much larger and may primarily have been cooking vessels (Figures 1.5; 1.6). These changes to funerary rites saw a shift from feeding the recently deceased to mainly feeding the recently deceased *to* the long-dead at collective burial grounds. When corpses were buried with vessels placed next to their heads this placement might have been a pre-liminal rite, or part of

their liminal transformation. It may even have been an act of reincorporation if vessels were added to graves some time after the burial had taken place, but there is little to tell if this is credible at present. The odd bones from sheep or goat that have been found in two of the later cremation deposits may hint at the addition of food to funeral pyres, suggesting that the deceased were still provided with some food. However, when the cremated bones of the dead were placed in urns, bags, boxes, or baskets, and buried at existing barrows or cairns then this act of deposition 'fed' the bones to the ancestors, returning the dead to them, and was arguably the end of the liminal transformation of the dead and enacted their incorporation into a new community. Earlier in the period sustenance may have been offered to the dead, or provided to the deceased so that they could offer a gift as they entered the next stage of existence. However, it is also possible that throughout the period the dead themselves *were* the gift, and that burials were a particular kind of offering intended to elicit a specific effect. This may have been a part of the funeral, or it may have constituted a different kind of event, so that while almost everyone had a funeral, only the remains of some people were drafted into such offerings. It is with this in mind that I have preferred to use the term mortuary deposits rather than the more specific 'funerary deposit' during much of this book.

Containing loss, transforming the dead

Earlier in the period the flesh of those who were buried was contained in the grave or cist. Cists, coffins, and shrouds or hide covers contained the dead, and in some cases they were nested in successive containers, each one separating them further from the community of the living. The Cartington body, for instance, was repeatedly wrapped, in a hide cover and a log coffin, and a stone chamber. Short cists left no room for manoeuvre, and the dead were then sealed in place with heavy cover slabs—including the massive stone covering the remains of two children within sight of a very ancient Neolithic tomb on Dour Hill. Perhaps these were attempts to seal away grief and loss, to cope with anxieties about the recently deceased. Perhaps there was a need to keep the buried dead fixed in their cists, unable to rise again. Coffins, cists, and ceramics also contained artefacts. In other regions there is evidence that knives or daggers, buttons, and other personal items were not displayed in the grave, but wrapped, bagged, or covered (e.g. Brück 2004*a*, 318–19; Harding and Healy 2007, 243). This could have happened here too, carefully containing the potencies and potentials of such objects.

Later, cremation seared away the flesh and released bones: while some of the bones were contained at the burial ground, others might have been retained or buried elsewhere. Both cists and ceramics could contain pots and other objects as well as some of the remains of the dead. In each case the soft, ephemeral

skin of the human body was replaced by a hard, enduring boundary made of stone or of fired clay, and in some cases both. The three jet beads placed around the neck of a Collared Urn holding the bones of a woman at Ford, and the necklace 'strung around the neck of the urn' at Pace Hill, may underline the equation of the human body with vessels such as these. While the remains of some persons were merged through their joint containment, for the most part single persons were held within these containers. But I would suggest that these vessels did not delineate the body as a complete or hermetically sealed entity. The objects encapsulated by the grave of the deceased did not necessarily belong to that person, but may have been gifts from mourners, may have been things that the deceased had co-produced with others or that connected that person to others, and/or may have been there in order to perform a particular service in the funerary transformation. The cremated bones were patently only one aspect of the body, a body unbounded through burning. Here substance was transformed, divided, and relocated. The cists and graves, the containers of the dead, nucleated dispersed relations—they telescoped some of the key media through which the dead were transformed into a single place.

The remains of the dead were also encased in mounds. Congregations of living mourners standing in circles around the grave and/or pyre might have foreshadowed circular enclosures and mounds. But mounds were substantially different: they transformed such circles into enduring legacies, and they covered and contained the dead. Most burials probably generated a low mound through the simple act of backfilling, but as we have seen round mounds proper were not always built during the same event as the dead were buried, and in many cases such mounds encased several mortuary deposits, drawing the dead together and containing them collectively. Such monuments arguably did not commemorate the identity of a single deceased person as it was in life, but potentially commemorated the emergence of ancestral presence at a later stage in the funerary rites. Furthermore, as Lewis (2007, 78–9) has pointed out, these mounds covered, contained, and concealed the traces of funerary or mortuary activity. Death, as well as the dead, might have been 'buried' at key moments in a complex sequential narrative about death and growth.

Severing ties, cutting and sharing

Where the dead were not cremated most were buried with either a vessel (95) or a knife or dagger (17), but only seven were buried with both. These two objects seem to form overlapping sets which do not seem to be related to sex, based on the limited sexing evidence available (two of those buried with blades were female and eight were male, while five women and 12 men were buried with vessels). Bronze daggers do seem to have been associated with men across

Britain, while knife-daggers appear with men or women. Flint knives were not found in any of the cists or graves with Beakers, bar one: the man in Hasting Hill cist 1 accompanied by a knife, Beaker, and a pile of bones from a cremated adult and a child whose remains were weathered, an antler tine, fish and animal bones and teeth, and seashells. It appears that in the later third millennium BC knives and Beakers were usually exclusive choices for the grave, producing different effects. All knives were buried with adults.

As cremation became more common knife blades were buried with children as well as adults. Nine of these 12 flint knives do not seem to have been burnt, while an unburnt bone knife was found with the cremated remains of a child in a Cordoned Urn at Middle Gunnar Peak. At Gains Law ring cairn a flint knife was found within the boulders covering the main central cist. A sherd missing from a vessel in this cist was found in another at the same site, suggesting the grave had been re-accessed. All of this suggests that these knives were added to the funerary corpus at a later stage in the ritual than the funerary pyre, and I would suggest they ritually severed the ties between the deceased and the living community at a time when that community cut away a part of their collective body and gave it over to the community of the dead. Furthermore, the disturbed nature of some of the remains buried with bronze daggers in particular suggest that interceding with the dead was practised in at least some cases, and the addition or removal of objects from cists after initial deposition might have been more widespread than we can normally detect. The green staining of a number of bones from the Reaverhill burial, for instance, might suggest that further copper-alloy objects were present when he was first buried and some were removed when the remains became disturbed (Gamble and Fowler forthcoming).

Knives acted in relation with flesh, hair, skin, fibres, and wood among other materials: in such interactions they were hard, cold, sharp, and bright. Knives were shiny, particularly bronze knives which reflected the light of the sun and fires but were not themselves usually hot to the touch. Knives could be effective in many ways: in killing animals, cutting meat and dividing it for sharing, and potentially in threatening or violent encounters. Perhaps they were a vital means of expression, ordinarily to be drawn only in specific situations and used in certain ways. Knives may have featured in a range of other rituals, from rites of passage associated with birth (e.g. cutting the umbilical cord) through initiation (perhaps through shaving or scarification). Such rituals would have been connected within particular narratives of life, death, and rebirth, and any object that was present at the pivotal moments in each ritual would have been a particularly potent emblem of transformation and identity. Placing a knife with the dead might not only cut them away from the living, but provide the means for them to share with others in their new existence, or even the means by which those they were going to join could cut the 'umbilical cord' attaching them to their previous existence.

Burning and regrowth

Fire is destructive and dangerous, but also necessary for the preparation of food and the provision of warmth among the living. It may also have been a tool in land management, lighting, and communication. Other than its role in cremating some of the dead, fire played a role in a number of funerary rites. I have already mentioned the evidence for burning above cists containing crouched burials. A burnt or burning plank also capped the burial deposit at Birkside Fell, and another was pushed into the backfill of Milfield North Henge grave D. At Low Hauxley (erosion cairn), a layer of ashwood charcoal covered the burial of cremated remains and hazel charcoal, much of which was held in a late Beaker. More generally, there is evidence for burning at many sites, often sealed within the cist, grave, or mound. Such burning could have purified burials and burial sites, closing one phase of activity and clearing the way for the next. In particular, fire seems to articulate the separation of the dead from the community of the living, and herald the conditions for the emergence of ancestral presence which was manifested in the growth of a mound at the burial site.

Attaining desired identities

Many mortuary practices transform the person in a way that temporarily stabilizes the unstable: the archaeological paradox is that the events through which the person was being transformed leave the most enduring trace. Indeed, it may be that the ability of an entity to be transformed in this way was a vital characteristic of a person. It is possible that those buried in the third millennium BC in isolated cists and not integrated into a materializing community of the dead were buried in a liminal state, while for those buried where the dead accumulated at the same locales, reincorporation occurred during the act of deposition. While identities and states of being are transformed at funerals, they are also often directed in desirable and auspicious ways: to some extent, funerals involve idealizations of the deceased and of the ethos of the community at large (Fowler 2013). For the most part I would suggest the identities idealized in the funerals of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age North-East England were convivial and co-operative: whether male or female the dead were often presented as good providers, people who acted appropriately—they were heading in the right direction. Identities were only subtly differentiated among those buried at any point in time, and it is very difficult to assess what differentiated those buried from others. But there are exceptions, people who were different, and who were buried facing a different way or with something unusual. The Kirkhaugh burial may be an example of

someone whose activities were specialized and different from others of the time, and whose activities were materialized in the funerary assemblage. This burial was also unusual at its time in receiving a substantial mound—and possibly very soon after, or as part of, the burial. The death was quickly transformed into new growth and marked in the landscape for future generations. But the upsurge in burial, and the presence of multiple burials in differing modes at one shared locale after *c.*2150 BC suggest a concern with heterarchy within similarity, and in at least some cases with ancestry, or at least a shared sense of belonging. There are interesting and diverse examples of those buried with very specific things, plants, minerals, animal remains; and perhaps in some cases bundles of such things. The full effects of pieces of coal, chalk, or ochre, or fish bones and seashells, or rushes or bracken, in such graves are unclear though we can appreciate some of their relative properties as colourants or cushioning. There are also activities that bound the dead together by orientating them in a shared direction, or placing their hands in front of their face (as at Hasting Hill), or by selecting similar artefacts to others at the same cemetery (as at Harbottle Peels or Cheviot Walk Wood). The type of vessel, and particularly the decorative motifs on the vessels, might also have manifested further relations, especially if the same patterns appeared in dress fabrics, body decoration, or other media.

There is much that we might expect was present within the communities burying the dead, yet was missing from funerary deposits throughout the period and across the region. Only seven arrowheads were recovered with human remains in the corpus, though 28 barbed and tanged arrowheads have been found as stray finds or in other contexts across the region. The burials contain only one battle axehead, only a few copper-alloy awls, and no copper or copper-alloy axeheads at all. Only nine bronze flat axeheads are recorded as having been found in the region, none from burial contexts. Axes, adzes, or other wood-working tools must have been part of the tool kits of everyday life, so why are they absent from the graves? One potential explanation might be that, as the higher echelons of society, the dead who were buried did not carry such everyday tools. But, as we have seen, very few graves could be argued to belong to people who were buried with emblems of any special status or authority. Furthermore, such an argument overlooks the special, exotic nature of bronze—it could not sit alongside the kind of argument for a prestige goods economy that usually supports the interpretation of an elite in the first place. Another possibility is that such objects were not buried but passed on within the living community (and perhaps recycled: Bray 2012). This seems more likely, and might reinforce the proposition that burials were not concerned with encapsulating or summing up the identity or biography of the deceased, nor with conveying an image of a person of wealth or means into another existence. Rather, key objects intimate to the dead could be inherited by others, distributing what remained of that person among others. It might

also suggest that some objects, particularly those made from copper alloys, were too precious to bury—funerary *deposition* was not a means of prestige enhancement through conspicuous consumption, though this is not to say that axes or other such objects were not displayed and/or given to mourners. Indeed, there is very little deposition at all in this period—very few pits with structured deposits or hoards of the kinds seen across northern Europe in later periods. Bows and arrows are less likely than copper-alloy artefacts to have been potential prestige items unless part of a full hunting 'kit' including, say, stone 'wristguards'. Unlike some other regions of central and northern Europe in the late third and early second millennium BC (e.g. Fokkens 2012, 121–3; Heyd 2007; Sarauw 2007), there is a notable paucity of fighting and hunting gear in the funerary record. Arrows and archers may have hunted and fought and protected herds and communities, but it seems that there was little or no emphasis on a hunting or warrior identity in the funerary rites. Any effort expended in the skills of hunting and fighting is not evident to us in the burial evidence from North-East England: the key technologies of the self that most frequently accompany the dead are domestic vessels and multi-purpose knives.

It is very likely that many more of the burials where no grave goods were recovered contained things of which no trace remains, and that subtle but important gradings in age and differences in sex were marked out through such objects and materials, along with a range of other distinctions between people. Craft tools are under-represented, as are many other tools of everyday life: only 11 burials included scrapers, while four more were recovered from topsoil near a burial at Lilburn Tower Farm. Two of those burials were the Beaker burials at Cartington and High Knowes, but no crouched burials with SN Beakers and only one with a Food Vessel incorporated scrapers, strengthening the proposition that earlier Beaker burials with notable funerary architecture were particularly concerned to include tools with the dead. By and large the desired identities presented through the dead were convivial ones: people who could provide, cut and share, give, feed, or cook. Perhaps the dead did not need to chop wood to warm themselves and did not need to be accompanied by such luminous objects as bronze axes into the next stage of existence. Perhaps such objects accompanied the dead during the earlier stages of the ritual, affirming their identities in life, and then, as communities separated, rejoined the community of the living. Perhaps the axes of the dead were used to cut the wood needed for funerary activities including cooking or building pyres, and then taken away to be melted and recast, perhaps intermingled with the substance of other objects. Perhaps any or all of the things used by and known intimately to the dead were passed on to others.

The translations involved in the production, use, and renewal of ceramics merit closer investigation, looking into the substance of the vessels and detecting the relations that endure: for instance, different patterns in the

temper of the pottery, such as the use of grog or particular stone, shell, bone, or other materials; or examining the residues left by the contents of these vessels. Some of this work is under way, including also detailed analyses of vessel manufacture and decorative techniques and motifs (Dana Millson pers. comm.; Neil Wilkin pers. comm.). As with other small portable artefacts we only see the role of these objects in accompanying the dead—it is harder to know what role pots played at funerals more generally, including in the later stages of funerary rites after the dead were buried, and before, when, or after any mounds were built. Throughout the period decorative schemes on vessels (and other objects) could have played various roles in the burial ritual: decoration could have signalled kinship or ethnicity, age, gender, or other social status, or it could have served to beautify the vessels accompanying and standing for the body, or to protect the contents (which may have been spiritually charged—and as well as substances pots may even have held an aspect of the person such as a kind of soul), or any combination of these and other possibilities. Shepherd (2012) has suggested that Beakers of specific shapes, sizes, and decoration were often chosen according to the sex of the deceased, with shorter, rounder vessels accompanying women (cf. Pierpoint 1980, 45–59). Her dataset includes burials from Yorkshire and North-East Scotland, and she sets this alongside the clear patterns in bodily orientation by sex. There is little to go on for North-East England given the paucity of securely sexed skeletons, other than to note that in all four cases where the body position of a woman was recorded she had her head to the west or north-west (two with Beakers, one with a Vase Food Vessel), though this is also true of eight of the 17 men whose body position was recorded (of those eight, two were with Beakers). Nonetheless it seems likely that sex was one of the key influences in the mortuary assembly. Given their currency over centuries, perhaps both Beakers and Food Vessels also carried connotations of general-ized ancestry and deep time by the early second millennium, especially if we also consider similarities in the form and decoration of Food Vessels to Neolithic Impressed Wares (see Millson et al. 2011). This coincides with a time when rare burials took place at henges: if this choice of (now perhaps ancient) location was intended to legitimate social positions for members of the community then it is ironic that they drew on the remains of a past in which no such means of stabilizing power relations seems to have existed. But given the lack of exotic objects from the burials at henges, and the rather unusual forms of the vessels that were buried there, it is perhaps more likely that there were other reasons why henges were chosen: perhaps such places could contain deaths that were especially difficult for the community, for instance.

The final markers of the attainment of new identities for the dead were probably the funeral monuments themselves—growths springing from deaths. Again, it is hard to know how these were finished, decorated, tended, or for

how long. Grave markers have been postulated at Chatton Sandyford. Other
than the remains of the dead of later generations there is little evidence of
votive deposition at cemeteries or barrows. If offerings were left at burial
mounds people did not usually delve down into the body of the mound to do
so. There are a few instance of Food Vessels in particular crushed on the
ground beneath barrows, such as at Harbottle Peels and Hasting Hill, but
these seem to relate to construction or in some but clearly not all cases may
have accompanied burials placed on the land surface which have since
decayed.

It seems also that almost any human member of the community might be
selected for deposition, in that the demographic spread of burials is extremely
wide. Thirty-seven burials are listed as containing men, but the method of
sexing is unclear or may be unreliable in 16 of those cases, and the attribution
is that the individual is probably or possibly male in another five cases.
Eighteen burials included women, the means of sexing for nine of which is
unclear, and another one of which was 'probably' female. There are 44 burials
which certainly included subadults, cutting across all types of vessels and
burial modes, and of which at least 32 were probably below the age of puberty
and 18 were around the age of 6 or less (or recorded as 'young child', 'infant',
or similar). All but one of the youngest children were cremated, and eight of
them were combined with the cremated remains of at least one other person.
Given the likely high mortality profile for children in prehistoric communities
this is a relatively low number of child burials for a period of over 1000 years,
but the number for comparison is that 108 burials included the remains of at
least one adult. There are also 11 cists from which no bones were recovered but
which were less than 60cm long, and these may have housed the remains of
children—though cists containing children were just as often as large as those
containing adults. Taken as a whole this arguably suggests that the deaths of
some children were commonly dealt with in equivalent ways to the deaths
of some adults, particularly after *c*.2200–2100 BC. But, given the low number of
burials in total over the period, it seems unlikely that such burial was a normal
way to treat all of the dead.

The duration and (dis)continuity of mortuary transformations

While the evidence resonates well with narratives of funerary transformation,
the duration of funerals might have been varied, and some of the transform-
ations to the remains of the dead may have sprung out of intra-actions within
new assemblages decades, or even centuries, after the burial. It is very difficult to
articulate this precisely and accurately, but there are features to the evidence
that could suggest something quite different from a narrative of individual
death and immediate burial, following which the remains are left to rest in
peace. Some of the cists are extremely small: for instance, the crouched burial of

a man was found in a cist measuring 75cm by 45cm and 30cm deep at Hasting Hill (cist 2). It would be difficult to compress a body into such a space, much easier if it was dessicated beforehand. There is the question of whether cists were reopened, and if so whether this was part of a funerary rite or a different kind of activity. The burials with bronze daggers or knife-daggers seem to have been particularly prone to such disturbance. Interestingly, while the cover slab at Dour Hill was especially massive, the cist was nonetheless opened at least once after the initial burial. Perhaps the decay of the dead was sometimes monitored, in case rituals were needed to ensure proper transformation. Such rituals might include the addition or removal of bones, soil, and/or objects to graves, or setting fires above the burial. Cremation transformed the dead more rapidly, initially, but an extended sequence of ritual transformations was still possible. The excavation of a wooden cist and replacement with a stone one, then covered by a cairn, at Wether Hill, and the construction of a new, larger, kerbed cairn at Turf Knowe North following a period in which ploughing had cut into the fabric of the first, buried cairn, suggest transformations to burial grounds and the remains of the dead of another order altogether. If the dead were disturbed their remains might perhaps be reburied, but it is interesting that Turf Knowe North was then reinstated as a burial ground. The past resurfaced, and this had to be acknowledged. Indeed, discontinuities in the use of burial grounds may be as important a feature of their history as continuities, and in the intervening periods the dead may have become anonymous or mythic ancestors whom the recently deceased of the second millennium BC might join.

Changing people, things, and places

Community, scale, and standing

Just as most of what we see in the graves are ordinary things, especially pots, so most of the monuments are modest in size. The size of mortuary mounds and enclosures where the dead were buried varied, but not enormously: of 65 examples where the diameter (or length if oval) of a mound is recorded, 21 were between 2 and 5m, 22 between 6 and 10m, 12 between 11 and 15m, and the remaining 10 were between 16 and 23m (Chart 5.1). Some were enlarged or in some cases only built following several burials. Of the largest mounds only How Tallon, on the southernmost limit of the study area, contained burials with suites of artefacts, mostly flint knives and arrowheads. While I do not see the size of the monument as an indicator of the status of the deceased on a hierarchical ranking system, and there are significant problems in ascertaining how much mounds have been affected subsequently, whether a mound is large or small and by how much it was enlarged may relate to the

scale of the community present at the event. It may also have been a measure of the potency of the ancestor or ancestors emerging from the funerary transformation. There is no necessary connection between the size of a monument and the distance from which the people building it had come: a few heads of kin groups from many miles around might have stood in a ring about the cremation deposit at Birkside Fell while the entire membership of an extended kin group from a very local area might have built the 10m mound at Debdon Farm.

Some locales might have had special significance as existing sacred sites, such as Blawearie, but it is very difficult to be certain that the rings of stone were not built immediately before the first burial there. Burials were perhaps undertaken by some on behalf of a wider community (of people, plants, animals, living and dead, and so on), mediating relations within that community and particularly involving the recently deceased, sometimes the long dead, and entities or forces indigenous to their world but which we are unable to identify strongly in the region of the assemblage we inhabit (e.g. spirits, divinities, cosmic forces). Perhaps grand acts of social competition and/or social cohesion were rare, or were rarely channelled into the transformation of the dead and of burial sites. Some of the changes in mortuary monuments may relate to changing patterns in settlement: from mostly dispersed communities in the late third millennium, perhaps some with an emphasis on herding cattle and some clustering of fields, to some more nucleated communities with perhaps specific areas of settlement that had been maintained by kin groups for decades or centuries around 2000–1750 BC, and dispersed but more sedentary communities after *c.*1750 BC. The changes might rather or also relate to shifts in attitudes towards the treatment of specific deaths and people.

Some skeletal remains show signs of osteoarthritis (Gamble and Fowler forthcoming), a couple suffered from linear enamel hypoplasia caused by a lack of nutrition in childhood, and a couple have worn and flattened front teeth (perhaps used for gripping hides while working them). Dixon (1892, 25) relates that a doctor who examined the bones of an adult male he recovered from a cist at Spital Hill noted a hole 'at the side of the skull, perhaps due to a blow on the head, which may have been the cause of death'. An arrowhead with the tip missing and burnt with the body of a 2–3-year-old buried with a Vase Food Vessel at Cheviot Walk Wood may potentially have killed the child rather than acting as a gift to the dead. I would suggest that most burials were not of 'elites'—a class apart—but of ordinary yet respected people: perhaps the heads of families, lamented mothers and fathers and sons and daughters who died in suspicious circumstances or asked for their remains to be interred in a particular place, ritual practitioners whose remains needed to be handled with care, and so on. Some may have been people who had toiled on the land or tended herds where they were buried. There are many kinds of respect and reasons why people might have been respected. Some of them may have had

certain forms of authority, but the scope and scale of that authority is unclear as is its relation to any kind of rank (as the example of 'leopard skin chiefs' among the Nuer, discussed in Chapter 3, reminds us).

If we make the assumption (though it may be erroneous) that burial indicates greater respect than other disposal, then we could envision small-scale kin groups among whom certain families' leaders might be accorded a burial once, twice, or three times over several generations, in some rare cases perhaps more. But among their neighbours other small cemeteries also formed and in some upland valleys at least these came to form broad clusters of mounds. Respect might have been held by or accorded to most heads of families, and what prompted that respect might be highly varied. Some of these people took special objects to their graves, objects that may have played an important role in rituals including mortuary rites in their local community. The choice of object types does not seem to have manifested a particular kind of ranking. Some objects chosen might relate to roles, but most seem to have more to do with desired sociality and moral conduct. It seems unlikely that even objects made from antler or bone that potentially could have eroded away were present in many of the graves in this study: there are hundreds of deposits in which human bone survived and in which we might expect any animal bone to survive as well. The survival of copper-alloy artefacts, and recognition of corroded examples by early excavators, is harder to assess. Even if organic objects have eroded away, this has no necessary implication for discerning between respected but ordinary members of the community and the presence of a powerful elite with supernatural authority. Clusters of graves with exotic or fine objects under and in barrows, and a dearth of these objects elsewhere, *might* indicate this. It is certainly possible that bronze daggers and jet necklaces and buttons were associated with aspiring elites elsewhere in northern Europe at the same time. Where such objects have been found with several burials in the same large mound in a prominent location this inter-pretation resonates well. It is also possible that further excavation in the clusters of upland barrows which are as yet unexcavated, or about which no useful information on the contents exists, may discover further evidence for differentiation along these lines (see Map 5.1). But, at present, that is not the pattern that emerges from the assemblage. For instance, five of the eight burials with copper-alloy blades were found in isolated cists; while one of these seems to have been near a stone circle, no other burials were located in the vicinity (Map 6.1). These burials form a 'background' pattern which is typical of other isolated cist burials of the later third millennium (cf. Map 4.1). Clusters of jet objects are evident, but spread across a large area in northern Northumberland. Special places for burial were used off and on throughout the period as a whole, but seldom was any one locale used consistently and repeatedly for burials of the dead accompanied by exotic, prestigious objects. For instance, the cist cemetery possibly covered by a mound at Harbottle Peels
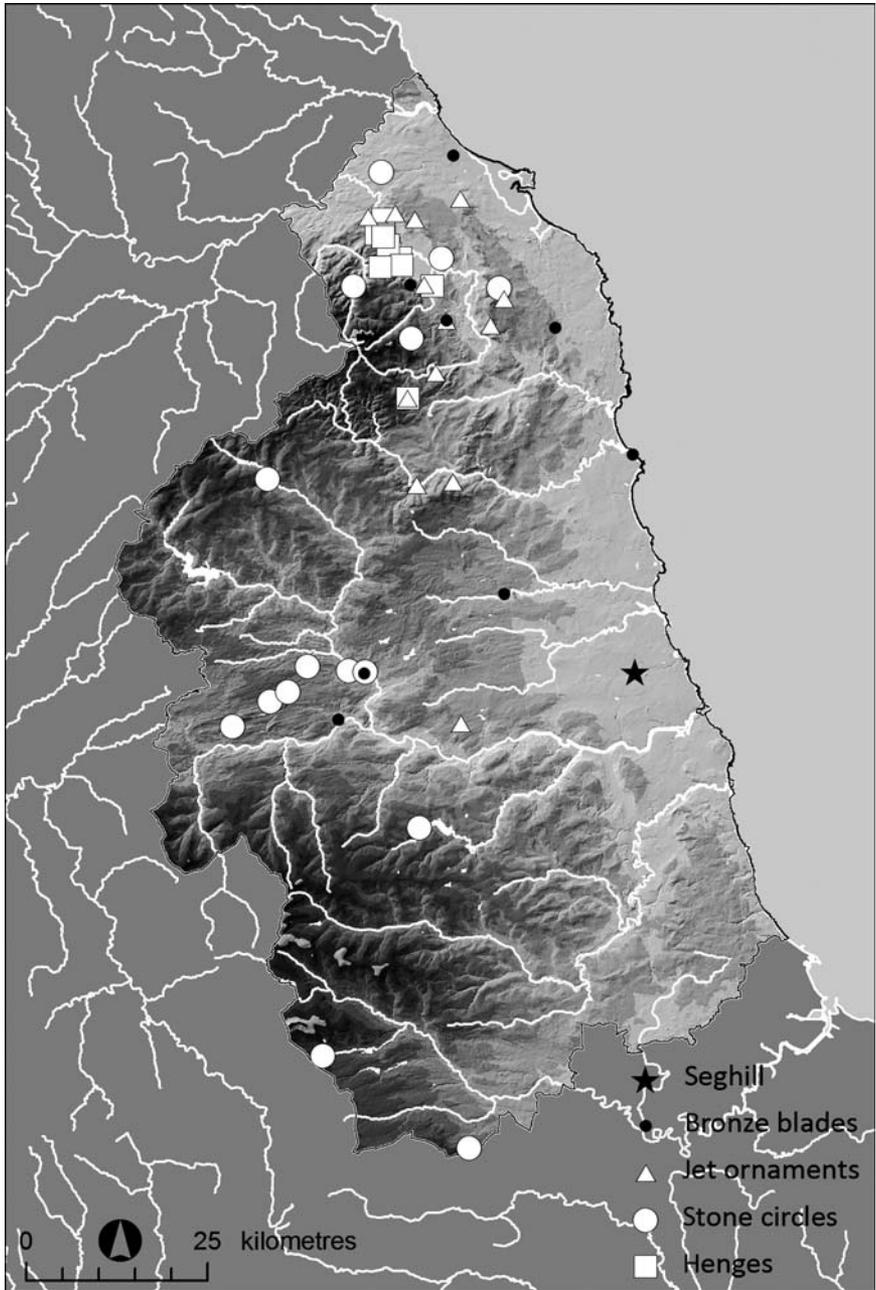
Map 6.1 Distribution of burials with objects that could be interpreted as prestigious

(Greenwell 202, Alwinton) contained at least seven burials, including one child, but while some were accompanied with Vase Food Vessels most had no surviving grave goods. This was within a landscape rich in burial mounds, but not exotic objects.

While I would agree that many Neolithic and Bronze Age communities in Britain could be seen as 'neither states nor egalitarian' (Earle 1991*c*, xi), and while some forms of social differentiation may have involved positions of authority, the evidence examined for North-East England does not accord with the presence of a chiefly 'polity that organizes *centrally* a regional population in the thousands' (Earle 1991*a*, 1; my emphasis). Arguably, prestige, respect, and authority came and went, or were acquired and distributed through the actions of daily life or the give and take of animals between herds and crops and locally crafted items between families as much as through the ownership or redistribution of exotic goods. Communities were involved in trends that were unfolding at the grand scale—using short cists, adopting Food Vessel pottery for burial—but an argument that these were the social elites involved in interactions with their peers elsewhere and manipulating a prestige goods economy has to remain only weakly articulated at present. Much of the interaction could have taken place through the annual movements of herds, through intermarriages between communities who traded with one another, through the arrival and incorporation of people born and raised elsewhere, through gatherings at monument complexes or periodic temporary settlements, or similar dynamics.

Some people may have travelled (from) afar and met people with access to special goods and knowledge. Examples include the Kirkhaugh burial with its rare and distant affinities, perhaps the Cartington burial given that the use of a log coffin was also rare and has elsewhere been associated with exotic artefacts, and perhaps the man with a rare type of copper-alloy dagger buried in a cist at the top of a hill overlooking a confluence near a stone circle at Reaverhill in North Tynedale. They may perhaps have been outsiders, who had to be treated in distinct ways in negotiation with travelling companions, or people who had adopted particular customs on their travels abroad or brought back valued keepsakes with them. The burials at the lowland henges and in some of the larger mounds and kerbed monuments may also have been carried out by a local community who were part of a network which extended widely along the eastern seaboard. Jet ornaments became focused in a relatively local area in northern Northumberland: these had distant origins, but they were also translated in the process and frequently combined with a distinctive local burial practice, perhaps with distant affinities, in which the dead were orientated north–south.

The pattern that emerges is not of a singular 'society' of any particular type in the region, but of a series of ways of being or becoming that were unfolding in relation to one another. Some of these ways of becoming stretched over

large distances, but were pursued locally in conjunction with other ways of becoming, resulting in the haecceity of particular places such as the Milfield Basin. Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age communities (and I am explicitly conceptualizing communities as assemblages of people, things, animals, materials, places, and so on: cf. Harris 2012) were nested and overlapping: some people had distant collaborators, others worked locally, some were more mobile than others. Some people may have had quite different lives from others, but we cannot neatly sort them into a sliding scale of social status.

Regions, landscapes, and local properties

As already noted, the county boundaries of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, and County Durham are historical. They need not match any of the prehistoric phenomena studied here. Much of what went on in North-East England also took place across much of Britain. Some lines were becoming in a parallel way across much of northern Europe: the construction of round mounds, for instance. Nonetheless, some things that took place elsewhere are only faintly present in North-East England. It seems to be only weakly connected with the 'maritorial' interactions across the English Channel and southern North Sea identified by Needham as operating under the impetus of a 'cosmologically-driven exchange' of exotic objects and materials (Needham 2000; 2009, 14). It seems more strongly interwoven with the unfolding pattern of activities in eastern Scotland: short cists and SN Beakers in particular, but also burials in cists with flat riveted bronze daggers and with jet ornaments (cf. Fowler and Wilkin forthcoming). Here, again, there was variation: burials with bronze daggers, or with jet necklaces, and burials with jet buttons and late Beakers at complex monuments were present in North-East England and South-East to Central but not North-East Scotland. Central Scotland seems to differ from its surrounding regions, including North-East England, in the use of Cordoned Urns to bury the dead (Fowler and Wilkin forthcoming). The presence of LN Beakers in North-East England has affinities with Yorkshire and places south, not with Scotland. Even if we consider the wide distribution of monuments such as kerb cairns, kerbed round cairns, and ring cairns, North-East England exhibits some affinities, some contacts and shared practices with others, but diversity within that. To draw a contrast with the same period further afield, recent studies of round barrows in Cornwall have stressed that human remains were only one of a series of different kinds of deposits at these monuments, some of which encircled landscape features rather than burials, and that they need not have been primarily funerary in nature (Jones 2005). This is quite different from what we see in North-East England, where almost all cairns and barrows over a few metres in diameter seem to have covered the remains of the dead—even if circular enclosures had previous meanings, values, and uses before burial occurred. Later in the period smaller mounds did not necessarily incorporate

mortuary deposits, and ring cairns might have developed through land clearance around houses and trees.

The landscapes woven out of these assemblages also unfolded in specific, historical ways, shifting in their haecceity and properties. They were formed through the diverse intra-actions of many differing entities and forces in the assemblage, and some of these landscapes were situated on key routeways through which people, animals, things, and materials flowed repeatedly. Frozen accidents or effects with enduring legacies that were produced by intra-actions in certain landscapes early in the period affected subsequent events, sometimes drawing further actants into their orbit. Many of these actants were widespread across northern Britain, but came to cluster together in specific landscapes in unique ways: the Milfield Basin attracted henge monuments which became a visual focus for burials which eventually en-croached on the monuments themselves, while rock outcrops at its periphery were carved with motifs; Upper Coquetdale became rich in burial mounds, some placed close to local clusters of rock art; while North Tynedale attracted a series of stone circles and barrows, but the burials in barrows were not accompanied by exotic goods, and there were rare burials that do not seem to have been covered by barrows and/or were on lower land ploughed in recent decades. There are very few monuments other than round mounds in County Durham, there were no jet ornaments, no copper-alloy blades. Rather, there was a variety of flint tools. It seems likely that relations here were directed towards local communities in North Yorkshire, but that the communities who buried their dead on the East Durham Plateau, for instance, did not live along the kind of routeway that was marked out with henge monuments (cf. Harding 2012), and were not participants in the relationships through which jet and bronze circulated. Multiple social relations and cosmologies—and multiple ontologies, multiple realities—arguably coexisted in some centuries in some areas, such as northern Northumberland. I am reminded of Humphrey's (1995) ethnographic study of shamans, chiefs, and priests in Mongolia where the centralizing cosmology of the chiefs and priests, focused on circular architecture within a mobile life on the plains, and the emphasis on the distinctiveness of diverse upland places among the shamans overlap as they contest the use of round cairns on hills for ritual purposes. It is the multiplicity of actants in this analogy that I am interested in, not the precise actants involved, and I am not inferring chiefs or shamans for northern Northumberland. There were, rather, ebbs and flows in connectivity, shared and parallel practices with neighbouring regions, and differing levels of contact across North-East England. Communities were diverse in their relations with communities elsewhere.

We can therefore explore the objects and practices that circulated, and the translations these underwent locally; how they affected local communities, and became transformed in the intra-action. The expansion in the range of materials and artefacts found in graves may have been entangled within the

escalation of mortuary practices *c.*2250–1950 BC: the spread of such artefact types and exotic materials may have stemmed from desires for some items as components of ritual practices. The transfer of such objects might also have facilitated the transfer of changing ritual practices and ideas. Certain materials had associations with particular regions (jet with the Whitby area, copper perhaps with Ireland and/or parts of Scotland), and became widespread because of interests in the emerging properties of those worked materials. At least some of the copper-alloy flat riveted daggers suggest connections northwards, where Masterton daggers are most common. Ridgeway flat riveted daggers, the type found at Cheswick and Reaverhill, have been found widely dispersed and rarely throughout Britain (Gerloff 1975, plate 33). The jet ornaments that cluster in Northumberland are found across Scotland and northern England in particular. Jet buttons found in the hills surrounding the Milfield Basin were probably worn as necklace fasteners, while those from Upper Coquetdale may have had other uses. Just as the associated practices varied, so jet may have been translated differently in each of these 'buttons', and each of the burials of such buttons. The efficacy of jet or copper alloys—even what they were (and in the case of copper alloy, their composition)—may have differed within North-East England and over time. Jet and copper alloys were arguably less effective, less well-articulated and resonant, within the landscapes of Tyne and Wear and County Durham than in northern Northumberland. All of these materials formed or changed connections among people living most of their lives in different parts of northern Britain.

Personhood and animacy, containment and growth

Among communities where animals, natural features, objects, and so on might be persons, some types of entity are more likely to be persons than others, but membership of a type or species is no guarantee of personhood. This would not mesh well with the proposition of, say, all pots are persons, but better with the idea that some pots might, under certain circumstances, become persons. While it is possible that humans were not the only persons in the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age of North-East England there are very few cases where we could argue that things were buried or otherwise treated like human persons. As a whole I would suggest that it seems more likely that non-human entities were beings of other kinds rather than mortal persons. They did not often pass through funerary rites, becoming something other than they were in life. The rock panel decorated with art interred at Lilburn Farm might have had special properties, have been a notable and identifiable entity that did pass through such rites. It is a very unusual deposit. Ceramics accompanied human bodies to the grave in many cases: these may have been intimate objects, 'technologies of the self', and conduits of substances that may have

conveyed or affected personhood, metaphors for the body or manifestations of the same kinds of relations as produced human bodies—but were not necessarily persons in their own right. Pots were not decorated in a way that clearly anthropomorphized them, though it is possible that the designs on pots were parallel to designs woven in baskets, stitched in hide, or woven into fabrics that people wore, and parallels between some of the designs on Beaker pottery, gold lunulae, and jet necklaces have been postulated (e.g. Jones 2001). Pots and bodies shared some substances, as people consumed the contents of vessels. A vessel the size of a Beaker or a Vase Food Vessel may have been used by a single person or shared by, say, close kin or those who were married. Such vessels—like all the other durable objects found in Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age graves—may have been a part of one or more human person, and/or inalienable from the community at the scale of the kin group. In those senses they may have been like persons. Equally, jet necklaces and copper-alloy knives may have had lives and identities like persons, in part drawn out of their relations with persons, but need not necessarily have been persons. These objects may have conveyed qualities taken on by persons wearing or using them, and may have been valued members of the community. Copper-alloy objects may have had a particular kind of animacy, a life and lustre of their own that in some cases would transcend any single form or owner and flow on generation after generation. Knives could cut away the dead, who could take knives with them, but the same does not seem to have been so for axes. Perhaps axeheads were key technologies of the self that were melted down and reshaped after the person had died. If so then some of the recycling of substances noted in the parallel life cycles of people, things, plants, and places that have been noted for the agricultural communities of the middle and later Bronze Age (e.g. Bradley 2002; Brück 2001; 2005; Williams 2003) may actually extend back well into the Early Bronze Age. This would also mesh well with the suggestion that the dead were buried in fields increasingly during the second millennium BC.

Some natural features and shaped materials may have had special properties in the world—such as the tree that was encircled by a tight ring of standing stones at Blawearie, the boulder buried at the centre of the mound at Murton Moor, or the rock fissures and crevices encircled at Howick Heugh. The kerb stones at Blawearie, by their association with the tree and later with human remains, may have had sacred efficacy, forming a potent boundary that could contain and protect. This boundary was later translated itself, as stones were taken from the ring, the community of stones encircling the space, and converted into cist slabs and cover slabs—bounding the dead intimately and incorporating them within the sacred space. Some places might have been special places, places as animate entities, and over time these places were marked out in a special way, and eventually became burial grounds. The mechanisms for their enclosure shared similarities with that by which burials

were grouped together and transformed into mounds: digging; raising banks or mounds; and/or gathering and piling up stones. As people transformed these locales they invested their labour, their care, along with the enduring relations embedded in the things and materials involved. This may have been partly in awe or anxiety over the power of these places and/or of the dead, and in a desire to draw out a particular effect or aspect of the 'personality' of the place (cf. Robinson 2012).

Mounds are, as Ingold (2010) has pointed out, growths of a kind: they form out of the ground as 'swellings'. To some extent all of the monuments and things of the period that survive involve growths, springing out of the intra-actions among cattle, stubble, crops, soil, herders, planters and harvesters, knives, trees, axes, baskets, quernstones, hands, feet, words, songs, beliefs, memories, feelings, and so on. As well as containing the remains of the dead mounds consisted of stone and earth, including in some cases the topsoil of the surrounding land, but in others the stones of local beaches or rocks from fields, woodlands, and grasslands. Sometimes they contained cup-marked stones or even fragments of quernstones. Building mounds changed the locality surrounding the mound at the same time as the mound surfaced, clearing the land of stone and perhaps undergrowth. Such excavations and clearances allowed new growth. Over time the land healed and changed. Eventually the fertility and diversity of the locale returned. In some cases the land next to the monument—even the monument itself at Turf Knowe North—could be put back under the plough. There were, perhaps, by the start of the second millennium BC, cycles in the activities at places and the nature of places which could for instance pass through periods of cultivation, grazing, burial practice, fallow growth, clearance, and back to cultivation. If so the patchwork of the landscape traced and formed the relations between the living and the dead. Some burial sites might have been completely dissipated through such successive activities. And throughout, the community and the landscape itself were composed of living and dead animals and plants and the effects of their lives, of rocks, caves, and trees, substances, elements, rain, light, wind, streams and rivers, and so on, as well as living and dead human beings.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explored the assemblage 'Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England' from a relational realist position. The resulting account moves away from narratives focused on social relations, where such relations are between humans, or culture, where cultural beliefs and identities are held to make use of and be expressed through material things. Instead, I have focused on identifying particular regions in

the assemblage, the haecceities of certain burials, places, and landscapes, as well as certain practices, and on describing the transformations involved in becoming dead in the period. I have explored change through time and differing articulations of past and present, and connections across space generated by prehistoric mortuary practices. I have considered relationships among practices and deposits, each of which can be understood as continually becoming, drawing out how places, things, bodies, materials, and graves changed and persisted in differing ways throughout the period. I have now brought my exploration of a relational realist approach to this particular assemblage to a temporary resting point. In the final chapter I return to consider the broader implications of deploying an explicitly relational realist archaeology.

7

The emergent past

Articulation, circulation, emergence, entanglement

ARTICULATING THE PAST THROUGH RELATIONAL REALISM

Throughout this book I have adopted a relational realist perspective on archaeological remains and archaeological inquiry. I started by treating each actant in the entanglement equally while also bearing in mind that some have more force than others and all are different. I have argued that the situation of any entity in specific intra-actions gives it a certain shape and efficacy, but that vestiges of that situation are carried forward within the changed entities, practices, and forces that result from the intra-action. The importance of any thing we might study does not lie solely in how humans invest it with meaning (a representational approach), nor just originates in a phenomenological encounter through which being and world emerge, nor is only intelligible as media shaping and shaped by human agency, but also lies in its effects and affects in relation with any other entity or force in the intra-action. In this relational realist perspective the assemblage in which I am involved is extended by each intra-action, and any 'external' relation immediately becomes drawn into the assemblage and extends it in a new direction. While on the one hand the assemblage is drawn through time, on the other hand time is itself emergent from the intra-actions within the assemblage. Assemblages are nested within one another as regions in a greater assemblage, and the greatest assemblage of all is reality 'as a whole' (which is not technically whole at all, but constantly unfolding and becoming in ways that both change and result in continuities).

As much as this is a philosophical position it is a practical one, and has directly shaped my intra-actions with various actants, from Greenwell's *British Barrows* to the Great North Museum, pots, cairns and barrows, site reports, radiocarbon dates, excavation techniques, osteological analysis and analyst, grid references, the ArcGIS computer programme, and so on. The goal of this

relational realism is a good description of a region of reality produced by the various actants in this intra-action, a good description of an assemblage or an entanglement: in my case, of 'Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England'. This is offered both as a development of a new approach to archaeological interpretation and a restatement of practices and principles that have lain at the heart of archaeological analysis for many decades. That is, archaeology operates by seeking strong and effective articulations between different elements of the world (prehistoric pots, petrology, laboratory equipment, cameras, books, analogies, concepts), not by testing 'ideas' or 'theories' against 'reality'. Throughout this book I have avoided presenting certain possibilities as 'true' and others as 'false': instead, interpretations have been described as strongly or weakly articulated. This acknowledges the temporary and contingent nature of the assemblage in which I am operating. The assemblage has a very particular shape because of all the intra-actions within it that have been drawn together through this and previous studies. It will change, and it could be configured differently. But many of the key relations that have endured over thousands of years should be apparent in any well-articulated archaeological study of Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England. New studies will undoubtedly yield new results, and may argue that, for instance, hierarchical relations are more strongly articulated than I have appreciated here. This is as it should be: new articulations will require new components to the assemblage and new relations among existing features. Nothing stays well articulated forever.

This book, then, is a new assemblage that conjoins and extends a series of existing ones. It will circulate, and join new assemblages, and it may change them significantly or not at all depending on how well its various features resonate with them. What is important about this approach is not that it offers a new way to interpret something or a new theory to test, but that it brings to the fore what archaeology does exceptionally well anyway. It argues that by identifying the statements we make as strongly or weakly articulated instead of right or wrong, fact or inference, we need to explain precisely what we mean by outlining the configuration of actants we see. Thus, we do not need to postulate the existence of a 'hierarchy', but can instead explain the detail of patterns in the presence of certain objects, burial practices, health indicators, and so on, and outline which of those statements are—for now—strongly articulated and which are more weakly articulated. I have suggested that rather than using models such as hierarchy, chiefdom, or prestige goods economy, we are better served to outline the detail of what relations we can detect and how we detect them, and to look beyond the 'pattern' that we could see in totalizing a period to identify some of the multiple intra-actions from which that pattern emerges. As a result I have argued for a heterogeneous world of multiple actants and effects which cannot be readily reduced to a single 'society' in which we perceive the boundaries of 'cultural groups', but rather

a world which consists of the differentiated tissue comprised of various lines of practice—lines that are still in the process of becoming.

EMERGENCE

> Wherever contingency rules, any tiny accident can shunt the future irrevocably down one route or another, and so when it comes to explaining the course of complex chains of events, there can be no simple, deterministic laws.

> (Buchanan 2001, 158)

Different effects have emerged during the intra-actions producing this book, and I want to only briefly explore two. First, I learnt to 'tell' about the period and region under investigation (cf. Ingold 2011, 156–64). This has been a process that has taken me at least since 2005, when I decided to study the prehistoric mortuary remains of North-East England after moving to Newcastle upon Tyne in 2004, though many strands of it extend back to my previous studies and of course elsewhere into the assemblage back to Greenwell and beyond. My skill in being able to tell has grown through the process, and I have emerged as a different archaeologist as a result of these intra-actions. I have been translated through these intra-actions along with the assemblage. I am still wayfaring, and this book is a point along the way, tracing the trail I have taken so far. I hope it traces a path 'that others can follow': can make sense of and see as well related, as able to tell things fairly, accurately, and usefully. Writing it has reminded me constantly how much more there always is to learn, how much potential there is in the assemblage, and I have tried to bring this sense of learning to the fore.

Secondly, though related, the kind of narrative I produced is rather different from what I started out to do several years ago. I have stressed that there is no singular point of origin for any event, object, assemblage, or pattern, and outlined various actants involved in the successive events that give that assemblage shape in the present. Some of these actants entered the assemblage far later than others, yet are equally important in how the assemblage is now configured. As a result I have often discussed alternative possibilities equally able to explain the emergence of a given pattern. I have not attempted to explain why things changed, or to identify certain core principles: I have not said that there was any causal relation between the building of mounds and social relations, or between social competition and acquisition of objects, or between changing social organization, economic activity, and cosmology. I have not argued for specific kinds of persons or societies. I have not held the nature of personhood, or the animacy of things or places, or the endurance of monuments responsible for the long-term patterns of change in prehistory.

We may be able to identify different kinds of patterns in different periods of the past, but this should not seduce us away from the importance of contingent histories and the emergent properties of specific assemblages. Events and histories emerge relationally just as much as things, persons, communities, and ideas—which, indeed, are events and histories. Instead I have tried to describe what the assemblage consists of, and how one feature might relate to another, not as its cause or effect, but as its partner in an emerging event, effect, or cause. For instance, I have argued that some knives cut away the dead from the living because of their intra-action within funerals. This is not all knives do, nor the end of the relationship between the dead and the living, and not all knives did this. But it is worth articulating this relationship for what it is and thinking about how it relates to the rites of passage which it partly constitutes, and what effect this relation has on other relations, such as between those seeking to acquire such knives and those able to supply them.

CIRCULATION

I have argued that actants do not stay still: the assemblage is dynamic, and actants circulate through it as it changes. I have traced the circulation, translation, and emergent durability of certain key actants from the Kyloe necklace to prehistoric elites, from the skeletal remains from Allerwash to barrows as ancestral tombs. These actants have circulated, in the course of my research, through the assemblage that is 'Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England', and they have become transformed in the process—perhaps not where they extend outside of this assemblage, but as they are pulled within it. It is through the course of the study that I found that the idea of mounds as arranged into lineages of ancestors was not well articulated in most of North-East England throughout much of the period, for instance, and that where mounds were arguably ancestral burial grounds there are several different ways that ancestry seems to have operated. During the research, pots, graves, cists, skeletal remains, mounds, and enclosures from North-East England all transformed repeatedly as the assemblage changed—as I brought new texts into the assemblage, or compared burials including one type of pottery with burials containing another. To stick just with pots, in the course of the study—and in the narrative of the book—they have, through their intra-actions with other actants, produced typo-chronologies, produced some sense of sequence to mortuary practices, accompanied the dead, provided sustenance for the dead, and contained the remains of the dead. The media we study with are not only the remains of the past, they are the dynamic past as it persists in the present, they have drawn the assemblage through time, created the conditions for other intra-actions and for that time

to occur. Equally, ideas and information from other texts, published as I was drafting and redrafting this book, repeatedly pervaded it, changing it in differing ways. The book is another actant, which by the time you read it has materialized in a more enduring and mobile form than it is as I write it, an actant in which the traces of the past are embedded and through which past relations persist, and it will itself circulate in other ways. The relations that are well articulated will, I hope, endure as part of other assemblages, while the weakly articulated components of the assemblage may be pulled apart, or may in time be revitalized as they are found to resonate strongly with some new technique, idea, or discovery.

ENTANGLEMENT: ASSEMBLAGES, REGIONS, AND SCALES OF ANALYSIS

This book is a study of 'Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England', but in relating that study it draws on a number of other phenomena: these became entangled in the study, but many of their features preceded and extend beyond the study. It is one 'extended phenomenon', and it is many. In Chapters 4 and 5, for instance, we considered the emergence of specific phenomena such as burials with Beaker pottery of various kinds. These phenomena unfolded gradually, eventually cohering as a phenomenon through repetition. It is only by studying them today as reified phenomena, inversions of histories of action, that they emerge as distinct phenomena of the kind we name them: Beaker burials, for instance. I have explored the usefulness and limitations of specific inversions as a way to grasp such past relations in Chapters 4 to 6. But we have to accept that the emergence of these phenomena under the names we give for them and the versions we have of them, is distinctive and involves all of the interpretative, methodological, and practical apparatus that forms the history of archaeological endeavour. 'Early Bronze Age mortuary practices in North-East England' is thus a present entanglement which extends across time and is partly constituted by the activities of people who lived thousands of years ago and partly by many generations who have lived since, especially during the last two hundred years, and it is constituted by materials, objects, and places, by forces and processes and events that have been particularly active in the assemblage in each of those periods (and in forming each of those periods). It is continually becoming.

I have argued that assemblages are nested within ever greater assemblages, but that there are no particular boundaries between assemblages other than what emerge from the intra-actions. I have referred to an assemblage within another assemblage as a region, and argued that while the 'whole' assemblage

can be changed when one region changes, some elements that did not survive from one region to another cannot be changed through that intra-action. Thus, the life of someone who died in 2034 BC cannot be affected by my writing today, even if their bones or the legacies of their actions, or their future existence as an entity can be. I have focused mostly on these regions as temporal in order to discuss the archaeological issue of enduring relations and dynamic assemblages. But this book is also a regional study, a synthesis based in one part of the British Isles. This region is an assemblage nested within and arising from the intra-actions within and among many others. It would make as much sense to study the region between the River Tees in England and the River Forth in Scotland, or to consider the whole of northern England and southern Scotland. In each case there would be patterns that are only properly visible at a larger scale, taking in parts of Ireland, or even the entire British Isles, and others that suggest coherence within a particular valley or river catchment. I have argued that analysis necessarily works across scales, as assemblages do, and that we can often detect equivalent patterns and equivalent levels of detail at several scales of analysis. Each assemblage is unique and specific, so what we learn from North-East England cannot be simply transposed onto other parts of Britain or northern Europe—important differences have been identified between this region and Wessex during the same period, for instance. But at the same time these regions are all entangled, partly through the history of archaeological inquiry, partly through many millions of intra-actions in the prehistoric past, many of which involved past people, materials, animals, beliefs, objects, and so on. The North-East of England has only appeared hazily—if at all—in synthetic narratives about these periods, and this book is an attempt to rectify that. If it has been well articulated then I hope it will be useful in making sense of the period at a greater scale. And I have included appendices of selected information about each deposit and site, and produced an electronic spreadsheet available online in order to allow these actants to travel yet further and make a difference to how we understand this period.

Finally, I must face what I have found the most difficult challenge of adopting this perspective: how do we know in which direction we should extend the assemblage? I have argued that archaeological research does not simply represent the past in accurate or inaccurate ways, but actively reconfigures the present and the past—it is work that moves things, that changes the assemblage. So how do we decide which transformations of reality to produce? In one sense the decision is not our own: the entanglement has momentum, and the equipment, techniques, and terms on which we depend carry the assemblage in particular directions. The enduring relations and the persistently repeating relations extending from the past have force provided by their continuing and repeated place in the assemblage. But I have tried to demonstrate through Chapter 3 how some theories, terms, and concepts are deflected

when we introduce others, and how we can detect weaknesses in how some ideas are interwoven within the entanglement, and unravel them. Ultimately, I want my articulations to be archaeologically effective, and that means they partly rely on actants already embedded within the assemblage of archaeology—but other actants can be brought in and we can experiment with seeing what happens if we extend the assemblage in this way or that way, or if we exclude a certain actant. For instance, any readers familiar with my previous work may be surprised at the lack of ethnographic analogy in this book. This is an example of a deliberate decision to restrain the expansion of the assemblage in a particular direction. I wanted to experiment with shaping the assemblage in a different way. Anthropological comparisons are still present in the book and are certainly useful, but in this case I wanted to see what could be achieved without giving them such a major role. At present a sense of finding a way tentatively, of experimentation, is my best answer to this difficult question.

Key details for sites in the dataset

For description of mortuary deposits and features see Appendix B. A series of primary references will be listed only where each supplies information not available in the original. Gw = Greenwell site number; GwUn = Greenwell Unnumbered site (numbers from Kinnes and Longworth 1985). For all sites with Greenwell numbers the reader is also referred to Kinnes and Longworth 1985. *This Appendix also acts as an index of sites referred to in the text.*

	Site name, NGR	Dimensions	Key features	Primary references	Index (this book)
1	Allerwash cist, NY871673	1.25 x 0.75 x 0.8m	Cist in pit	Newman and Miket 1973	13, 111, 126–7, 129, 137, 151, 232, 259
2	Altonside cist, NY856649	0.95 x 0.4 x 0.5m	Cist in pit	Jobey 1978	119, 183
3	Alwinton cairn (Gw203), NT9305	10m diameter, 0.8m high	None—cremations on land surface	Greenwell 1877	14
4	Amble cist, NU273052	1.2 x 0.6 x 0.45m	Cist in pit	Hodgson 1899	115, 182
5	Ancroft cist (GwUn11), NU041456	1 x 0.7 x 0.6m	Cist in pit	Kinnes and Longworth 1985	119, 183
6	Angerton cist, Hartburn, NZ100848	Not given	Cist in pit	Cowen 1966	123, 126, 128–9, 149
7	Batter Law barrow, NZ406459	13m diameter, 1.4m high	Cist at SE periphery	Trechmann 1914	133, 145
8	Bedlington cist cemetery, NZ262814	Not given	5 cists in pits	Purvis 1946	133, 157
9	Benthall cairn, NU237289	Not given	2 cists	Askew 1938	140, 149, 212
10	Bewes Hill cist, Stargate, NZ170630	Not given	Cist in pit	Miket 1984; letters in GNM	113, 133, 275
11	Birkside Fell cairn, NY934512	4m diameter	Central pit, ring of stones, round cairn	Tolan-Smith 2005	15, 162, 186, 207–8, 212, 240, 246
12	Blawearie cairn (Eglingham, Gw200), NU08172229	8m diameter, 1m high	Kerb, 6 cists, 3 pits, round cairn	Greenwell 1877; Hewitt and Beckensall 1996	123, 133, 163, 167, 171, 195, 201–2, 206–7, 211, 213, 215, 246, 253

	Site name, NGR	Dimensions	Key features	Primary references	Index (this book)
13	Blawearie Satellite cairn 1, NU08172229	2 x 0.5m	Central pit, round cairn	Hewitt and Beckensall 1996	140, 201–3, 206–7
14	Bluebell Inn cist, NU215315	1 x 0.8 x 0.8m	Cist in pit	Hodgson 1893	119, 122, 183
15	Bowchester cist, Humbleton, NT9728	1 x 0.75 x 0.45m	Cist in pit	Short 1931	126–7, 152, 130
16	Bowsden West Farm cist, NT984414	1.2 x 0.9 x 0.9m	Cist in pit	Tait 1969	276
17	Brandon barrow, NZ20724003	Not given	Central cist in pit	Trechmann 1914	119, 152, 183, 231
18	Broomhill cist, NZ076606	0.9 x 0.6 x 0.65m	Cist in pit	Newman 1977	140, 149, 157
19	Broomhill kerbed cairn (Ford, Gw187), NT965370	4.8m diameter, 0.9m high	Kerb, round cairn, central upstanding cist, 7 cremation deposits	Greenwell 1877	149, 209
20	Broomhouses barrow (Prudhoe, Ovingham Gw214), NZ099655	Destroyed	Either barrow or cemetery—4 cists, 2 pits	Greenwell 1877	
21	Broomridge 2 (GwUn15), NT9437	Unknown	2 cremation deposits, otherwise unknown	Kinnes and Longworth 1985	149
22	Burgh Hill 1 (Gw208, Rothbury), NU023005	10m diameter, 1.5m high	Central cist upstanding on land surface, round cairn	Greenwell 1877	
23	Burgh Hill 2 (Gw209, Rothbury), NU0200	8m diameter, 1.2m high	Central cist upstanding on land surface, round cairn	Greenwell 1877	
24	Carham cist, Howburn (GwUn30), NT821357	Unknown	Cist in pit?	Kinnes and Longworth 1985	
25	Cartington Farm cist or chamber, NU0305	At least 2m long	Log coffin in cist in pit	Dixon 1913; Jobey 1984	83, 115, 119–21, 183, 231, 237, 242, 249
26	Catcherside, Kirk Whelpington (Gw211), NY992877	9m diameter, 0.5m high	Robbed: 2 cremation deposits surviving	Greenwell 1877	

27	Chatton barrow 1 (Gw190), NU0228	4.5m diameter, 0.8m high	Central cist upstanding on land surface, round barrow	Greenwell 1877	
28	Chatton barrow 2 (Gw191), NU0228	4.8m diameter, 0.9m high	Central cist upstanding on land surface, round barrow	Greenwell 1877	
29	Chatton barrow 3 (Gw192), NU0228	2.4m diameter, 0.3m high	Central cist upstanding on land surface, round barrow with stone cap	Greenwell 1877	
30	Chatton Sandyford cairn 1, Sandyford Moor, NU10032669	10m diameter	Kerb, platform ring, 3 graves, 2 cremation deposits, round cairn	Jobey 1968	11, 123, 137–8, 171, 184–5, 188, 195, 197–8, 200, 206–7, 211, 233, 244
31	Cheswick cist (GwUn16), NU0346	0.8 x 0.8 x 0.6m	Cist in pit	Greenwell 1877	126–7, 252
32	Cheviot Walk Wood, NU10161960	10m diameter	Natural mound with stone kerb, 3 cists, 4 pits	Stopford et al. 1985	14, 140, 155, 157, 161, 167, 215, 241, 246
33	Chollerton barrow (Gw213), NY9572	12m diameter, 1m high	Central cist upstanding on land surface, 2 cremation deposits, round barrow	Greenwell 1877	
34	Clara Vale cist, NZ130646	1.1 x 0.6 x 0.6m	Cist in pit	Trechmann 1914	134, 136, 185
35	Coldsmouth Hill south cairn, NT85732826	4m then 16m extended diameter, 1m high	2 concentric stone rings, 2 stone-cut graves, round cairn (extended)	Craw 1931	192
36	Coldsmouth Hill north cairn, NT85732826	10m then 11m extended diameter	2 concentric stone rings, central cist, round cairn (extended)	Craw 1931	192
37	Copt Hill Neolithic round barrow (Hougton-le-Spring, GwUn3), NZ35344922	20m diameter, 2.4m high	2 cists, 4 graves, and 3 cremation deposits inserted into Neolithic round barrow	Young 1985; Kinnes and Longworth 1985	14, 140, 142, 166, 174, 176, 188
38	Corby's Crags rock shelter, NU12800965	2 x 6m	Cremation deposit in natural hollow	Beckensall 1976	

(Continued)

The Emergent Past

	Site name, NGR	Dimensions	Key features	Primary references	Index (this book)
39	Crag Hall cists, Jesmond, NZ2567	Pair of cists within 3m	Pair of cists	Dendy 1904, 15–16	
40	Crawley Edge cairn, Stanhope, NZ00093979	3x4m, 2.5 x 4.5m	Oval ring of stones, possible cremation deposit, cairn, second oval of stones abutting first, second cairn	Young and Welfare 1992	164, 186, 195, 207–9
41	Debdon Farm cairn 1, Cartington Fell (Gw206), NU0504	10m diameter, 0.9m high	Round cairn, cist, cremation deposit	Greenwell 1877	152, 246
42	Debdon Farm cairn 2, Cartington Fell (Gw207), NU0504	4.35m diameter	Ring of stones, round cairn	Greenwell 1877	
43	Denton cist, NZ1965	2.4m long	Cist in pit with three internal divisions	Woodhouse 1822	
44	Dilston Park cists, NY9663	Pair of cists within 2m	Pair of cists in pits	Gibson 1906	112, 119, 121–2, 152–3, 166, 182–3, 231
45	Doddington cist (Gw189), NU005310	1m x 0.9m wide	Cist	Greenwell 1877	133, 140
46	Dour Hill cist, Byrness, NT794021	Cist 1.4 x 0.8 x 0.5m	Cist in pit, cairn (traces)	Jobey 1977	15, 140, 148, 151–2, 165, 174, 176, 232, 237, 245
47	Ellsnook cist, Rock, NU183187	Cist 0.69 x 0.45 x 0.2m	Cist in pit, barrow (traces)	Bosanquet 1935	136, 185
48	Etal Moor barrow (Ford Gw184), NT9640	5m diameter, 0.8m high	Cist, 2 or 3 cremation deposits (1 or 2 central), possible Beaker votive offering	Greenwell 1868; Greenwell 1877	167–8, 207
49	Farnham cist (GwUn10), NT9206	?	Cist, possibly within cemetery	Kinnes and Longworth 1985	14, 136, 185
50	Fatfield barrow, NZ30755372	?	3 cists, barrow	Trechmann 1914	142, 145
51	Fawns barrow, Kirkwhelpington (Gw210),	12m diameter, 0.9m high	3 cremation deposits (1 central), barrow	Greenwell 1877	160, 207, 238

52	Ford barrow (Gw186), NT9538	4.2m diameter, 0.5m high	3 cremation deposits (1 central)	Greenwell 1877	160, 207, 238
53	Gains Law ring cairn, NT956282	17.5m diameter	Ring cairn 1.5m wide, central cist with second cist inserted within it	Burgess and Speak 1981	142, 239
54	Goatscrag rock shelter, NT977371	10m wide, 4m recess	Rock shelter, 4 cremation deposits	Burgess 1972	14, 15
55	Great Tosson Quarry cists (GwUn22), NU030005	?	Pair of cists, cemetery or round barrow	Greenwell 1877; Kinnes and Longworth 1985	123, 142
56	Green Leighton barrow, Hartburn (Gw212), NZ0986	6m diameter, 0.6m high	Grave pit, possible Food Vessel votive offering	Greenwell 1877	212
57	Greenhill cist, Ilderton (GwUn23), NU0222	?	Cist	Greenwell 1877; Kinnes and Longworth 1985	14
58	Grundstone Law barrow (GwUn24), NZ004734	13.5m diameter, 1.3m high	Cist in pit and deposit of unburnt remains on top of cist	Greenwell and Embleton 1862	145, 164–5
59	Gunnerton cist (GwUn25), NY905750	?	Cist	Kinnes and Longworth 1985	
60	Harbottle Peels cairn/cist cemetery (Gw202 Alwinton), NT9404	Unclear	4 cists, 3 cremation deposits, 2 possible votive vessels or surface inhumations. Cemetery or destroyed round mound.	Greenwell 1877	14, 140, 142, 215, 241, 244, 247–9
61	Harehope Hill cairn, Eglingham (Gw201), NU0820	6m diameter	Cist in pit, cairn, stone kerb	Greenwell 1877	133, 138, 142
62	Hasting Hill barrow, NZ35275435	12m diameter, 0.9m high	1 grave, 4 cists, 2 square cists, 3 cremation deposits, round barrow, possible votive Food Vessel deposit	Trechmann 1912; 1914	83, 111, 133–4, 136–8, 140–1, 143, 145, 150, 157, 161, 166, 185, 198–201, 206, 212–13, 215, 232–3, 239, 241, 244–5

(Continued)

	Site name, NGR	Dimensions	Key features	Primary references	Index (this book)
63	Haugh Head cist, Wooler, NU0026	1m long, 0.55m wide	Cist in pit	Collingwood and Cowen 1948	149, 155, 157
64	Hedley Wood cist (GwUn27), NT985006	?	Cist	Kinnes and Longworth 1985	
65	Hepple cairn, Rothbury (GwUn29), NT980000	?	Cremation deposit, round cairn	Kinnes and Longworth 1985	
66	Hexham Golf Course cist, NY922649	1 x 0.58 x 0.45m	Cist in pit	Cocks 1921	152
67	High Buston cist, NU2308	1 x 0.6 x 0.55m	Cist in pit, possibly site of later barrow	Burman 1913; Gibson 1978	11, 119, 166, 183, 231
68	High Knowes cairnfield A cairn 2, NT967121	2m diameter, 0.5m high	Oval grave pit	Jobey and Tait 1966	115, 116, 121–2, 182, 230, 242
69	High Knowes cairnfield B ring ditch enclosure, NT967121	5.5m diameter ditch, 0.25m deep and wide	2 pits, probably cremation deposits	Jobey and Tait 1966	206
70	High Knowes cairnfield A small henge/banked enclosure, NT967121	Penanular ditch 6m diameter, 1m wide, 0.3m deep, low exterior bank	Disturbed finds may or may not be from mortuary deposit	Jobey and Tait 1966	206, 235
71	Hollybush Field cist, NY894746	1.1 x 0.7 x 0.55m	Cist in pit	Newman 1977	111, 144, 145, 231
72	Holystone Common cairn 1 (Gw204), NT950020	7.2m diameter, 1m high	Cist, 2 cremation deposits, round barrow	Greenwell 1877	157, 164, 192, 215
73	Holystone Common cairn 2 (Gw205), NT961004	7.2m diameter, 0.5m high	4 cremations deposits, round barrow	Greenwell 1877	161, 192, 209
74	How Tallon cairn, Barningham Moor, NZ057074	20m 'circumference', 2m high	5 burials (1 in cist just off-centre), oval cairn	Gatty 1898; Coggins and Clews 1980	133, 137–8, 141, 245
75	Howick cist cemetery, NU25851657	4 within 20m, 1 20m from these	5 cists in cemetery	Waddington et al. 2005	142, 151, 152
76	Howick Heugh ring cairn, NU237171	Ditch 5m diameter, 1m wide	4 cremation deposits, 1 disturbed inhumation	Jobey and Newman 1975	192, 209, 253

77	Humbleton Burn House cist, ?	?	Cist	Kerr 1810 (letter)	
78	Huntlaw Quarry cist, Belsay, near Dalton, ?	1.2m long, 0.9m wide	Cist in pit	W. P. Hedley 1928	11, 136
79	Jubilee Wood cist, Roddam, NU0320	?	Cist in pit, possibly within cemetery	Holderness 1967	
80	Kirkhaugh barrow 1, Alston, NY700504	7.3m diameter, 0.5m high	Burial placed on land surface at centre, possible stone ring, round barrow	Maryon 1936	58, 103, 115–18, 121–2, 128, 151, 181–2, 221, 230, 240–1, 249
81	Kirkhaugh barrow 2, Alston, NY700503	5.4 diameter, 0.76 high	Cist near centre, round barrow	Maryon 1936	181–2
82	Kirkhill cremation cemetery, NT975007	?	Cemetery, at least 2 pits, 1 grave pit	Miket 1974	145, 167
83	Kyloe Quarry cist, NU0440	0.72 x 0.43 x 0.41m	Cist in pit	Brewis 1928; Spain 1928; Newman 1976	47, 55–6, 123, 140
84	Lilburn Hill Farm (North) cemetery, NU0124	?	Pair of cists, possibly part of extended cemetery	Moffatt 1885	168, 214, 252
85	Lilburn Hill Farm (East) cemetery, NU0225	?	Cemetery of at least 3 cists, 3 pits	Hardy 1889	
86	Lilburn South Steads cist, West Lilburn, NU0223	0.95m long, 0.6–0.85m wide	Cist in pit, possibly part of extended cemetery	Collingwood et al. 1946	119, 123–4, 126, 128–30, 137, 149, 151, 183–4
87	Lilburn Tower Farm cist, West Lilburn, NU0124	0.85 x 0.75 x 0.75m	Cist in pit, possibly part of extended cemetery	Collingwood and Jobey 1961	158, 242
88	Low Hauxley cists, NU284018	?	Pair of cists at site of cairn	Drury et al. 1995	137, 138, 153, 161, 184–5, 211–12
89	Low Hauxley erosion cairn, NU2840181	?	Part of cemetery of cists and pits, at site of cairn	Waddington 2010	159, 162, 184, 212, 240
90	Low Hills barrow, easington, NZ413415	15.5m diameter, with extension to 21.5m E–W; at least 1m high	3 cists, round mound, cairn extension	Trechmann 1914	212
91	Low Shield Green Crag barrow, NY8879	20x18m, height not specified	2 cremation deposits, barrow	Rome Hall 1887b	83

	Site name, NGR	Dimensions	Key features	Primary references	Index (this book)
92	Low Trewhitt barrow, NU001047	Diameter not specified, 1m high	3 cists, round barrow	Bate 1912	152, 185, 231
93	Lowstead Ground cist, Howick, NU245175	?	Cist in pit, possibly in cemetery	Bateson 1895	
94	Middle Gunnar Peak cairn, Barrasford, NY91507500	5m diameter, 0.8m high	2 cremation deposits	Jobey 1980*b*	160, 239
95	Milfield North henge, NT934348	15m diameter, ditch, 4.5m max ditch width	Timber circle 7.5m diameter in interior, circle of pits *c.*20m diameter to exterior, 3 grave pits and 1 cist in interior	Harding 1981	137, 138, 178, 180, 185, 206, 233, 240
96	Millstone Hill kerb cairn 1, NU088261	3.5m diameter, 0.6m high	Kerbed cairn, central cremation deposit	Jobey 1981	207–8
97	Millstone Hill kerb cairn 2, NU088261	1.75m by 1.5m oval, 0.6m high	Kerbed cairn, central cremation deposit	Jobey 1981	207–8
98	Millstone Hill kerb cairn 3, NU088261	2.5m diameter	Kerbed cairn, central cremation deposit	Jobey 1981	207–8
99	Murton Moor barrow, NZ38184600	12m diameter, 1.2m high	Central boulder, round cairn, cremation deposit near boulder	Trechmann 1914	213, 253
100	North Charlton cairn, NU1722	'large'	2 cists, round cairn	Tate 1891	126, 127, 128–30, 149
101	North Hazelrigg cist, NU06053345	0.75 x 0.6m	Cist in pit	Jobey 1975	11, 115, 122, 182
102	Pace Hill (Crookham) cemetery, NT913375	*c.*18m diameter	Cemetery of cists and pit on natural knoll, 2 rings of stone may or may not be prehistoric	Greenwell 1868; Stopford et al. 1985	136, 155, 185, 238
103	Pitland Hills, Birtley, barrow 1, NY8879	11.7–15.5m by 1.7m high	2 cists, 2 cremation deposits, oval mound	Rome Hall 1887*a*; 1887*b*	69, 83, 141, 152, 192, 205–6, 214

104	Pitland Hills, Birtley, barrow 2, NY8879	8–9m diameter, 0.8m high	Cremation deposit, oval/round barrow	Rome Hall 1887a; 1887b	83, 192
105	Pitland Hills, Birtley, barrow 3, NY8879	3.3–5m diameter	Central oval pit grave, oval barrow. Potentially Neolithic?	Rome Hall 1887b	83, 192
106	Plessy Mill (GwUn36), NZ241793	?	Cemetery	Kinnes and Longworth 1985	
107	Ravensheugh cairn (Dixon burial 10), NZ015989	9–10m diameter, 3m high	Cist in pit, cup-marked slab at centre of cairn base, round cairn	Dixon 1892	
108	Rayheugh cairn 1, Lucker Moor (Gw193 Bamborough), NU116268	15m diameter, 3m high	Central cist upstanding on land surface, round cairn, kerb	Greenwell 1877	119, 182–3, 192, 213
109	Rayheugh cairn 2, Lucker Moor (Gw194 Bamborough), NU117267	19m diameter, 3m high	Central grave pit, round cairn	Greenwell 1877	183, 192, 213
110	Rayheugh cairn 3, Lucker Moor (Gw195 Bamborough), NU118267	16.5m diameter, 3m high	Central cist, round cairn	Greenwell 1877	183, 192
111	Rayheugh cairn 4, Lucker Moor (Gw196 Bamborough), NU118264	18m diameter, 3m high	Central cist upstanding on land surface, round cairn	Greenwell 1877	183, 192
112	Reaverhill cist, Barrasford, NY907737	1.2 x 0.68 x 0.45m	Cist in pit, traces of barrow (dimensions unclear)	Jobey et al. 1965; Page and Walker-Turner 1991	13, 111, 126–31, 151–2, 184, 188, 232, 239, 249, 252
113	Rosebrough Moor cairn 1 (Gw197 Rosbrough I), NU118260	7.5m diameter, 0.9m high	Central cist in pit, cremation deposit in urn inverted on cist cover slab, round cairn	Greenwell 1877	119, 183, 186, 213
114	Rosebrough Moor cairn 2 (Gw198 Rosbrough II), NU1326	5.5m diameter, 0.9m high	Central cremation in urn on land surface, round cairn	Greenwell 1877	207

	Site name, NGR	Dimensions	Key features	Primary references	Index (this book)
115	Rosebrough Moor cairn 3 (Gw199 Bamborough), NU1326	4m diameter, 0.8m high	Central oval pit (possibly grave), round cairn	Greenwell 1877	
116	Roseden Edge (GwUn39, Rosedean), NU0221?	?	2 features in possible cemetery	Kinnes and Longworth 1985	
117	Sacriston cist, NZ23814767	1.17 x 0.6 x 0.6m	Cist in pit	Trechmann 1914	119, 183
118	Sandyford Park cist, ?	1.2 x 0.6 x 0.5m	Cist in pit	Dendy 1904	
119	Seafield Farm cist cemetery, NU21603202	Within 10m	Cemetery of 6 cists and 1 grave (possibly barrow or cairn?)	Filby 1906	74, 141, 149, 215
120	Seghill cist (GwUn40), NZ2874	?	Cist	Kinnes and Longworth 1985	143, 248
121	Shipley cist, Alnwick, NU145165	0.85 x 0.66 x 0.7m	Cist in pit	Jobey 1960	11, 134, 136, 137, 151, 186
122	Smalesmouth cist (GwUn41), NY731858	?	Cist in pit	Kinnes and Longworth 1985	119, 183
123	South Charlton cairn, NU157200	13m diameter, 1m high (cairn—deposits extend beyond this)	2 cists, 2 square cists, 9 cremation deposits, round cairn. 9 deposits set in a rough line NNE–SSW	Hodgson 1917	158, 203–5, 215
124	Spital Hill cairn 1, NZ020992	6.2m diameter, 1m high	Cremation deposit in stone-lined pit, round cairn	Dixon 1892	
125	Spital Hill cairn 2, NZ018990	'large'	Cist, round cairn	Dixon 1892	145, 246
126	Spital Hill cairn 3, NZ026998	'small'	Cist, round cairn	Dixon 1892	
127	Spital Hill cairn 4, NZ0299	'scarcely perceptible'	Cist, round cairn	Dixon 1892	
128	Spital Hill cairn 5, NZ0299	?	Cist, round cairn	Dixon 1892	
129	Spital Hill cairn 6, NZ0299	?	Cist, round cairn	Dixon 1892	
130	Spital Hill cairn 7, NZ0299	8.8m diameter, 2m high	2 cists (one central), cremation deposit, round cairn	Dixon 1892	162, 167, 211

131	Spital Hill cairn 8, NZ0298	8m diameter	2 cists (one central), round cairn	Dixon 1892	
132	Steeple Hill cist (GwUn5), NZ383529	?	Cist, stone-lined grave, natural mound	Greenwell 1877	141, 144, 166, 232
133	Summerhill cist cemetery, NZ177635	Within 500m	4 cists (see also Bewes Hill, Stargate)	Bulmer 1938; 1939	11, 113, 119, 133–4, 136, 141, 145, 149, 152, 183, 185, 200, 231
134	The Sneep cist, NY792885	1.1 x 0.85 x 0.5m	Cist in pit	Hedley 1892	119, 183
135	Tom Tallon's Grave cairn [Tantallon's Grave] (GwUn43), NT932280	23m diameter	Cist, round cairn	Tate 1862	
136	Trow Rocks barrow (Gw215), NZ384667	9m diameter	Central cist	Greenwell 1877	133, 145
137	Turf Knowe North round cairn, NU006157	4m diameter, extended to 10m diameter	2 cists (1 central), 5 cremation deposits, 2 round cairns (one built over and around the other), two kerbs	Adams and Topping 1996; Adams and Carne 1997; McKinley 1998	95, 155, 158, 163, 195–6, 212, 213, 214, 217, 220, 245, 254
138	Turf Knowe South 'tri-radial cairn', NU006157	3 'arms' each 6m long, 1m wide	2 cists, 1 pit, each next to 'arms'. May be robbed/altered round cairn?	Adams and Topping 1995; Adams and Topping 1996; McKinley 1998	
139	Warden Law cist, NZ372505	11m diameter, 1.2m high	Central square cist, round mound (quarried) or oval mound	Ford and Miket 1982	111, 158, 160
140	Warkshaugh Farm barrow (Warkshaugh (GwUn44)), NY867765	15m diameter	4 cists (1 central), round barrow	Rome Hall 1887*b*	133, 142, 212
141	Warkworth cairn (Gw296), NU277043	12m diameter, 1.5m high	9 cists, 2 cremation deposits, 1 possible votive Food Vessel Urn	Greenwell 1877	126–8, 145, 149, 158, 184, 186, 188, 206, 212
142	Well House Farm cist, NZ04046676	1.1 x 0.7 x 0.65m	Cist in pit	Gates 1981	138, 141, 152, 232

	Site name, NGR	Dimensions	Key features	Primary references	Index (this book)
143	West Wharmley cist, NY8866	0.7 x 0.55 x 0.6m	Cist in pit	Hedley and Hedley 1928	112–13, 115, 152, 182
144	Wether Hill, NU013145	Less than 1.96 x 1.34 x 0.7m	Cist in pit (dimension for pit), cut into site of earlier pit with wooden furniture. Possible cairn?	Topping 2001	141, 212, 245
145	Wheathall Farm cist, NZ40736265	?	Cist	Miket 1984	
146	Whitton Hill henge 1, NT933347	Ditch 13.5m diameter, *c.*1m wide	Timber circle *c.*5m diameter, grave pit, cremation deposits	Miket 1985	111, 155, 158, 159, 161, 178, 206, 207, 220
147	Whitton Hill henge 2, NT933347	Ditch 9m diameter, *c.*1m wide	Timber circle?, 4m diameter, cremation deposits	Miket 1985	111, 161, 178, 206, 207
148	Woodhorn cist (GwUn46), NZ2988	?	Cist	Kinnes and Longworth 1985	119, 183
149	Wooler cist (GwUn47), NT9928	1.4 x 1 x 0.6m	Cist in pit	Greenwell 1872	112, 123
150	Yeavering cemetery, NT92493047	Within *c.*30m	Cemetery of features	Hope-Taylor 1977	163, 176, 191, 235

Key details of mortuary deposits in the dataset

For description of sites and dimensions of cists see Appendix A. Full details of each deposit including spatial location of deposits at sites, human remains, and artefact descriptions (where available) can be found via the Archaeology Data Service Website (Digital Object Identifier 10.5284/1017128). New information and/or information correcting previous reports is in bold; italics denote a comment on attribution. For linear features length is provided, for square features the measurement is marked as 's' before the number, for circular features the diameter is marked as 'd' before the number. Where it is unclear how sex or age had been determined, or where the attribution is 'possible', a question mark follows the information. Radiocarbon dates are cited at 2σ, or 95.4 per cent confidence unless otherwise stated. Artefact types are according to the following schemes: Beakers—Needham (2005), then Clarke (1970). Needham's scheme and variations on it: SN = Short-Necked (ecn = Elongated/ Cupped-Necked: Wilkin 2009); LN = Long-Necked; TSN = Tall Short-Necked; WC = Weak-Carinated; TMC = Tall Mid-Carinated; HBSP = High-Bellied S-Profile; GSP = Globular S-Profile; SMB = Slender Mid-Bellied. Clarke's scheme: AOC = All Over Cord; N/NR = Northern British/North Rhine group; N1/D = Primary Northern British/Dutch group; N2 = Developed Northern British group; N3 = Late Northern British group; N4 = Final Northern British group; S4 = Final Southern British group. Food Vessels divided into: BFV = Bowl Food Vessel; VFV = Vase Food Vessel; FVU = Food Vessel Urn, EFVU = Enlarged Food Vessel Urn; FV = Food Vessel, unknown type. CU = Collared Urn. Copper-alloy blades—Gerloff (1975). Jet buttons—Shepherd (2009).

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Allerwash cist	Cist (1.25m), E–W	Partly disarticulated	1, adult, **male** (lower body only) [**2153–2030 BC, 79.9%**]	Rushes, shale or coal in shallow layer of earth/stones over remains, dagger in 'hands' position (WLN)	Masterton flat riveted bronze dagger blade
Altonside cist	Cist (0.95m), E–W	None recovered	–	Beaker NW corner	Beaker SN, N/NR
Alwinton cairn cremation 1	Placed on land surface	Cremation	1?, adult?	Discrete heap of bone	–
Alwinton cairn cremation 2	Pit or placed during cairn construction	Cremation	1?, adult?	Discrete heap of bone	–
Alwinton cairn cremation 3	Placed on land surface	Cremation	?	Spread on land surface	–
Amble cist	Cist (1.2m), NE–SW	Crouched	1, adult?	Beaker 'by the side of the skeleton' (SWLNW)	Beaker (lost) TSN?, N3?
Ancroft cist	Cist (1m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, male?	Beaker in front of face (WLN)	Beaker SN, N3
Angerton cist	Cist, ?	Not cremated	1, adult, female?	?	Bronze blade, 2 flint knife blades, flint?, 7 jet spacer plates?, 1 jet button?
Batter Law round barrow cist	Cist (1.12m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, male (osteoarthritis?)	Knife in front of knees (WRS)	Plano-convex flint knife blade
Bedlington cist 1	Cist, ?	Not cremated	1, adult, female?	?	'Pot' not recovered
Bedlington cist 2	Cist (0.72m), ?	?	?	?	Beaker SN (ecn), N3
Bedlington cist 3	Cist ('large'), ?	?	?	?	Flint knife blade
Bedlington cist 4	Cist ('small'), ?	Cremation	?	?	VFV
Bedlington cist 5	Cist, ?	Crouched	1, adult, ?	?	–

Benthall cist 1	Cist (0.9m), ESE–WNW	Not cremated	1, adult, ?	Teeth found at W end	–
Benthall cist 2	Cist (0.85m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, female?	Pot in front of feet (WRS)	VFV
Bewes Hill (Stargate)	Cist, ?	Not cremated	1, **adult, male**	?	Flint knife blade (flint flake also 'associated with cist')
Birkside Fell cairn pit	Pit (0.75m) NNE–SSW	Cremated	2, adult (2), 35–44 and 20–40; male (1), ?(1)	Vessel upright in pit, cremated bone at base of vessel, charcoal/bone, then burnt wood covering vessel and pit [2035–1745 BC, 1965–1675 BC]	CU
Blawearie cairn 1 'pyre' pit	Pit (d 0.55m)	Cremated	1, adult, ? (100g)	Line of pebbles divided pit N–S, bone to E, oak charcoal and cinder, 'baked' pit sides	–
Blawearie cairn 1 southern pit	Pit (0.88m)	Cremated	2, adult(2), male(1)?, ?(1) (1kg)	Bone within inverted vessel	EFVU
Blawearie cairn 1 stone-lined pit	Pit (0.7m), E–W. Stone slab cover	Cremated	1?, ??	Bone in soil fill within pit	–
Blawearie cairn 1 cist 1	Cist, ?	?	?	?	'Vessel' reported
Blawearie cairn 1 cist A (Gw cist 2)	Cist (1m), NW–SE	None recovered	–	?	VFV
Blawearie cairn 1 cist B (Gw cist 3)	Cist (0.8m), NE–SW	None recovered	–	Flint at centre of cist, necklace in N corner of cist (head to north?)	Flint knife blade, jet necklace (Kinnes and Longworth report 4 barrel-shaped, 4 flattened barrel-shaped, 92 disc-shaped)

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Blawearie cairn 1 cist C (Gw cist 4)	Cist (0.7m), NE–SW	None recovered	–	Cobbles backfilled between cist slabs and pit edge	–
Blawearie cairn 1 cist D	Cist (1.1m), WSW–ENE	None recovered	–	Partly filled with 'upcast'	–
Blawearie cairn 1 cist E	Cist (1.07m), E–W	Cremated	2, 1 adult, 1 child (c.5 years) ?,? (1000g adult, only 1 fragment child)	Bones 'tightly packed' in soil within cist	5 burnt flint fragments, 3 of which were within the cluster of bone
Blawearie satellite cairn 1 Pit	Pit (d 1m)	Cremated	? (all bar 5g lost during post-ex)	Oak charcoal with bones in soil fill, sides of pit scorched and reddened	–
Bluebell Inn cist	Cist (1m), E–W	Not cremated	1, child, ?	Head to the SE of cist	2 Beakers: 1. SN or HBSP, N2; 2. SN (ecn), N3
Bowchester cist (Humbleton Farm)	Cist (1m), ENE–WSW	Crouched	1, adult, male? (lesions on parietal)	Blade found while sieving cist soil (WRS)	Flat riveted bronze knife-dagger blade
Bowsden West Farm cist	Cist (1.2m), ?	None recovered	?	?	2 FV
Brandon cist/barrow	Cist (1.5m), SE–NW	Crouched, scorched/burnt bones	1, ?, ?	Burning to stones, soil, and bones in cist, Beaker behind head (SELS)	Beaker SN (ecn)
Broomhill cist	Cist (0.9m), NE–SW	Cremated	1 or 2, child(2), 1 c.7–8 years, ?	Two heaps of bone, one next to vessel fallen on side	VFV
Broomhill kerbed cairn cist 1	Cist (0.9m), N–S	Skull fragments only recovered, not cremated	1, child c.2 years, ?	Vessel near head, head to N	VFV
Broomhill kerbed cairn cremation deposit 1	Around cist: placed on land surface or in unrecorded pit	Cremated	1, adolescent c.17 years, ?	Bones within urn, inverted and with mouth plugged with clay	CU, flint knife, bone pin point (fractured)

Broomhill kerbed cairn cremation deposit 2	Around cist: placed on land surface or in unrecorded pit	Cremated	?	Bones within urn, vessel upright, covered with stone slab	'Cinerary urn', flint knife (unburnt)
Broomhill kerbed cairn cremation deposit 3–7 (identical descriptions)	Around cist: placed on land surface or in unrecorded pit	Cremated	?	Bones within urn, vessel upright, covered with stone slab	'Cinerary urn'
Broomhouses cist 1	Cist (1m) ENE–WSW	None recovered	–	?, charcoal	–
Broomhouses cist 2	Cist (1.1m) ESE–WNW	None recovered	–	?	–
Broomhouses cist 3	Cist (?), E–W	Burnt or cremated	'a young person'	Bones laid on bed of sand	–
Broomhouses cist 4	Cist (0.7m), ?	Burnt or cremated	1?, adult?, ?	Pebbles paving floor	–
Broomhouses pit 1	Pit (d?)	Cremated	1?, adult?, ?	Bones and knife within inverted urn, slab on top of urn base	FVU, flint knife (seems unburnt)
Broomhouses pit 2	Pit (d?)	Cremated	1?, adult?, ?	Bones within inverted urn, slab on top of urn base	EFVU
Broomridge 2 cremation deposit	Unknown	Cremated	?	?	CU, min. VFV
Broomridge 2a cremation deposit	Unknown	Cremated	?	?	Accessory Vessel
Burgh Hill cairn 1 cist	Cist (1.1m), E–W	None recovered	–	?	–
Burgh Hill cairn 2 cist	Cist (0.8m) ENE–WSW	None recovered	–	?	2 sherds of pottery (no details, lost)
Carham cist	Unknown	?	?	?	VFV
Cartington chamber	Cist or vault (?), E–W?	Not cremated, only enamel from 3 teeth recovered	1?, ?, ?	Monoxylous coffin, bracken in base (ELS?). Coffin dated [2340–2060 BC]	Beaker sherds (lost), piece of calfskin or kidskin with stitch-marks, flint scraper.

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Catcherside cairn cremation 2	Placed on land surface	Cremated	?	Bones in inverted urn, stone slabs rested on sides of urn	'Cinerary urn'
Catcherside cairn pit 1	Pit (d 0.3m) in cairn	Cremated	?	Bones in inverted urn	EFVU
Chatton barrow 1 cist	Cist (0.9m), NE–SW	None recovered	–	Cist filled with white sand	–
Chatton barrow 2 cist	Not given	Cremated	?	?	–
Chatton barrow 3 cist	Cist (s 0.35m)	Cremated	1?, adult?, ?	Sand on cist floor, bones within layer of 'earth and small water-rolled pebbles' above this	Burnt and broken retouched flint flake
Chatton Sandyford cairn 1 cremation deposit 1	Placed on land surface?	Cremated	?, small amount	Bones in inverted urn placed on ground, covered by slipped cairn material	FVU
Chatton Sandyford cairn 1 cremation deposit 2	Placed within cairn, in pit?	Cremated	?, small amount	Bones in bag or basket-shaped clump	– (possible organic container)
Chatton Sandyford cairn 1 grave 1	Grave (1.5m), N–S. Robbed/disturbed	None recovered	–	–	Beaker GSP, N/NR. 2 v-bored jet buttons (type 1, 2) in upcast
Chatton Sandyford cairn 1 grave 2	Grave (d 2m)	None recovered	–	Vessel at north end of grave	Beaker GSP, N/NR
Chatton Sandyford cairn 1 grave 3	Grave (1.4m), N–S. Robbed/disturbed	None recovered	–	Vessel sherds found in upcast from robbing	Beaker WC?, S4/FV

Cheswick cist	Cist (s 0.8m)	Not cremated, 'traces' only	?	?	Ridgeway flat riveted bronze dagger blade
Cheviot Walk Wood cist 1	Cist (1m), N–S	Not cremated—disturbed	?	Vessel sherds found in upcast from disturbance	BFV
Cheviot Walk Wood deposit 2	Pit (d 0.7m), stone cover slab	Cremated	1, adolescent, ? (500g)	Pit lined with stones, disturbed, vessel sherds	BFV
Cheviot Walk Wood deposit 3	Natural hollow (?)	Cremated	1, adult (20 years +), ? (640g), 'slight build'	?	Waste flint flake
Cheviot Walk Wood deposit 4	Cist (1m), NE–SW. Disturbed.	Cremated	2, adult (1) (30–40 years), child (1) (2–3 years) (550–700g)	Bones from adult charred and blackened, those from child white. Sherds of vessel only	BFV
Cheviot Walk Wood deposit 5	Cist (s 0.5m)	Cremated	2, young adult (1), infant or neonate (1) (1350g)	Bones at base of cist with sandy fill	Burnt flint knife
Cheviot Walk Wood deposit 6	Natural hollow (?)	Cremated	1, child (2–3 years), ? (70g)	Bones in inverted vessel	VFV, burnt barbed and tanged arrowhead
Cheviot Walk Wood deposit 7	Unclear—feature cut by feature 1.	Cremated	1, adult (under 40 years), ? (165g)	Sherds of vessel along with bones	VFV
Chollerton cist	Cist (1.1m) NW–SE	Not cremated—mainly long bones present	1?,	Based on arm and leg bone positions Greenwell argues head to NW of cist	–
Chollerton cremation deposit 1	Pit or placed on land surface (0.45m)?	Cremated	1?, adult?	Stone slab covering deposit	–
Chollerton cremation deposit 2	Placed on land surface?	Cremated	1?, 'a young person'	Bones in upright vessel	'Cinerary urn'
Clara Vale cist (Ryton)	Cist (1.1m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, male (? based on skull)	Beaker close under left arm (ELS)	Beaker LN, N3
Coldsmouth Hill south cairn grave 1	Grave (1.45m), E–W	Cremated	1, adult, female?	Charcoal	Flint scraper
Coldsmouth Hill south cairn grave 2	Grave (1.39m) NW–SE	Cremated	?	Charcoal	–
Coldsmouth Hill north cairn cist	0.6m by 0.5m	Cremated	?	?	Flint knife (plano-convex?)

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/ square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/ facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Copt Hill cist 1	Cist (0.6m), SSE–NNW	Crouched	1?, child, ?	(NNWRWSW)	–
Copt Hill cist 2	Cist (2m), E–W. *Probably not EBA*	Extended on back	1, ?, ?	Extended on back	–
Copt Hill cremation deposit 1	Unclear *Could be Neolithic*	Cremated	?	Spread over 0.8m area, perhaps at base of mound	Flint flake, calcined
Copt Hill cremation deposit 2	?	Cremated	1?	?	–
Copt Hill cremation deposit 3	?	Cremated	1?	?	–
Copt Hill grave 1	Grave (?), ?	Not cremated	1?	?	–
Copt Hill grave 1	Grave (?), ?	Not cremated	1?	Either 2 sets of remains in one grave or a grave disturbed by later grave	flint scraper
Copt Hill grave 2	Grave (?), ENE–WSW	Crouched	1, adult, male?	(WSWLNW)	–
Copt Hill grave 3	Not given, but aligned ENE–WSW	Crouched	1, ?, ?	Vessel S of head, head to SW end of cist	FV
Copt Hill cremation deposit	Not given	Cremated	?	Bones within inverted vessel	FVU
Corby's Crags Rock Shelter feature 1	Natural hollow	Cremated	?	Bone within upright vessel, stone slab cover, charcoal	FVU
Crag Hall cist 1	Cist (0.75m), ?	Cremated	?	Bones within vessel with earth	'urn'
Crag Hall cist 1	Cist (0.75m), ?	Cremated	?	Bones within vessel with earth	'urn'

Crag Hall cist 2	Cist (0.6m), ?	Cremated	?	Bones within vessel with earth	'urn'
Crag Hall cist 2	Cist (0.6m), ?	Cremated	?	Bones within vessel with earth	'urn'
Crawley Edge cremation deposit	Pit (0.8m)	Uncertain—may be unburnt	? May not be human bone?	'Bone' within upright vessel with soil and oak charcoal	Lump of galena (lead ore)
Debdon Farm cairn 1 cist 1	Cist (1m), N–S	Not cremated—only 1 femur portion survived	?	Charcoal and burnt stone in and around cist	–
Debdon Farm cairn 1 cremation deposit	Pit (d 0.3m)	Cremated	?	Bones and charcoal on top of 'burnt earth', stone slab cover	–
Debdon Farm cairn 2 pit	Pit (d 0.5m)	Cremated	1?, adult?, ?	Charcoal with bones	–
Denton cist	Cist (1.9m, subdivided in 3), NE–SW	Unclear whether cremated or not	?	Vessel from central chamber, bones 'filled' the NE chamber, yellow sand fill SW, C chambers	VFV
Dilston Park cist A	Cist (?), ENE–WSW	'many scraps of partially burnt bone, portions of four human teeth'	Teeth from 1?, adult (17–20 years?)	Charcoal	3 Beakers: 1. SN N/NR, 2. SN N3, 3. SN N/NR
Dilston Park cist B	Cist (?), ENE–WSW	None recovered	–	Vessels to SW end of cist, 'ashes' to SE side of cist	2 Beakers: 1. SN? N/NR, 2. SN (ecn) N3
Doddington cist	Cist (1m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult (24–30 years?), male?	Vessel placed close to head (WRS)	VFV, flint knife, flint flake, fragment of stitched leather or hide (< 0.05m square)
Dour Hill cist	Cist (1.4m), E–W	Not cremated, disturbed by second burial in cist	1, child (6–9 months). Skull fragments only	Hazelnut shell, fragments from both vessels but BFV mostly in this fill	BFV

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Dour Hill cist	Cist (1.4m), E–W	Not cremated, possibly disturbed by later intercession	1, child (c.11 years). Bone and teeth.	Sandy silt and gravel in fill, fragments from both vessels but VFV mostly in this fill	VFV
Ellsnook cist	Cist (0.69m), NW–SE	None recovered	–	Beaker at W end of cist, crushed	Beaker SMB, N/NR
Etal Moor barrow beaker find	Disturbance near barrow surface	None recovered	–	May be votive deposit not mortuary deposit	Beaker LN, S4
Etal Moor barrow cist	Cist (0.5m), E–W	Cremated	1?, adult, ?	Bones, charcoal, sandy fill	–
Etal Moor barrow cremation deposit	Pit or standing on land surface	Cremated	?	Bones in and around upright vessel	CU
Etal Moor barrow cremation pit	Pit (0.8m), E–W	Cremated	1?, adult, ?	Bones and AV in upright CU to E end of pit	CU, Accessory Vessel, ? vessel
Etal Moor barrow cremation pit	Pit (0.8m), E–W	Cremated	1?, adult, ?	Bones and objects in CU at W end of pit, second CU in middle of pit	CU, min. CU, fragments of bronze pin or awl, tip of bone pin
Farnham cist	?	Not cremated	?	?	Beaker TMC
Farnham cremation	?	Cremated	?	Stone slab covering urn	FVU
Fatfield barrow cist 1	Cist (?), SSW–NNE	Crouched	1, adult, ?	Head to SSW	–
Fatfield barrow cist 2	Cist (?), SSW–NNE	Crouched	1, adult, ?	Head to SSW	FV, lost
Fatfield barrow cist 3	Cist (1m), SSW–NNE	Crouched	1, adult, male?	(SSWRW)	–
Fawns barrow cremation deposit 1	Pit (d 0.4m)	Cremation	1?, adult, ?	Greenwell suggests cremation in situ	Burnt flint fragment

Fawns barrow cremation deposit 2	Placed on land surface	Cremation	1?, 'very young child', ?	Bones in inverted vessel with mouth on cup-marked slab	FVU
Fawns barrow cremation deposit 3	Pit?	Cremation	1?	?	'Cinerary urn'
Ford barrow cremation deposit 1	Placed on land surface	Cremation	?	Spread of bone	–
Ford barrow cremation deposit 2	Placed on land surface	Cremation	?	Spread of bone	–
Ford barrow cremation deposit 3	Placed on land surface or in pit?	Cremation	1?, adult?, female?	Bone and objects in upright vessel. Jet beads and button were 'outside the rim of the urn'	CU, burnt flint fragment, 3 jet beads, fragment of jet button (type 2)
Gains Law ring cairn cist 1	Cist (2m), N–S	Cremation, possible decayed burial not cremated	? (excavators also infer decayed inhumation from the cist size)	Bone throughout cist sandy gravel fill. Flint knife found in layer of stones and boulders above cist cover slab	FV (one sherd of same vessel found in cist 2)
Gains Law ring cairn cist 2	Cist (s 0.6m)	Cremation, possible decayed burial not cremated	? (excavators also infer decayed child inhumation from the cist size)	Only 1 scrap of bone which matches that from cist 1	One large sherd of FV matches vessel in cist 1
Goatscrag site A C1	Pit (d 0.38m)	Cremation	1?, adult?, male?	Bones in inverted vessel on stone slab	EFVU
Goatscrag site A C2	Placed on land surface	Cremation	2, adult (20 years +), female?, child (2–3 years), ?	Bones in inverted vessel packed in with sand	EFVU
Goatscrag site A C3	Natural hollow	Cremation	1, adult (young),?	Bones covered with stone slab, bead within cremated remains	Burnt jet or lignite bead
Goatscrag site A C4	Pit (d 0.5m)	Cremation	1, adolescent or adult (young), ?	Bones and charcoal in gravelly sand fill	Burnt flint flake, sherd of ? EFVU

(Continued)

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Great Tosson cist 1	Cist? N–S?	Crouched	1, adult, female?	Head to the S	FVU, jet button (type 6a)
Great Tosson cist 2	Cist? N–S?	Crouched	1, adult, ?	Head to the S	FVU, jet button (type 5), antler pick
Green Leighton barrow deposit 1	? at base of barrow	No bone recovered	–	?	FVU
Green Leighton barrow deposit 2	Grave pit (0.9m), ?	No bone recovered	–	?	–
Greenhill cist	Cist, ?	?	?	?	VFV
Grundstone Law cist	Cist (1.8m), E–W	Crouched, disarticulated	2, adult (1 40 years +, 1?), male (1, 1?)	Bones missing from crouched skeleton (ELS), additional bones or second burial present	–
Grundstone Law deposit 1	Placed on cist cover	Not cremated	1, ?, ?	Possible that bones from this skeleton intruded into the cist	–
Gunnerton cist	Cist?	Not cremated	1?	?	Bone pin
Harbottle Peels cairn ?burial 1	Placed on land surface	No bone recovered	–	?	VFV
Harbottle Peels cairn cist 1	Cist (0.8m), NE–SW	No bone recovered	–	?	FV
Harbottle Peels cairn cist 2	Cist (1m), N–S	No bone recovered	–	?	VFV
Harbottle Peels cairn cist 3	Cist (1m), ENE–WSW	No bone recovered	–	Vessel in N corner of cist	VFV
Harbottle Peels cairn cist 4	Cist (0.9m), N–S	No bone recovered	–	?	–

Harbottle Peels cairn cist 5	Cist (0.9m)	No bone recovered	–	?	VFV
Harbottle Peels cairn cremation 1	Pit, ?	Cremated	1, adult, ?	?	'Cinerary urn' with 'overhanging rim': CU?
Harbottle Peels cairn cremation 2	Placed on land surface or in pit?	Cremated	1, child, ?	Discrete heap	– (organic container?)
Harbottle Peels cairn cremation 3	Placed on land surface or in pit?	Cremated	1, adult, male?	Spread of bone	–
Harehope Hill cist	Cist (1.4m), NE–SW	No bone recovered	–	?	Flint knife, FVU rim sherd
Hasting Hill cist 1 (Trechmann Find 9)	Cist (0.9m), E–W	1 crouched, 1 cremated, 1 exposed	**3, 1 adult male (40–55) [2145–2009 BC 86.55%] (mild osteoarthritis), 1 adult?, 1 child (5 years)**	Beaker in front of crouched adult face, arms raised, knife in front of forearm, pin behind shoulders, tine at base of cist (WRS)	Beaker GSP or HBSP N/NR, bone pin, flint knife, antler tine pick tip
Hasting Hill cist 2 (Trechmann Find 10)	Cist (0.75m), NNW–SSE	Crouched	1, adult, male	On bed of earth and gravel; hands and vessel in front of face, flint saw to rear of head, flint flake near feet (NNWRSSE)	VFV, flint saw, flint flake
Hasting Hill cist 3 (Trechmann Find 12)	Cist (0.65m), NW–SE	Crouched	**1, child (1 year), ? [1931–1756 BC, 96.4%] (no pathology)**	Vessel behind head, backfill limestone rubble and earth (SRE)	VFV, flint fragment, ox tooth
Hasting Hill cist 4 (Trechmann Find 1)	Cist (0.63m), E–W	Cremated	?	Bones and ceramic fragments intermixed	VFV fragments, Accessory Vessel, flint core, flint flake
Hasting Hill grave 1 (Trechmann Find 11)	Cist (1.2m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, female	Skull 'inclined upwards as though the intention had been to face the midday sun', hands in front of face (WRS)	–

(Continued)

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
			?		
Hasting Hill square cist 1 (Trechmann 1914 Find 8)	Cist (s 0.35m)	Cremation		?	–
Hasting Hill square cist 2/stone–lined pit (Trechmann Find 5)	Stone–lined pit (d 0.35m)	Cremation	? 'the greater part are human'	?	Sheep tooth
Hasting Hill stone-lined pit (Trechmann Find 6)	Very small	Cremation	?	Bones within inverted urn filling pit	FVU
Hasting Hill unurned cremation deposit 1 (Trechmann Find 2)	Not recorded	Cremation	?	Disturbed	FVU
Hasting Hill unurned cremation deposit 2 (Trechmann Find 3)	Not recorded	Cremation	?	Disturbed	–
Haugh Head cist	Cist (1m), E–W	Token cremation, ?decayed unburnt remains	1 or 2, ?, ?	Only 2 scraps of cremated bone—cist could have housed crouched burial too	VFV, flint arrowhead, flint projectile head or knife, 5 flint fragments.
Hedley Wood cist	Cist, ?	?	?	?	EFVU, flint side-scraper
Hepple round cairn cremation deposit	Unknown	Cremation	?	?	Jet bead (barrel)

Hexham Golf Course cist	Cist (1m), N–S	Not cremated	**1, adult (22–8 years), ? (calculus on teeth)**	Skull missing from one end of cist, probably disturbed	–
High Buston cist	Cist (1m), E–W	Not cremated	2, 1 adult, male?; 1 adult, ?	No mention whether bones articulated as skeletons	Beaker SN (ecn) N2
High Knowes cairnfield A cairn 2	Grave pit (1m), E–W	No bone recovered	–	?	Beaker sherds (rim with cordon), flint scraper, barbed and tanged arrowhead, fragment of barbed and tanged arrowhead
High Knowes cairnfield B ring ditch pit 1	Grave pit (d 0.75m)	Cremation	Scraps only	Charcoal, disturbed	–
High Knowes cairnfield B ring ditch pit 2	Grave pit (d 0.6m)	Cremation	Scraps only	Charcoal, disturbed	None
High Knowes henge ('burial 3')	On land surface	No bone recovered	–	May or may not relate to mortuary activity	Jet cup fragment, flint scraper
Hollybush Field cist	Cist (1.15m), NE–SW	Crouched	**1, adult (23–57 years), male (fractured and healed fibula, osteoarthritis) [2211–2121 BC, 68.2%]**	Part filled with sand 'presumably brought from the North Tyne, ⅓ mile to the south' (NELSE)	None
Holystone Common cairn 1 cist	Cist (0.6m), NW–SE	Cremated	?	Vessel in E corner of cist	VFV
Holystone Common cairn 1 cremation 1	Pit or hollow (d 0.4m)	Cremated	1, adult, ?	Body 'burnt on the spot and over the already existing hole'	None
Holystone Common cairn 1 cremation 2	Heap (d 0.25m)	Cremated	1, adult, ?	Heap of cremated bone in cairn/unrecorded pit in cairn	None

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Holystone Common cairn 2 stone-lined pit	Pit (d 0.4m)	Cremated	3, 1 adult, ?; 1 adult, female?; 1 child, ?	Animal bone burnt and intermixed with human remains, burnt stone and earth around pit	4 burnt flint fragments, 1 burnt bone pin (from split sheep/goat metatarsal)
Holystone Common cairn 2 cremation 2	Heap (d 0.3m) on land surface	Cremated	2 or 3 adults, ?	Possibly organic container	3 burnt flint fragments
Holystone Common cairn 2 cremation 3	Heap (d 0.3m) on land surface	Cremated	1, adolescent, ?	Larger urn and contents next to and just above the human remains, charcoal in smaller vessel, burnt objects intermixed with human bone	2 min. CU, 2 burnt flint fragments, burnt and broken bone pin (from ulna of sheep-sized animal)
Holystone Common cairn 2 cremation 4	Placed on land surface	Cremated	1, adult, ?	Vessel inverted over the bones	VFV (shape sim to Beaker)
How Tallon burial 1	?	Not cremated	1, adult (20–5 years), male?, (v. good teeth)	Head to SW, unclear whether crouched or not	None
How Tallon burial 2	Cist, ?	Not cremated	1, adult (50 years +), male? (heavy worn teeth, molars lost through gum disease, caries)	Head to E, *bos* tooth and objects 'near to the bones'	VFV fragments, leaf-shaped flint knife with finely serrated edge, barbed and tanged flint arrowhead, plano-convex scraper/knife, fragmentary arrowhead
How Tallon burial 3	?	Not cremated	1, adolescent (15–18 years), ?	Head to the E, objects close to bones	?Beaker fragments, flint

How Tallon burial 4	?	Not cremated	1, adolescent (16–20), female? (linear enamel hypoplasia indicating nutritional stress *c.* age 5)	Hundreds of grove snail shells near burial	None
How Tallon burial 5	?	Not cremated	1, ?, ?	Hundreds of grove snail shells near burial	2 flint scrapers, 2 flints
Howick cist 1	Cist (0.44m), E–W	None recovered	–	Charcoal in clay sand fill	None
Howick cist 2	Cist (0.58m), NW–SE	8 skull fragments, not cremated	1?, child, ?	Lower fill sand with charcoal, upper fill silty sand	'tiny fragments of abraded pottery'
Howick cist 3	Cist (0.56m), NE–SW	None recovered	–	Skull-shaped shadow in lower sandy fill, charcoal in upper fill	None
Howick cist 4	Cist (1.3m), NW–SE	None recovered	–	Charcoal and reddened clay in fill, burnt residue on cover slab	Flint flake
Howick cist 5	Cist (0.7m), NNE–SSW	None recovered	–	Charcoal, burnt clay, sandy fill	2 small sherds of food vessel, 'some undiagnostic flint flakes'
Howick Heugh ring cairn cremation 1	Two discrete heaps in rock crevice	Cremated	2, 1 adult (21+ years), female; 1 child (1–2 years)	Charcoal with bone [1870–1530 BC, charcoal]	CU fragments, broken whetstone
Howick Heugh ring cairn cremation 2	In linear rock fissure	Cremated	Scraps, ?	Charcoal with bone	None
Howick Heugh ring cairn cremation 3	In linear rock fissure	Cremated	Scraps,?	Charcoal with bone	Calcined flint fragment
Howick Heugh ring cairn cremation 4	In linear rock fissure	Cremated	Scraps,?	Charcoal with bone	None
Howick Heugh ring cairn inhumation deposit	? disturbed	Skull fragments only, not cremated	1, adult, male?	?	None
Humbleton Burn House	Cist, ?	Not cremated	1, adult, male?	?	None

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Huntlaw Quarry cist	Cist (1.2m), ?	Crouched	1, ?, ?	Vessel close to skull	Beaker WC
Jubilee Wood cist	Cist, ?, E–W	Not cremated	1 or 2, 1 adult, 1 child	?	None
Kirkhaugh cairn 1 deposit	Placed on land surface, within area d 1.2m–1.5m	No bone recovered	–	Vessel was crushed under a stone slab (possibly a cushion stone—Needham in Fitzpatrick 2011, 115) to SW of burial area	Beaker LC or MC AOC, gold basket ornament, flint barbed and tanged arrowhead, 1 flint fabricator, 6 worked flint flakes, 2 flint cores, ? unworked flakes, whetstone fragment, flat sandstone rubber fragment, iron pyrites
Kirkhaugh barrow/cairn 2 cist	Cist (0.6m), ?	No bone recovered	–	Animal bone surrounded cist, but cist was empty	None
Kirkhill pit A	Pit (0.71m), N–S	Cremated	4, 3 adults, ?; 1 child (8–9 or 13–14 years), ?	Bone, charcoal, and flint within inverted vessel on stone slab [1620–1420 BC 68%, charcoal]	CU, 2 calcined flint fragments.
Kirkhill pit C	Grave pit (1.68m), E–W	Crouched	Adult?	Awl near base of spine (WRS)	Bronze awl fragment
Kyloe cist	Cist (0.72m), N–S	No bone recovered	–	Disturbed upon discovery, charcoal present	BFV, jet necklace: four spacer plates, two triangular terminal plates, c.50 barrel-shaped beads
Lilburn Hill Farm cist 2 (North Cairnfold Field)	Cist, ?	?	?	?	'trace of iron'?

Lilburn Hill Farm cist 3 (North Cairnfold Field)	Cist, ?	?	?	?	–
Lilburn Hill Farm cist 1 (East group)	Cist (2.1m), N–S	Cremated	?	7 discrete piles of bone within fill, each topped with 3 pebbles, and 4 similar features in a lower fill, rock art stone in SW corner of cist	Pyramidal slab of stone decorated with cup-and-ring carving
Lilburn Hill Farm cists 4–6 (East Cairnfold Field)	Cist, ?	?	?	'Three cists were dug up . . . containing bones and three urns'	2 Beakers identified from these 3 cists, 1. WC S4, 2. SN N2
Lilburn Hill Farm pit 1	Grave pit, ?	Not cremated	1?	Charcoal?	–
Lilburn Hill Farm stone-lined pit 1 (Cairnfold Field)	Pit, ?	Cremated		Upright vessel containing 'bones and ashes'	CU
Lilburn Hill Farm stone-lined pit 2 (Cairnfold Field)	Pit, ?	Cremated		Upright vessel containing 'bones and ashes'	'urn'
Lilburn South Steads cist	Cist (0.95m), N–S	Not cremated	1, adult, female (teeth heavily worn)	Bones displaced, some long bones split longitudinally	Beaker SN (ecn) N2 sherds, bronze knife-dagger blade, jet button type 6a, fragmented flint blade
Lilburn Tower Farm cist	Cist (0.85m), ?	Cremated	?	Burnt bone, charcoal, and pot sherds dispersed throughout fill	VFV
Low Hauxley cist 1	Cist (0.6m), ?	Cremated	1, adult, ?	Bones not within vessel	Beaker GSP
Low Hauxley cist 2	Cist (1.2m), E–W	Not cremated	1, subadult (12–15 years), male? (LEH, calculus, abscess lower jaw)	Head to the E	Beaker, flint flakes

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Low Hauxley erosion cairn cremation pit	Pit (d 0.55m)	Cremated	1, adult, male [1890–1690 BC, 68%]	Bones within inverted vessel in NW corner of cist, pyre debris, charcoal/ash and residual Mesolithic flint throughout cist	Beaker?/FV?
Low Hauxley erosion cairn square cist	Cist, ?	Cremated	? [2010–1875 BC, 68%]	Bones across cist floor	–
Low Hills round barrow (Easington), cist 1	Cist, ?	Cremated	?	Charcoal with and below bones	Burnt flint knife, flint fragment
Low Hills round barrow (Easington), cist 2	Cist, ?	No bone recovered	–	Clay fill, charcoal	–
Low Hills round barrow (Easington), cist 3	Cist, ?	No bone recovered	–	Disturbed	–
Low Shield Green Crag barrow, cremation 1	Pit, ?	Cremated	?	Vessel fell on side, stone covering slab	Bucket urn?
Low Shield Green Crag barrow, cremation 2	Pit?, ?	Cremated	?	Vessel fell on side, stone covering slab	Bucket urn?
Low Trewhitt North Moor cist 1	Cist, ?	No bone recovered	–	Vessel W side of cist	Beaker SP or SN (ecn)

Low Trewhitt North Moor cist 2	Cist, ?	Not cremated	1?, 'immature': teeth, long bone fragments, no skull fragments	Charcoal, blackened earth, and stones	Beaker sherd, '7 or 8 small flints'
Low Trewhitt North Moor cist 3	Cist (0.85m), ?	Not cremated	'a few fragments of unburnt bone' only	Bones, charcoal, and fire-affected stones in upper fill	None mentioned
Lowstead Ground cist, Howick	Not given	Not cremated	1?, adult, ?	Gravel	'urn'
Middle Gunnar Peak cremation deposit 1	Pit, ?	Cremated	1, 'young' child, ?	Bones within inverted vessel	Cordoned Urn, unburnt bone 'knife'
Middle Gunnar Peak cremation deposit 2	Destroyed	Cremated	1?, child, ?	?	Cordoned Urn
Milfield North henge ditch	Spread or dump in ditch terminals	Cremated	?	?	–
Milfield North henge pit A cist	Cist (0.46m), NNW–SSE	No bone recovered	–	'Empty'	–
Milfield North henge pit B (probable grave)	Grave pit (2.26m), SE–NW	No bone recovered	–	Scraper at base, pot sherds throughout stone packing filling feature	Flint scraper, Beaker sherds LN (late series)
Milfield North henge pit C (grave or votive pit?)	Pit (2.72m), E–W	No bone recovered	–	Charcoal layer under layer of large stones [2470–1930 BC, charcoal]	Beaker GSP
Milfield North henge pit D (probable grave)	Grave (2.62m), NNE–SSW	No bone recovered	–	Charcoal from ?burnt plank in middle of gravel fills	–
Millstone Hill kerbed cairn c1 cremation deposit	Disturbed	Cremated	1?, adult?, ?	Charcoal	Indeterminate urn fragments
Millstone Hill kerbed cairn c2 cremation deposit	Placed on land surface	Cremated	1?, child?, ?	Bone and earth in heap within pit	–

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/ square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/ facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Millstone Hill kerbed cairn c3 cremation deposit	Placed on land surface	Cremated	?	Charcoal, bone	–
Murton Moor round barrow	Pit, ?	Cremated	?	Charcoal	Flint knife, burnt scraper, two flakes
North Charlton cist 1	Cist (1.2m), ?	Not cremated	?	?	–
North Charlton cist 2	Cist (1.8m), E–W	Extended?	1, ?, ?	Dagger described as lying on chest	Masterton bronze dagger blade
North Hazelrigg cist	Cist (0.75m), NW–SE	No bone recovered	–	Vessel 'in each corner at the south-east end'	3 Beakers: 2 SN (TSN), 1 mini, type?
Pace Hill cist 1	Cist (0.75m), N–S	No bone recovered	–	?	–
Pace Hill cist 2	Cist (1m), N–S	No bone recovered	–	?	–
Pace Hill cist 3	Cist (0.8m), N–S	No bone recovered	–	Filled with sand, quartz fragment at top of fill	–
Pace Hill pit	Pit (1.1m), NW–SE	No bone recovered	–	?	Beaker LN (earlier series)
Pace Hill unknown feature	Unknown	Cremated	?	Greenwell (1868, 125–6): jet necklace 'strung around the neck of the urn'	VFV
Pitland Hills, barrow 1, cist 1	Cist (1.3m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult (40–50 years?), male? (teeth worn flat)	'The left hand was under the thigh, and the right arm across the chest', head lay on a hammer stone, vessel in SW corner, clay filling cist (WRS)	VFV
Pitland Hills, barrow 1, cist 2	Cist (0.82m), ?	No bone recovered	–	Clay fill, charcoal, burnt stone	–

Pitland Hills, barrow 1, cremation 2	Pit (d 0.45m)	Cremated	'a very large deposit'	Soil at base reddened by fire	None
Pitland Hills, barrow 1, cremation deposit 1	Pit?	Cremated	1?, 'young child', ?	Bones in inverted urn on cover slab	Urn (probably CU)
Pitland Hills, barrow 2, pit	Pit, ?	Cremated	?	Bones filled upright urn, AV next to urn	Urn (probably CU), Accessory Vessel
Pitland Hills, barrow 3 grave	Grave pit (1.17m), NE–SW	Not cremated	1, adult, male? (long bones only)	Grave filled with limestone with fossils	None
Plessy Mill cremation deposit 1–3	Pit, ?	Cremated	?	Bones within inverted vessel in each case	Min. CU from pit 1, VFV pit 2, min. FV pit 3. Also from these 3: burnt flint plano-convex knife, 2 flint knives, 1 flint knife fragment, and 1 burnt flint fragment
Ravensheugh cairn 2 cist	Cist (?), NW–SE	None recovered	–	Cist filled with sand	None
Rayheugh cairn 1 cist	Cist (1.2m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, ?	Vessel behind shoulders, head on stone 'pillow' (ELS)	Beaker SN or HBSP N2
Rayheugh cairn 2 burial	Grave pit (1.4m), NW–SE	None recovered	–	?	–
Rayheugh cairn 3 cist	Cist, ?	None recovered	–	?	–
Rayheugh cairn 4 cist	Cist (1.2m), NW–SE	Not cremated	? 'very few bones'	?	–
Reaverhill Farm cist	Cist (1.2m), NE–SW	Not cremated	1, adult (**30–40** years), male (periodontal disease) [**2135–1951** ʙᴄ]	'Most of the skeleton was missing, the bones remaining were in disorder'	Ridgeway group bronze dagger blade, hilt likely bone, ivory, or antler.

(Continued)

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Rosebrough Moor cairn 1 cist	Cist (1m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult?, ?, traces only	Vessel in NE corner, in front of face (ERN)	Beaker SN (ecn) N2
Rosebrough Moor cairn 1 cremation deposit 1	Placed on cist cover slab	Cremated	2 adults: 1 female, 1?	Bones in urn inverted on cist cover slab	EFVU, unburnt flint knife
Rosebrough Moor cairn 2 cremation deposit 1	Placed on land surface?	Cremated	1, adult? (18–20 years?), ?	Bones and artefacts in upright vessel with cover stone	Min. CU, 4 burnt bone-pin fragments
Rosebrough Moor cairn 3 burial	Pit (0.7m), ?	No bone recovered	–	Charcoal lining edges of feature	–
Roseden Edge burial	Pit or grave?	Not cremated	?	?	VFV
Roseden Edge cremation deposit	Pit?	Cremated	?	?	Accessory Vessel
Sacriston cist	Cist (1.17m), ESE–WSW	Not cremated	? 'much decayed'	?	Beaker SN (ecn) N2
Sandyford Park cist	Cist (1.2m), ?	Crouched?	1, adult, male	Vessel held 'some red coloured earth'	FV
Seafield Farm cist 1	Cist (1.1m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, male?	Arms by side, vessel in NW corner and in front of face (WLN)	VFV
Seafield Farm cist 2	Cist (0.75m), NE–SW	Crouched?	1?, ?, ?	?	FV
Seafield Farm cist 3	Cist (0.7m), N–S	Crouched?	1?, ?, ?	?	FV
Seafield Farm cist 4	Cist (0.5m), NE–SW	None recovered	–	?	–
Seafield Farm cist 5	Cist (0.4m), N–S	None recovered	–	?	–

Seafield Farm cist 6	Cist (1.2m), N–S	Crouched	1, 'young' adult, ?	Vessel in front of face, right hand under this urn, left hand across the chest (SRE)	Beaker LN
Seafield Farm grave 1	Grave pit (1.2m), E–W	Not cremated	?	Bones described as 'exhumed and reburied' and 'much broken'	–
Seghill cist	Cist, ?	Not cremated	?	?	Quartzite battle axehead, Intermediate type
Shipley cist	Cist (0.85m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, female (cut mark on L humerus)	Vessel behind head, ochre under head and near shoulder (WRS)	Beaker LN (earlier series) N4, 2 pellets of red ochre
Smalesmouth cist	Cist, ?	Not cremated	?		Beaker SN (ecn) N3
South Charlton cairn cist ('Primary interment')	Cist (1.15m), E–W	No bone recovered	–	?	'one small piece of flint'
South Charlton cairn deposit 1	Pit?	Cremated	?	?	FV
South Charlton cairn deposit 2 pit	Pit, ?	Cremated?	?	Bones in inverted urn	FVU
South Charlton cairn deposit 3 pit	Pit, ?	Cremated	?	Bones and charcoal in upright urn	FVU
South Charlton cairn deposit 4	Pit?	Cremated?	?	Bones and charcoal	Min. CU, Accessory Vessel
South Charlton cairn deposit 5	Pit, ?	Cremated?	?	Oak charcoal	–
South Charlton cairn deposit 6	Pit?	Cremated?	?	Bones and charcoal	'some minute fragments of earthenware'
South Charlton cairn deposit 7	Pit?	No bone mentioned	–	?	FV sherds
South Charlton cairn deposit 8	Cist (s 0.2m)	Cremated	?	No charcoal	Mini. VFV

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
South Charlton cairn deposit 9	Stone-lined pit, ?	Cremated?	?	Charcoal	Fragments of 2 FVs
South Charlton cairn deposit 10 cist	Cist (s 0.6m)	No bone recovered	–	Charcoal	VFV
South Charlton cairn deposit 11 cist	Cist (1m), NW–SE	No bone recovered	–	Cist filled with earth and sand	–
Spital Hill cairn 1 cist (Dixon no. 1)	Cist or stone-lined pit, ?	Cremated	?	Bones within upright vessel	'a small cinerary urn'
Spital Hill cairn 2 cist (Dixon no. 2)	Cist (1m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult (25–40 years?), male?	(WLN)	–
Spital Hill cairn 3 cist 1 (Dixon no. 3)	Cist (1.05m), NNE–SSW	No bone recovered	–	'empty'	–
Spital Hill cairn 4 cist 1 (Dixon no. 4)	Cist (s 0.38m)	?	'small fragment of bone'	?	–
Spital Hill cairn 5 deposit 1 (Dixon no. 5)	Pit(s)?	Cremated	?	Possibly 2 deposits, unclear	Fragments of 2 FVUs
Spital Hill cairn 6 cist 1 (Dixon no. 6)	Cist (1.05m), NW–SE	No bone recovered	–	'empty'	–
Spital Hill cairn 7 cist 1 (Dixon no. 7)	Cist (0.9m), E–W	No bone recovered	–	?	–
Spital Hill cairn 7 cist 2 (Dixon no. 7)	Cist (0.97m), NE–SW	Cremated	More than 1?, ?	Bones, ashes, charcoal, burnt soil and stones	–
Spital Hill cairn 7 cremation deposit 1 (Dixon no. 7)	Placed on land surface or pit	Cremated		Bones and artefacts in FVU	FVU, flint knife (unburnt?), sherds ?pot

Spital Hill cairn 8 cist 1 (Dixon no. 8)	Cist (0.9m), NW–SE	No bone recovered	–	'empty'	–
Spital Hill cairn 8 cist 2 (Dixon no. 8)	Cist (s 0.46m)	1? cremated, 1? not cremated?	1 or 2, skull fragments, and burnt bones only	'empty'	–
Steeple Hill cist	Cist (1.2m), E–W	1 crouched, 1 cremated	2, 1 adult, male 1 child, ? (cremated)	Head to W, vessels in front of chest, cremation in 1 vessel	2 VFV
Steeple Hill grave with stone settings	Grave with stone settings?	Crouched?	1, adult, female?	Head to W	–
Summerhill (Blaydon) cist 1	Not recorded	Crouched?	1(*?*), **adult, female**	*Cannot verify correct remains*	Beaker SN (ecn)
Summerhill (Blaydon) cist 2	Cist (0.9m), NNE–SSW	Crouched	1, adult (26–30 years), male	Knife behind skull (NNELE)	Flint knife
Summerhill (Blaydon) cist 3	Cist (1m), NNE–SSW	Crouched	1, ?, ?	Vessel near skull, charcoal and burnt bone above cist cover slab (NNELSE)	VFV
Summerhill (Blaydon) cist 4	Cist (1.05m), E–W	1 crouched, 1 cremated	2, 1, **adolescent (18 years), female,**1, ?, ?	*Cannot verify correct remains— could be from cist 3 or 4,* vessel behind head in NE corner (ELS)	Beaker HBSP
The Sneep cist	Cist (1.1m), NW–SE	Crouched	1, adult, female	Sand floor, hands on knees, vessel fallen on its side behind shoulder, flints near vessel mouth (NWRSW)	Beaker SN (ecn) N1/D, 2 flint scrapers, 5 flint flakes
Tom Tallon's Grave cist	Cist (1m), NW–SE	Not cremated	1?	?	?FV sherds
Trow Rocks cist	Cist (1.2m), NNW–SSE	Crouched	1, adult, male?	Knife in front of face (SSERE)	Plano-convex flint knife
Turf Knowe North central cist	Cist (0.85m), N–S	Cremated	1, adult, female [1750–1530 BC]	Reuse of cist seems likely, pyre debris around vessel (see below), bones in vessel	VFV, flint flakes and jet beads.

(Continued)

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Turf Knowe North central cist	Cist (0.85m), N–S	Cremated	2, 1 adult, ?, 1 infant, ?	Upper soil fill, rich in ash, charcoal, and burnt bone; reuse of cist [1940–1680 BC, charcoal and 2340–1950 BC, charcoal]	–
Turf Knowe North cremation 1	Pit/insertion (0.5m), E–W	Cremated	2, 1 infant, ? (meningitis), 1 adult, ? (intrusive scraps only) [2490–2200 BC]	Bones within inverted urn placed in hollow at edge of cairn. C14 date anomalously early for vessel.	EFVU
Turf Knowe North cremation 2	Spread within cairn material?	Cremated	2, 1, adult (older, poss. joint disease), male, 1 juvenile, ? [1880–1620 BC]	Soil with ash, charcoal, bone, same individuals as pyre debris 1.	Part of bone/antler pin conjoins with part from pyre deposit 1
Turf Knowe North cremation 3	Spread within cairn material?	Cremated	1, adult (younger), female? [2130–1880 BC]	Soil with ash, charcoal, bone	–
Turf Knowe North cremation pyre debris 1	Spread within cairn material?	Cremated	2, 1, adult, (older), male, 1 juvenile, female	Soil with ash, charcoal, bone, same individuals as cremation 2.	Part of bone/antler pin conjoins with part from cremation deposit 2
Turf Knowe North cremation pyre debris 2	Not given	Cremated	1, adult, ? (v small quantity)	Soil with ash, charcoal, bone, possibly same individual as cremation 3	–
Turf Knowe North southern cist	Cist (s 0.6m)	Cremated	3, 1 adult (18–30), ?, 1 adult (30+), ?, 1 immature, ?	Soil with ash, charcoal, bone	–
Turf Knowe South eastern cist (1/A)	Cist (s 0.5m)	No bone recovered	–	Hazelnut shell	–
Turf Knowe South pit 2	Pit (d 0.65m)	No bone recovered	–	Charcoal [1390–1120 BC]	FV, crescent-shaped flint

Turf Knowe South western cist (2/B)	Cist (1m), NW–SE	Cremated	1, adult, ? (140g) [2130–1870 BC]	Bone throughout soil fill; truncated by later fill	Iron spearhead socket (upper fill)
Turf Knowe South western cist (2/C)	Cist (1m), NW–SE	Cremated	1, adult (older), ? [2030–1770 BC]	Bone dumps in E corner and along N wall of cist	FV found next to cist, cist poss. disturbed
Warden Law cist	Cist (s 0.3m)	Cremated	2, 1, child (2–10 years), ? [2025–1887 BC] Possibly also 1, adult, ? (scraps)	Bone in inverted vessel. *Adult provenance cannot be verified*	FVU with cordon
Warkshaugh Farm barrow cist 1	Cist (1m), E–W	Not cremated	?	'river sand' in cist	FV, mottled grey flint knife
Warkshaugh Farm barrow cist 2	Cist (1m), E–W	Not cremated	?	'river sand' in cist	–
Warkshaugh Farm barrow cist 3	Cist (0.7m), E–W	Not cremated	?	'river sand' in cist	–
Warkshaugh Farm barrow cist 4	Cist (1m), E–W	Not cremated	?	'river sand' in cist	–
Warkshaugh Farm barrow cremation deposit 1	Stone-lined pit, ?	Cremated?	Bones inferred only	inverted urn	CU
Warkworth cairn cist 1	Cist (1.1m), NE–SW	Crouched?	1?	Head to E	FV, flat riveted knife-dagger blade, flint flake
Warkworth cairn cist 2	Cist (s 0.4m)	Not cremated?	1, child, ?	?	–
Warkworth cairn cist 3	Cist (0.6m), ?	Cremated?	?	?	VFV
Warkworth cairn cist 4	Cist, ?	?	?	?	FV
Warkworth cairn cist 5	Cist, ?	?	?	?	FVU
Warkworth cairn cist 6	Cist (0.8m), NW–SE	?	?	?	?vessel
Warkworth cairn cist 7	Cist (1.2m), NE–SW	Crouched	1, adult, ?	Charcoal (NELS)	–

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Warkworth cairn cist 8	Cist (1.8m), ?	Crouched	1, adult, male?	On left side	–
Warkworth cairn cist 9	Cist (1.2m), N–S	Not cremated	? 'scanty remains'	?	'Cinerary urn'
Warkworth cairn cremation deposit 1	Found on cist 1 cover slab	Cremated	?	Found on cist cover slab	–
Warkworth cairn cremation deposit 2	Heap	Cremated	1, adult, ?	Discrete heap	– (possible organic container?)
Warkworth cairn vessel	Pit?	None recovered	–	?	FVU
Well House Farm cist	Cist (1.1m), NE–SW	No bone recovered	–	Vessel S and NE corners, flint flake in SW corner, bead between the cist slabs at the S corner exterior, charcoal in pit packing [2200–1780 BC, 95%]	FVU, min. VFV (damaged and repaired before firing), 1 fusiform jet or shale bead
West Wharmley cist	Cist (0.7m), E–W	2, 1 crouched?, possibly also 1 not cremated	2, 1, adult, male?, *possibly also 1 adult, female* (bone scorched)	Part filled with sand and soil. *Adult female provenance cannot be verified*	Beaker SN (TSN) N2
Wether Hill stone cist	Cist (?), E–W	No bone recovered	–	[2020–1745 BC, 95%, Barley grain on vessel]	Fragments from 3 FV, inc 1 VFV
Wether Hill wooden cist or coffin	Pit grave (1.96m), E–W	No bone recovered	–	Wooden coffin or cist [charcoal 2335–1935 BC, 2201–1886 BC, 2199–1890 BC], stone packing around edges	1 complete Beaker, 1 fragmentary

Wheathall Farm (Whitburn cist 2)	Cist, ?	Not cremated	1, adult (25–45), ? (persistent squatting and limb disease, teeth worn low)	Limpet shells placed next to hands and feet	Barbed and tanged arrowhead, five flint flakes.
Whitton Hill henge 1 central pit	Pit (1.8m), NW–SE	Cremated	1, adult, **male?** [**1889–1693 BC**]	Bones in inverted vessel in lower fill of pit, charcoal, packing stones; upper fill included 'domestic' or 'Neolithic–derivative' vessel.	FVU, small flint flake outside vessel
Whitton Hill henge 1 'cremation 2'	Pit/hollow left by post	Cremated	1, child [**1426–1270 BC**]	Bone lying in and over upper fill of pit, possibly with a postpipe	–
Whitton Hill henge 1 'cremation 3'	Pit/hollow left by post	Cremated	?	Bone lying in and over upper fill of pit, possibly with a postpipe	–
Whitton Hill henge 1 'cremation 4'	Ploughed out pit?	Cremated	?	Discrete clump	Small flint blade fragment
Whitton Hill henge 1 pit 6	Pit (d 0.35m)	Cremated	? 'tiny fragments'	?	–
Whitton Hill henge 1 pit 7	Pit	Cremated	? 'tiny fragments'	?	–
Whitton Hill henge 1 southern ditch	Ditch	Cremated	7? inc. **1 subadult?** [**3361–3103 BC**]	8 deposits in upper fill of ditch above stone packing and layer of burning. Redeposited?	–
Whitton Hill henge 2 pit I 'cremation 3'	Pit (0.5m), E–W	Cremated	1, ?, ?	Charcoal, stones, earth over bones [1500–1120 BC]	–

(Continued)

Feature name (deposit reference if more than one per feature)	Feature (length/square/diameter)	Treatment of human remains	MNI, Age, Sex (notes) [C14 dates]	Arrangement (head/side/facing), Materials [C14 dates]	Artefacts
Whitton Hill henge 2 pit Y	Pit (d 0.7m)	Cremated	**24, inc. 16 adults (1 female), 4 subadults, 26.1kg [1259–1026 BC]**	Charcoal [1900–1000 BC]. Flat sandstone cover slab propped up on blocks, 5 quartz pebbles placed on top of cover, then earth mound. Earth at base of pit below bones.	–
Whitton Hill henge 2 pit Z	Pit, (2m), E–W	Cremated	?, fragments only	Upright stone slabs, rubble, sandy soil	–
Woodhorn cist	Cist, ?	Not cremated	1?	?	Beaker SN (ecn) N3
Wooler cist	Cist (1.4m), E–W	Crouched	1, adult, male?	(ELS)	Jet button type 1
Yeavering cist	Cist (1.5m), NNW–SSE	No bone recovered	–	? Disturbed during construction of Anglo–Saxon building	Fragments of EFVU?, jet disc beads: 9 in deposit, 7 more in disturbance
Yeavering cremation deposit 1	Pit (d 0.35cm)	Cremated	? 'finely ground up'	Bones poured into hole in base of inverted vessel	CU

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