

## T.40 : Barrow and Windmill at Butcombe, North Somerset

By

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(O.S. 6 in. to 1 mile, Somerset 11 S.E. N.G.R. ST 517628)

### SUMMARY

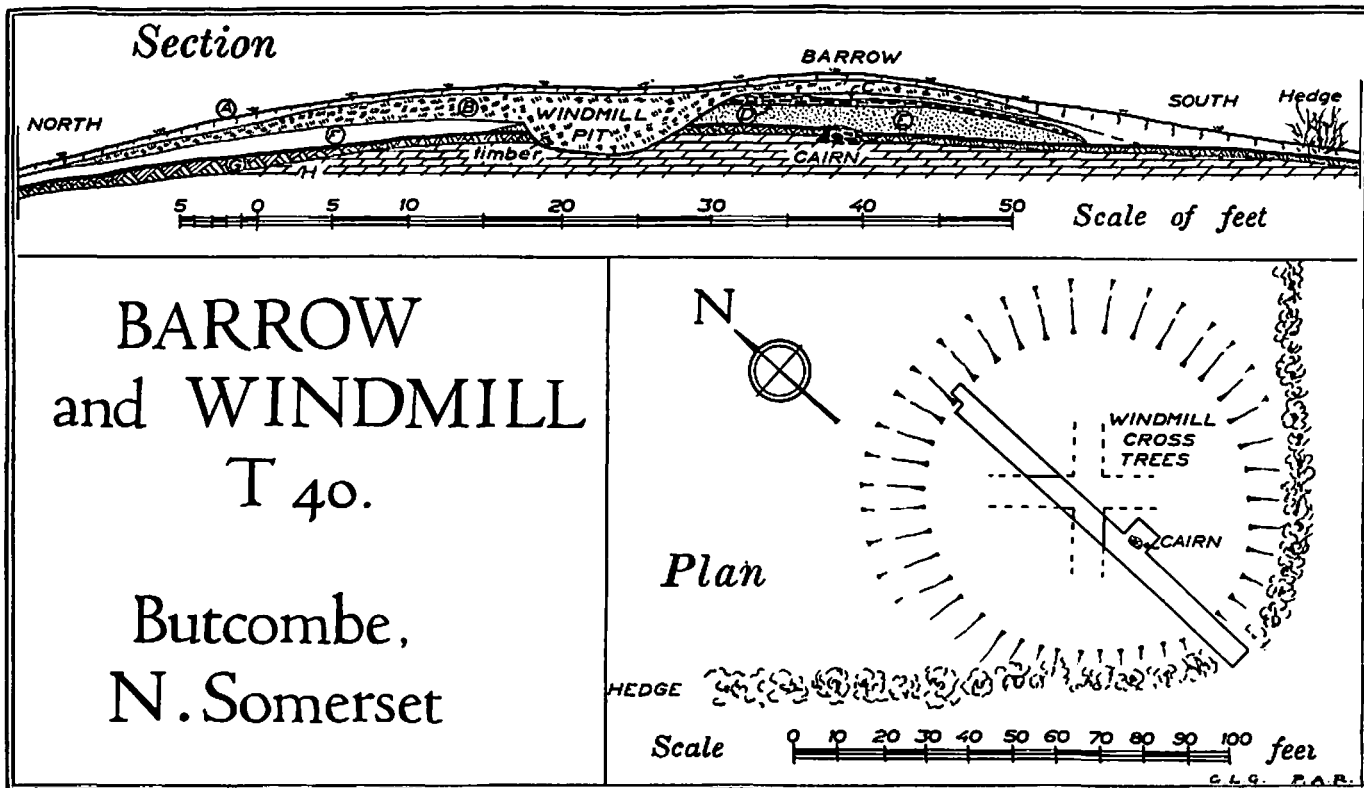
The site was probably a barrow of Iron Age A date. In the thirteenth century a sunken-post windmill was erected on the barrow and its cross-tree foundations destroyed part of the earlier levels.

### INTRODUCTION

This work was done in 1946 and 1947 with the help of G. L. Gettins and boys of the Bristol Grammar School Archæological Society. Publication was not possible then, and the report has now been re-written with revised sections on the pottery. No further work could be done after 1947, as the land was required by the owner. We would like to thank Mrs. D. P. Dobson-Hinton and the late B. H. St. J. O'Neil for their helpful advice; G. A. Brown for drawing the prehistoric potsherds; A. M. ApSimon and J. Wilfred Jackson for their reports on the prehistoric pottery and animal bones; E. M. Jope for his comments on the mediæval pottery; and G. L. Gettins for surveying the plan.

The site is on a small hill 50 yards south-west of Bicknell Farm, which is half a mile to the north of Butcombe Church. The barrow lies 20-30 ft. above the 500-ft. contour, on the south edge of the high ground around Broadfield Down, between the Mendips and Bristol. It is on the boundary between the parishes of Butcombe and Nempnett Thrubwell, and the boundary also passes through Fairy Toot, a ruined long barrow to the south-east. The strata underlying the site are of Lias origin, which here takes the form of grey-blue crystalline slabs interspersed with bluish clay. They lie here directly on the carboniferous limestone.

The barrow, T.40, is a roughly circular flat-topped mound about 80 ft. in diameter and 3-4 ft. high (*Fig. 20*). Around its southern half runs a hedge of trees and bushes, the roots of which have considerably disturbed this part of the mound. Twenty yards to the west of the mound is the edge of an old quarry, now grass covered. On the north and east sides of the mound there appears to be a slight ditch. Before excavation the top



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Fig. 20.

of the mound appeared uneven as if it had been disturbed. The mound was first recorded by Tratman when it was given the catalogue number of T40 (Tratman, 1926 B).

### METHOD OF EXCAVATION

A trench 5 ft. wide was cut from the south in the tree-disturbed area and extended by removal of natural layers through the highest part of the mound, which is some 6 ft. west of the centre. A large central pit, 13 ft. across, was soon evident in the central area, where the clay (layer B) was looser and disturbed. In the course of digging this trench, the side of a small cairn was exposed in its east side, and a cut was made above the cairn 6 × 5 ft. This was removed in natural layers until the whole of the cairn was exposed. Both these trenches were excavated down to natural soil.

### STRATIFICATION AND INTERPRETATION

(*Fig. 20*)

A. Reddish-brown soil : post mediæval. At its base was a slightly darker soil from which came most of the mediæval material ; this darker soil was not seen over the central pit.

B. Mixed blue and yellow clay and soil : mediæval make up derived from the pit and elsewhere.

C. Red clayey soil : post-barrow, pre-windmill. This is cut away by the south side of the central pit.

D. Lias slabs : capping of barrow, 3-4 layers thick.

E. Red-brown clayey soil as C : body of barrow, slightly charcoal flecked.

F. Red clayey soil, as C, north side only : pre-barrow soil merging to south with the material of the barrow. Most of the prehistoric material came from this layer both under and to the north and south of the barrow. The Roman potsherd also came from this layer south of the barrow.

G. Blue-green clay : natural, with H, Lias slabs under : natural bedrock.

The central pit was about 4 ft. deep and appeared to be cross-shaped as shown by the dotted lines in the plan (*Fig. 20*). On the west side of the trench was an undisturbed patch of red soil extending upwards to the level of the Lias slabs (layer D) and this is interpreted as an undisturbed part of the barrow, without any Lias capping, between the north-west and south-west arms of the cross. The pit was filled with disturbed clay similar to layer B, and at its base in the north section were the remains of a large piece of timber. In the upper part of the pit filling were found fragments of mill-stones. It is suggested that the pit held the cross-trees for the foundation

of a sunken-post mill, which was partially robbed out when the structure was destroyed.

The cairn was 12 ft. south of the pit. The bed-rock had been broken up and made into a small rough cairn about 1 ft. high; the top of this extended a few inches above the natural clay, layer G. It contained only a trace of charcoal and a small sliver of bone.

### CONCLUSIONS

The pre-mediæval layers clearly represent an earlier structure, which appears to be a mound of soil capped with a layer of Lias slabs. It seems likely that this was a barrow about 40 ft. in diameter, and that the cairn might have held the primary interment, perhaps disintegrated or merely a token one. A probable date for this is suggested by the pottery in the old soil level under it and on either side. Mr. ApSimon considers the pottery to have Iron Age A affinities.\* A single rim is of late Roman date. A secondary structure was built in the thirteenth century. The probably cross-shaped pit and the fragments of millstones point to this having been a windmill of sunken-post type.† The mill was roofed with sandstone tiles but the only other remains of the superstructure found were numerous iron nails. The mill presumably collapsed or was destroyed, the only signs of fire being scorch marks on one of the millstone fragments. The mediæval pottery found includes a high proportion of glazed jugs, perhaps owned by the Cistercian monks of Butcombe Court, a mile to the north (Rutter, 1828). A full interpretation of the structures found will be possible only if and when a complete excavation is undertaken.

### THE FINDS

By

A. M. APSIMON

(*Fig. 21, Nos. 9-14*)

The fragmentary state of the relatively small quantity of material available makes certainty in classification very difficult. That of the pottery has, in the absence of characteristic forms and ornament, had to be based largely upon fabric. The pitfalls inherent in this approach cannot be stressed too often and therefore the opinions expressed are to be treated as no more than tentative in the hope that further material will one day be made available.

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\* Few barrows of this period are yet known in the Bristol district. One on King's Weston Down, west of Bristol, yielded Iron Age A sherds (Tratman, 1926 A) and secondary interments of similar date are recorded from the North Barrow, Tynning's Farm, Mendip (Taylor, 1933).

† See Wailes, 1954, for sunken-post mills. An example has recently been excavated at Lampport, Northants, and comparative details of others are given in the report (Posnansky, 1956).

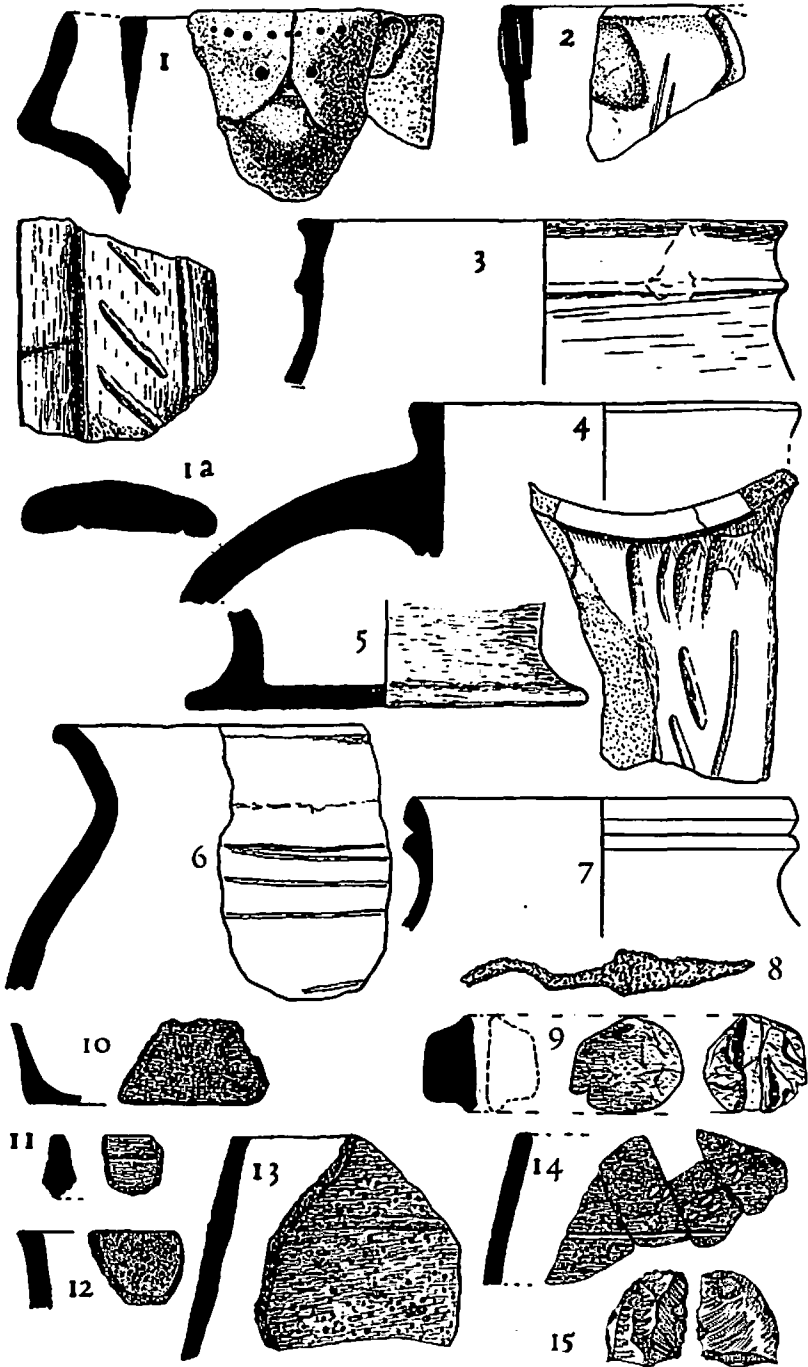


Fig. 21.—Sc.  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Pottery and other objects.

The yellow clay spindle whorl, split down the axis of the perforation, is of a type familiar from earliest Iron Age times, occurring at All Cannings Cross and at the Lake Villages of Somerset (No. 9).

The pottery falls into two groups. The first, 1, 2 (a), 4 and 16 (a) of the list below, is more or less identical with that of other Iron Age A groups from the Chew Valley, notably Chew Park Farm, Burlledge Camp and Stanton Wick (see *Chew Valley Lake Report* to be published by H.M.S.O.). The second group, 2(b), 3, 9-15, 16 (b), is less easy to place; very similar finger-printed cordons, and panels filled with impressed patterns do appear on Iron Age A pottery, perhaps most notably on sites of the All Cannings Cross group. Sherds 5-8 could belong to either group.

#### SCHEDULE OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY

1. Five sherds of grey, "dry" ware with some fine shell and stone grits, surface buffish in colour. The fractures are rather abraded.
- 2(a). Three fragments of black ware with reddish buff outside, (b) two small sherds of fine grey-black shelly ware, with smooth soapy brown outside.
3. Three sherds of hard flint-gritted ware, inside black, outside brick red.\*
4. Three sherds of grey ware as in 1. Only the outside is reddish buff to buff.
5. Sherd of base and lower wall of black ware with remains of brownish-buff surfaces, which are pitted where grit has weathered out. (No. 10.)
6. Two abraded fragments, one soapy with smooth, red outside and brown inside, the other orange-reddish and pitted inside.
7. Fragments of narrow, flat-topped rim of soapy ware with a traced line on the outside just below the rim. (No. 11.)
8. Rim sherd of black ware (cf. 5), flat-topped rim. (No. 12.)
9. Sherd of hard, flint-gritted ware.
10. Sherd of hard, black, flint-gritted ware (cf. 9), outside light brownish slip.
11. Sherd of hard, well-baked, grey ware, pitted where grits have weathered out. Faint, impressed horizontal groove on outer surface. Part of a vessel with expanding sides. (No. 13.)
12. Two sherds of hard grey ware with some brownish tinge on the outer surface (cf. 11), each decorated with raised, horizontal cordon bearing a chain of oval finger marks. Not from the same pot as the thickness of the sherd and the size of the cordons varies slightly.
13. Six dark, grey-brown sherds, one with brown surfaces, the remainder more or less abraded.
14. Four sherds, all fitting together, of fine, grey ware with finely pitted light brownish inside. Outside decorated with shallow impressed line of paired finger impressions. (No. 14.)
15. Sherd broken into four fragments of hard but friable dark brown ware; the outside is yellowish buff, the surfaces are pitted where grits have weathered out and the fresh fractures show an irregular shaly appearance.
16. A collection of 50-60 miscellaneous sherds. These may be divided into two main groups. (a) About 20 sherds of grey ware with buff outside generally similar to 1, 2 (a) and 4. (b) A roughly equal number of sherds of reddish brown to dark grey-brown ware, with brownish inside and brown to reddish-brown-buff outside. Generally more soapy to the touch than the former and more deeply pitted by loss of grits.

Finally, there are half a dozen harder, more gritty fragments, one rather like 10. A minute fragment suggests in appearance and texture Romano-British coarse ware but is too small for certainty.

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\* It is just possible that this ware may be Neolithic.

The Roman (No. 7) sherd is part of a double-rimmed jug or jar in soft, fine, grey fabric. It is a common local type in the late third–mid-fourth centuries A.D., and is especially characteristic of the Pagans' Hill Well, a few miles to the east of Butcombe (Rahtz and Harris, 1957).

The animal remains have been examined by Dr. J. W. Jackson and have been found to include the following. Ox, fragments of ulna, mandible, vertebræ, ribs, and teeth; sheep, several teeth; pig, fragment of a canine tooth; red deer, the butt end of a shed antler and antler chips.

The flints number 34. Twenty-six of these, some unpatinated, were found in the mediæval level and it seems unlikely that all were derived from the prehistoric levels. They are characterless and most likely to have been used in roughening the millstones. Of those eight patinated found in layer F only one is a worked flake, probably part of a knife (No. 15).

The mediæval finds other than pottery include 140 iron objects, a small piece of lead spilled in the molten state, a dozen fragments of Old Red Sandstone roof tiles, and 6 fragments of three millstones. These are of Old Red Sandstone with quartzite pebbles, obtainable from the Mendips and common on all local sites, Roman and mediæval. The largest millstone was originally about 4 ft. in diameter and 4 in. thick and is fire scorched. The iron objects include 52 1-in. nails with large round flat heads, 19 1½-in. nails with small squarish heads, 13 ½-in. nails and 42 fragments of nails or headless nails. In addition there were 4 other iron objects of which one is probably a latch lifter (No. 8), and 10 shapeless lumps.

### THE MEDIÆVAL POTTERY

Mr. E. M. Jope, M.A., F.S.A., has kindly examined the mediæval pottery and the following notes are based on his suggestions. There are about 250 sherds, of which 189 are glazed and 6 are described and figured. Most of them are from jugs with a patchy green or yellow glaze; there are only about a dozen sherds of cooking pots, and these are of thin, hard wares consistent in date with the thirteenth-century jugs, though one sherd of corky, soapy ware might be earlier. The Chew Valley Lake series are referred to as C.V.L. (*Chew Valley Lake Report*).

### SCHEDULE OF FIGURED SHERDS

(Fig. 21, Nos. 1-6)

1 and 1 (a). Bridge spout with face. Handle and rim sherds of same vessel, soft, sandy-pink with grey core and red patches round "eyes". C.V.L. fabric 15 (cf. O'Neil, White Castle, late thirteenth-century date).

2. Rim sherd of bridge-spouted jug with applied pad; fabric as in 1, but pad bright red so that glaze on pad appears brownish. C.V.L. fabric 13 G (cf. Pagans' Hill, near middle of thirteenth century, Rahtz, 1951).

3. Rim sherd of jug, medium hard grey with mauve-pink interior surface and patchy green glaze. C.V.L. fabric 14 A, thirteenth century.

4. Rim and handle sherds of jug, hard cream with grey core, light green exterior glaze. C.V.L. fabric 13 G, thirteenth century.
5. Base sherd, medium-hard, grey, with good olive green exterior glaze ; pushed-out bases such as this could be of fourteenth-century date.
6. Rim and shoulder sherds of cooking pot, sandy grey with orange buff surfaces. C.V.L. fabric 7, thirteenth century.

The pottery, save for two sherds, is of thirteenth-century date. There can be little doubt that the *floruit* of the mill was sometime in the thirteenth century A.D. A more exact dating is not possible on the present evidence.

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