

5. CHALCOLITHIC–EARLY BRONZE AGE ACTIVITY

5.1 Short-cist burials

Prior to excavation, trial trenching exposed an intact stone-built short-cist (C030) at the far western corner of the site (Marshall 2011b: 7, illus 3 and illus 5). Radiocarbon dating of charcoal retrieved from within the cist produced a date of 2440–2130 cal BC (95.4% probability; SUERC-61665). Traces of human bone were found, through palaeoenvironmental assessment, but it could not be determined whether they represent the remains of an inhumation or cremation, either of which would be consistent with the Early Bronze Age date. At this stage, the contents of the cist were fully excavated but the structure left intact. The investigation of this cist continued during the excavation with the recording and removal of the lining stones (Context 033) (Illus 5A, 5B). This revealed a cut (C030) which was somewhat irregular in plan and measured 1.1 × 1.0m and 0.45m deep. The lining was found to rest directly against the cut, packed in places with redeposited natural sand and stones (C032).

The cist contained a complete small tripartite Food Vessel (V1) in the ‘Yorkshire’ style. The vessel stands at 130mm tall with a rim diameter of 135–145mm, a base diameter of 70mm, and a maximum diameter of 150–160mm (Illus 6). The vessel is sub-circular in plan and irregular in both manufacture and decoration. It has an internal bevel and two cavettos (a concave moulding with a regular curved profile), upon which is a twisted cord-impressed herringbone motif. The lower body is also decorated with twisted cord that has been looped upon itself and pushed into the surface. The impressions to the exterior rim bevel are not continuous; there is a c 10mm gap between the start and finish points. The spacing between and the length of the impressions is irregular. The exterior has also been wet smoothed or slipped to hide the very large (2–10mm) frequent rock inclusions which are visible on the interior. The angular, speckled black and white, inclusions constitute around 30% of the matrix and are well sorted throughout the fabric. The black organic residue is located on the rim bevel and part of the interior, suggesting the vessel contained food or had been used in cooking.

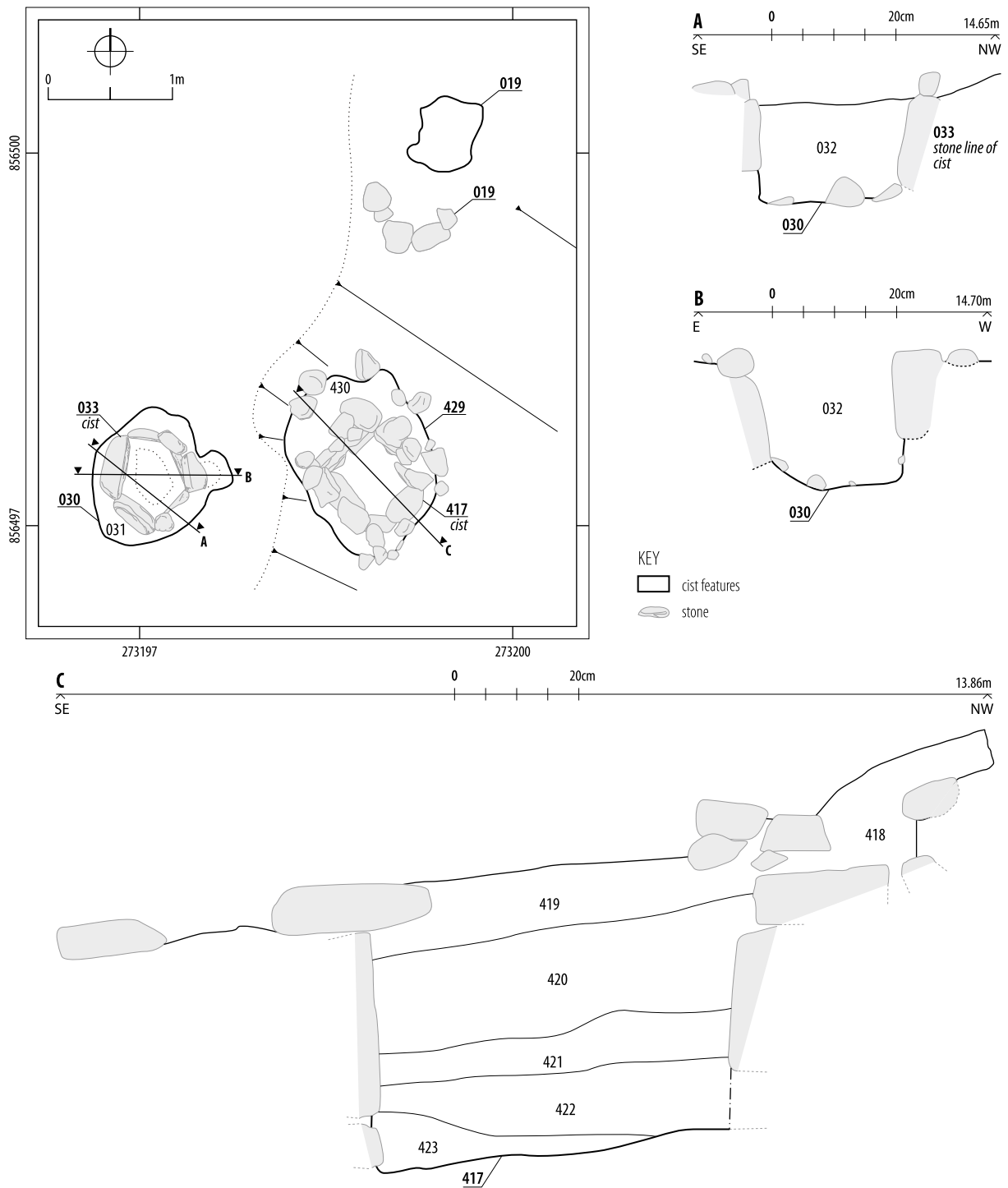
Sooting to parts of the exterior and spalled areas on the lower body could have occurred during firing or through use for cooking.

During hand-cleaning around Cist 030, a second short-cist (Cist 417) was revealed cut into the slope immediately to the east of the first. The cist was slightly larger, with the sub-oval cut (C429) measuring 1.6 × 1.35m and 0.4–0.8m deep. It was lined with water-worn stones of up to 0.4m in diameter. These were supported with smaller packing stones and sand (C430), resulting in an internal space that measured 0.5 × 0.4m (Illus 5C). The cist had no surviving capstone and was filled with several layers of redeposited natural material (C419–423) containing pottery and small fragments of non-identifiable burnt bone. The upper two deposits (C419–420) and the deposit overlying the packing material outside the main lining (C418), contained fragments of glass and hammerscale, suggesting the cist had been disturbed in more recent history. Eight sherds and 19 fragments of pottery, in very fragmented and poor condition, were recovered from within the modern disturbance. A single diagnostic rim sherd, intricately decorated using fine twisted cord, could be part of the remains of a small Food Vessel or a cup (often termed accessory vessel). The sherds have no original surfaces, are grey in tone and are slightly vesicular, which may suggest they have been burnt (see Barclay 2002).

A possible partial stone-lined pit, Pit 019, was uncovered during trial trenching a short distance to the north-east of the cists (Illus 5). The fill contained fragments of charcoal and non-identifiable burnt bone and was thought to be the remains of another cist. This feature was not convincingly rediscovered during the excavation, the stony natural deposits limiting the identification of shallow features, making it impossible to research further the reality of the potential cist.

5.2 Chalcolithic–Early Bronze Age pits

Two medium-sized Pits 182 and 184 were recorded near the southern edge of the site (Illus 3). Pit 182, which measures 1.3 × 1.2m and 0.25m deep, contained an assemblage of Beaker pottery and lithics. A radiocarbon date of 2290–2050 cal BC (95.4% probability; SUERC 64615), obtained from charcoal collected within the fill, corresponds well



Illus 5 Plan of Cist Burials 033 and 429. A-B: Section through Cist Burial 033. C: Section through Cist Burial 429 (© Headland Archaeology)

with the assemblage. Pit 182 contained abundant hazel charcoal together with a small amount of pomaceous fruitwood (*Pomoideae* sp.), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and oak.

The pottery recovered from Pit 182 includes two Beaker vessels that can be termed ‘domestic’ (V7 and V8). Beaker V7 was retrieved from soil sample processing and comprises three small body sherds and eight fragments. The sherds are 9mm thick with a sandy fabric tempered with fine, well-sorted quartz and mica. The largest sherd has six horizontal lines of twisted cord decoration. The three sherds

of Beaker V8 are larger and comprise a conjoining base, wall and neck sherd. The neck form is closed with three cavettos, presumably leading to a bulbous belly, finishing at the small flat base. Decoration occurs on the lower body in the form of five comb-impressed horizontal lines bordered top and bottom with short comb-impressed diagonals (Illus 7). The comb would have had closely positioned rectangular-sectioned teeth. The fabric of this vessel is unlike the other fabrics in the assemblage. The sandy fabric includes fine, well-sorted quartz and mica with some large, very rare, black and white



Illus 6 Food Vessel V1 from Cist 030 (© Headland Archaeology)

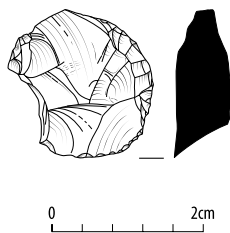


Illus 7 Base and body sherd of Beaker V8 (© Headland Archaeology)

speckled, angular rock (possibly granite) inclusions. The interior of the base and lower wall sherd is coated in a thick black organic residue indicating the presence of foodstuffs.

The lithic assemblage from Pit 182 included flint chips, which may indicate it was open at the time of knapping or located near a knapping event. The lithic pieces present in this pit included a bipolar

core and a thumbnail scraper on a bipolar core or flake (Illus 8). These two pieces could have been made any time between the Mesolithic and Early Bronze Age. However, this small sub-circular type of scraper is more common in the latter part of this range, between the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, which corresponds well with the radiocarbon date obtained from the pit.



Illus 8 Detail of thumbnail scraper from Pit 182 (© Headland Archaeology)