

A LARGE BRONZE AGE COLLARED URN FOUND AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL OVENDEN NEAR HALIFAX, WEST YORKSHIRE

By Raymond Varley



The Large Bronze Age Collared Urn from Ovenden on display at the Tolson Memorial Museum, Huddersfield July 2021.

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Summary

In 1877, a large Bronze Age Collared Urn containing cremation remains was found in a stone cist by a labourer digging a grave in the grounds of Mount Zion Chapel. It was subsequently placed on display in the museum of the Halifax Literary & Philosophical Society. The urn was later donated to Bankfield Museum, Halifax and is now on loan to the Tolson Memorial Museum, Huddersfield where it is on display.

Archaeological Background

The location of the discovery of this large Bronze Age Collared Urn was sited at Ogden by Watson¹ in 1952 followed by the writer² in a summary of the urn in 1968. Ling Roth³ reports that the urn was discovered in February 1877 by a grave digger in the grounds of Mount Zion Chapel, Ovenden. Jas Davis also gives an account of a large urn containing cremation remains discovered about a year prior to 1879⁴. He records that the urn was found “in making an extension of the burial ground of St. John’s Church, above Mixenden, a few yards beyond the boundary wall”. The measurements and description of the urn, which “was placed with the mouth downwards on a slab of stone” and “the base is very narrow, and not being broad enough to support the urn” is identical to the one found at Mount Zion Chapel. Furthermore, he reports that the urn was in 1879 on display in the Museum of the Halifax Literary & Philosophical Society, therefore it is very probable that the Mount Zion Chapel urn and the St. John’s Church urn are the same. St. John’s Church is situated 1.3 kilometres north-east of Mount Zion Chapel at Bradshaw (Figure 1).

The Halifax Literary & Philosophical Society was established in September 1830, their headquarters and museum were housed in the New Assembly and Concert Rooms on Harrison Lane in Halifax⁵. In the beginning, the museum was very successful but by 1895 it had declined. A decision was then taken to close the museum and donate the exhibits to the newly opened Bankfield Museum, Halifax⁶. The New Assembly and Concert Rooms were demolished in 1898 to make way for police and court buildings.

Site Location

Mount Zion is a Methodist Chapel⁷ with a Sunday school and is now surrounded by a large burial ground (Figures 1 and 2). The chapel O.S. Grid reference SE 068297 is situated further back from Per Lane at an altitude of about 305 metres O.D. It is 1.4 kilometres south-west of Ogden, 2 kilometres north-west of Illingworth, 3 kilometres north-west of Ovenden and 6 kilometres north-west of Halifax. When the urn was reported by Ling Roth in 1906⁸ Mount Zion Chapel came under the township of Ovenden, today the area incorporates Ogden, Illingworth, Ovenden and Mixenden within the Metropolitan Borough of Calderdale. The immediate surrounding area is agricultural land (Figure 2) with a large urban expansion of housing estates to the south-east at Illingworth (Figure 1). To the west runs the Hebble Brook which meanders south-east both under and above ground through Halifax and is one of many tributaries that feed the Rive Calder into which it flows near Exley. There are also several various small springs that rise in the vicinity. To the north-west are interrupted views over Ovenden Moor where a Roman Road runs over Hunter Hill⁹. Also, an important enclosure site, (Figures 1 and 10) which could have its origins in the Bronze Age¹⁰, lies at the top of the incline on the Moor. The natural topography of the area has revealed prehistoric remains (Figure 9) of stone¹¹ and flint implements¹², bronze axes¹³ and pottery¹⁴ the majority of which have been recovered accidentally during quarrying operations or as surface finds.

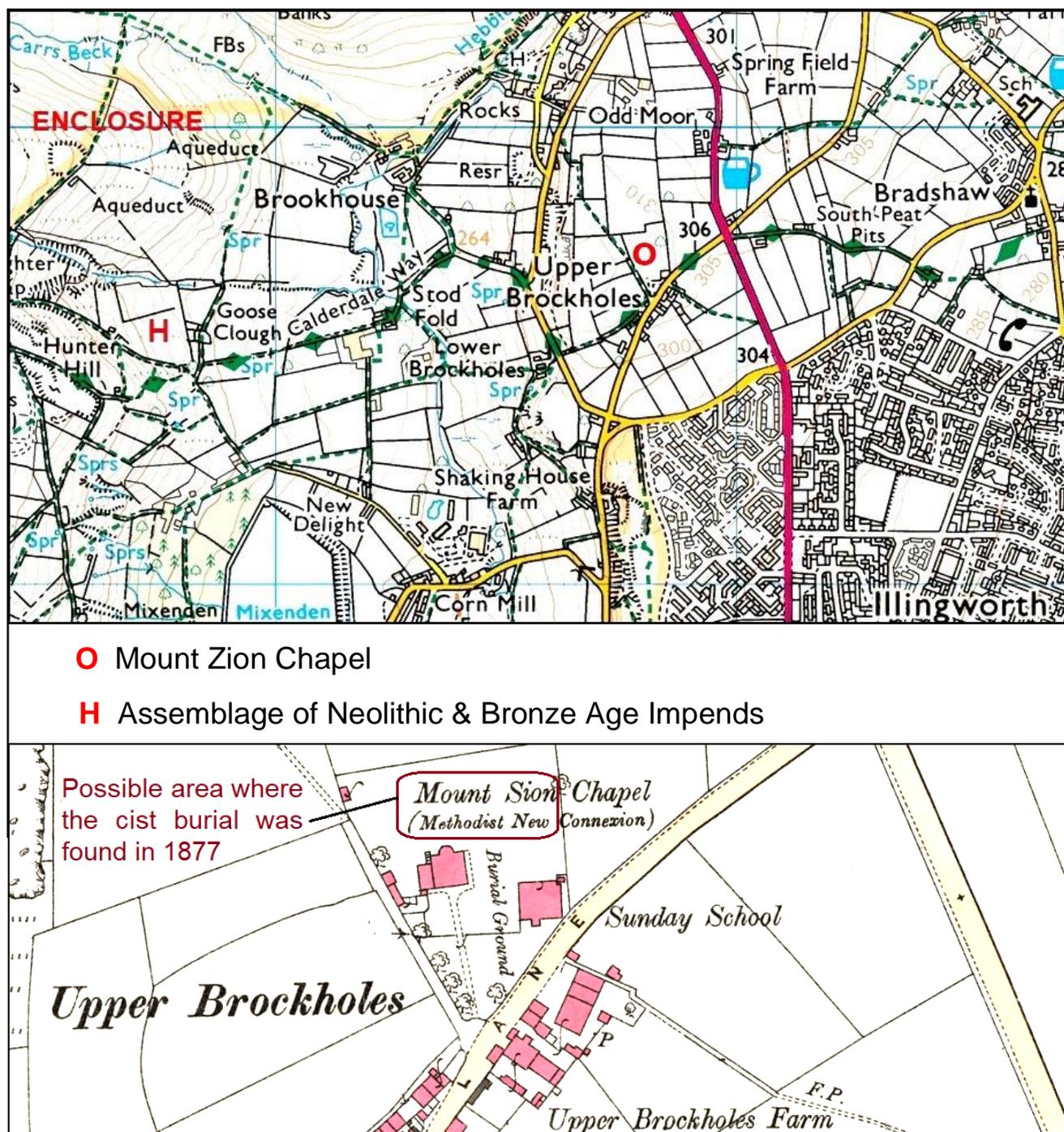


Figure 1. Top: Location map of Mount Zion Chapel with the surrounding topography. Below is a detailed map illustrating the possible location where the cist burial was found in 1877 from the OS 25-inch map of 1894.

The 1877 Investigations

Like many other prehistoric sites and finds made in the Halifax district, this burial was found quite by chance in February 1877. A brief account of the discovery and a report on the cremation remains by Dr Dolan was reported by H. Ling Roth in 1906¹⁵. However, the full report is published in the Halifax Literary & Philosophical Society's Annual Report for 1878¹⁶ which begins -

“The Curators of this Section have to record that a large and valuable cinerary urn has been added to the Society's Collection of primaeval sepulchral remains, already rich in relics of times anterior to the Roman invasion. The urn was found in digging a grave in the new part of the Cemetery, at Mount Zion Chapel (Figure 1), in the township of Ovenden. It is of a size not often met with, as the generality of these sepulchral urns are usually designed for the ashes of one person, while that under notice is large enough to hold the relics of several.

On digging about two feet below the surface of the ground, a slab of stone impeded the work, and on its removal, a square cavity, formed of four upright stones, was discovered, in which the urn had been placed, bottom upwards, and the mausoleum filled with gravel—probably that from which the calcined bones of the dead had been separated after the work of cremation was completed. Curiosity, and the hope of hidden treasure, impelled the grave-digger to strike his mattock through the unbaked and perishable material of sunburnt clay of which the urn was made, and the exuviae of some primeval inhabitants of the district, who perhaps perished in plague or pestilence, or were slain in some unrecorded fray in these wild places, were brought to light, it may be, after a lapse of two thousand years. On the discovery being noised abroad, many of the inhabitants visited the spot, and a quantity of the bones were taken away to be hoarded in private collections. The Urn has not been disturbed since its removal from its site, but still remains on its original base, a rude stone which formed the floor of its ancient sepulchre. The Urn measured when first uncovered, nineteen inches in height, by thirteen in diameter at its orifice, but only four inches at its base. Below its rim, it has the usual curved division, which is here ornamented with dots made with a pointed instrument when the clay was in a soft state. There can be little doubt that potteries existed in those distant times, even in our own neighbourhood, in places where clay abounded, which supplied the Brigantes with the household vessels often found in their graves. There can be as little doubt that cinerary urns were kept in stock by the potters, for sudden emergencies, and of various sizes for varied requirements.

Dr Dolan has kindly examined the bones still remaining in the Urn. He says:

“The bones have evidently been submitted to an intense heat, as they are in a calcined condition, and broken up into fragments; but from them, it would be possible to construct almost an entire skeleton. I have arrived at the conclusion that the bones are human. There is unmistakable evidence on this point from some of the bones of the skull, particularly from the preserved portions of the petrous part of the temporal bone showing meatus auditorius, from the right malar bone, and from fragments of the flat bones of the cranium. The teeth offer confirmatory evidence. I have found several which had evidently been subjected to great heat, as they were completely calcined. But there was one which had been only partially burnt, the burnt part being quite black; and another, unburnt, which seems to have dropped from the jaw before the fire had reached it. One of the teeth seems to me to have been “stopped,” and this opens out a question whether the art of dentistry was known to the inhabitants before the Roman Invasion. From the size and structure of the bones, I believe the majority of them to have belonged to a female of adult age. There are certain bones, particularly some phalanges, which seem to me to be those of a child. As we do not, however, possess the whole of the original contents of the Urn, — much having been extracted from it on its discovery,—there may probably have been, when first interred, the relics of others than those we at present possess.”

The thanks of the Society are due to Dr Dolan for his careful and scientific analysis of the bones, and for the additional interest, he has thus thrown around this relic of primeval times.

Portions of the bones, and several teeth, have been fixed upon a card and named, in order that all interested in the science of ethnology may the more easily acquire such information as they may afford.

This interesting remain was found in February of 1877 and has been presented to the Society by Mr. F. A. Leyland.” - This concludes the full account in the Society’s Annual Report.

Interpretation of the Discovery

This full report appears to provide evidence for a cist burial constructed of four upright stone slabs, presumably, they were in *situ* on discovery forming an internal space. No attention was paid to the surfaces of the stone slabs to determine if they had been decorated in any way. After the capstone was removed revealing a large inverted urn placed in the centre, the first thought of the labour was to smash it open in the optimism that the urn contained valuables, if it did the finds were not reported. Fortunately, the labour only damaged part of one side of the large urn (Figure 4) which left it exposed. Consequently, a large part of the cremation remains were removed by local people who came to see the discovery. Apparently, the large inverted urn was placed in the centre of the cist packed around with gravel. The discovery was then reported to someone in authority who noted that the urn had not been disturbed in any way since it was deposited and remained on its original stone base floor (Figure 4). This observation was made after the square internal space was cleared and the urn removed.

Figure 2. Google map showing Mount Zion Chapel situated further back from Per Lane, with a large crowded Burial Ground and the surrounding agricultural landscape.



Figure 3. The reconstructed Collared Urn currently on display at the Tolson Memorial Museum, Huddersfield.

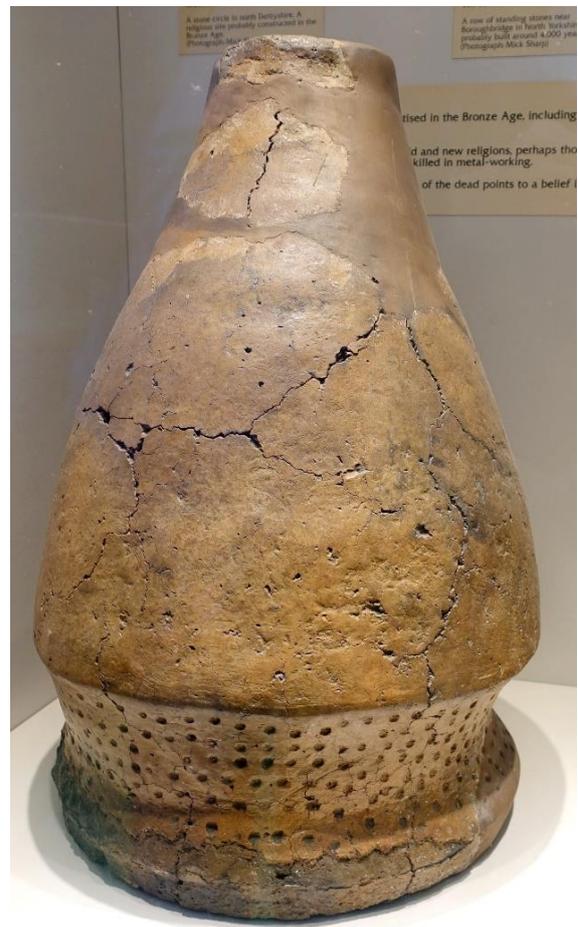


Figure 4. The Bronze Age Collared Urn from Ovenden on display at Bankfield Museum, Halifax in 1906. The urn is inverted on the original stone base and is broken on one side.

The cist floor comprised of a flat stone, sunk into the pit in the ground and was designed to contain the large urn which was packed round and filled with gravel from the cist pit. There is no archaeological evidence that the cist had a burial mound. In all probability it was a simple flat grave, unmarked when discovered, though perhaps covered originally by a low mound which had been removed during digging activities by labourers in the burial ground.

Unfortunately, the Mount Zion Chapel burial records, prior to 1887 are lost and only the graves whose inscriptions can be read before this year have been recorded on the database¹⁷. Of these, only a few were first burials in the grave dug in 1877. Although the actual grave that was dug in 1877 where the cist burial was found cannot be identified, the general area can be deduced in the then-new part of the cemetery situated at the rear of the chapel that was first built in 1773 (Figure 1).

The Large Collared Urn and its Contents

The urn has been completely restored to its original condition (Figures 3 and 5). It is 54.3 cm high, 33 cm diameter rim and 10.2 cm diameter base (Figure 7). The fabric is rather hard and varies in colour on the exterior from buff-brown to dark brown with grey and slight orange patches. The interior is dark grey with darker buff-brown patches with traces of a thin layer of carbon towards the base, and the core is black-tempered with quartz grains. Both interior surfaces are smooth apart from occasional grit particles which protrude through the surface. The urn is decorated on the neck with shallow impressions of jabs (Figure 6) irregularly placed in rows of about 9 cm in diameter applied and executed with the end of a broken stick when the clay was soft.

Bankfield Museum's Registration number A.H.54.



Figure 5. A detailed photograph of the Large Bronze Age Collared Urn from Ovenden.



Figure 6. This coloured photograph shows the detailed decoration on the neck of the Collared Urn with irregularly placed in rows of shallow impressions of circumferential jabs.

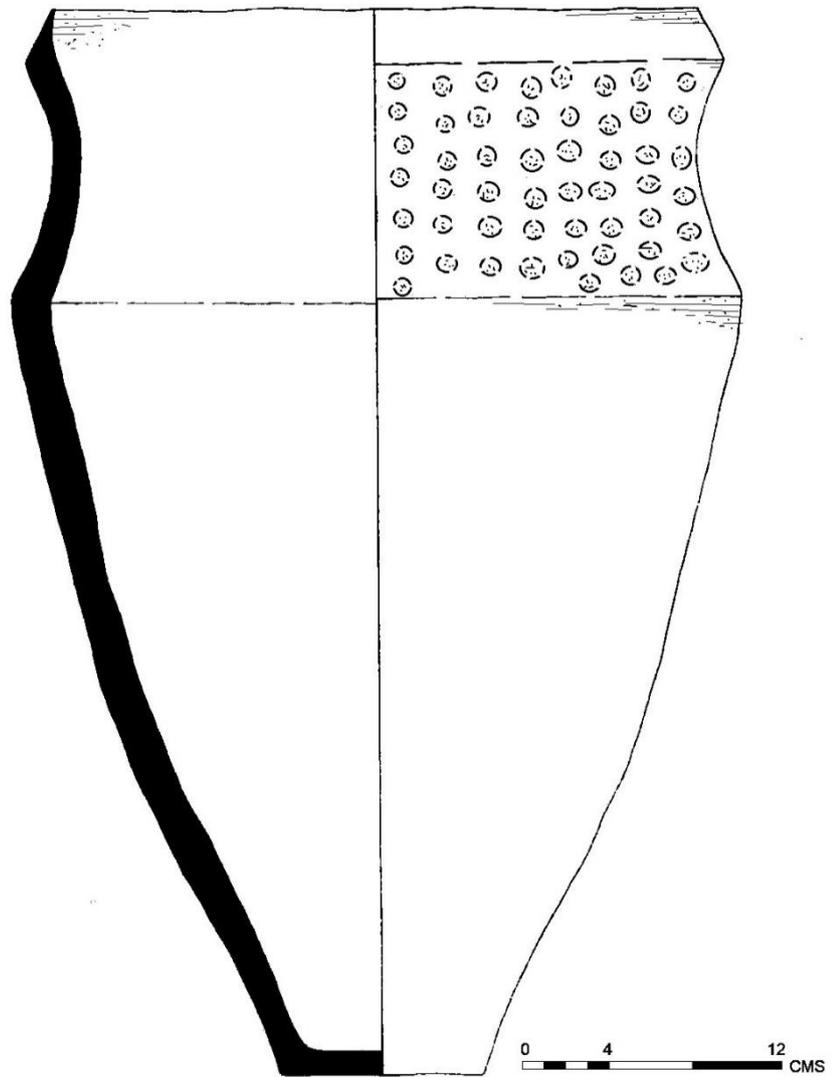


Figure 7. Drawing of the large Collared Urn found at Ovenden in 1877.

The large Collared Urn, its contents and the original stone base was removed to the Museum of the Halifax Literary & Philosophical Society and put on display. The cremation remains from the urn were then scientifically analysed by Dr Dolan¹⁸ which he found to be human. There is no mention of grave goods or other finds associated with the cremation remains within the urn. Also, a large part of the cremation remains was removed from the urn when it was first discovered. However, Dr Dolan was able to determine that most of the remains were those of an adult female. A few were of a child, but he was unable to conclude the sex or its age. It was also not possible to determine from the cremation remains the number of individuals it originally contained. Intriguingly it seems that Dr Dolan found some evidence of prehistoric dental practice to one tooth which appears to have been ‘stopped’.

Some of these bones, and several teeth, were mounted on card, unfortunately, these seem to be missing. The writer could not locate them when making an inventory of the archaeological collection in Bankfield Museum in 1969. They are now lost and not available for further analysis so we will never know if the tooth was ‘stopped’.

Ling Roth illustrates a small piece of bone¹⁹ found at the site but not in the Collared Urn, this bone is also now lost. It appears to have two bored holes and is probably a pommel for a knife (Figure 8) which was probably placed in the cist alongside the urn. Although grave goods are usually found in the urn with the cremations, it is likely to have belonged to the adult female.

Figure 8. Illustration of a small piece of bone found in the cist, now lost. (after Ling Roth)



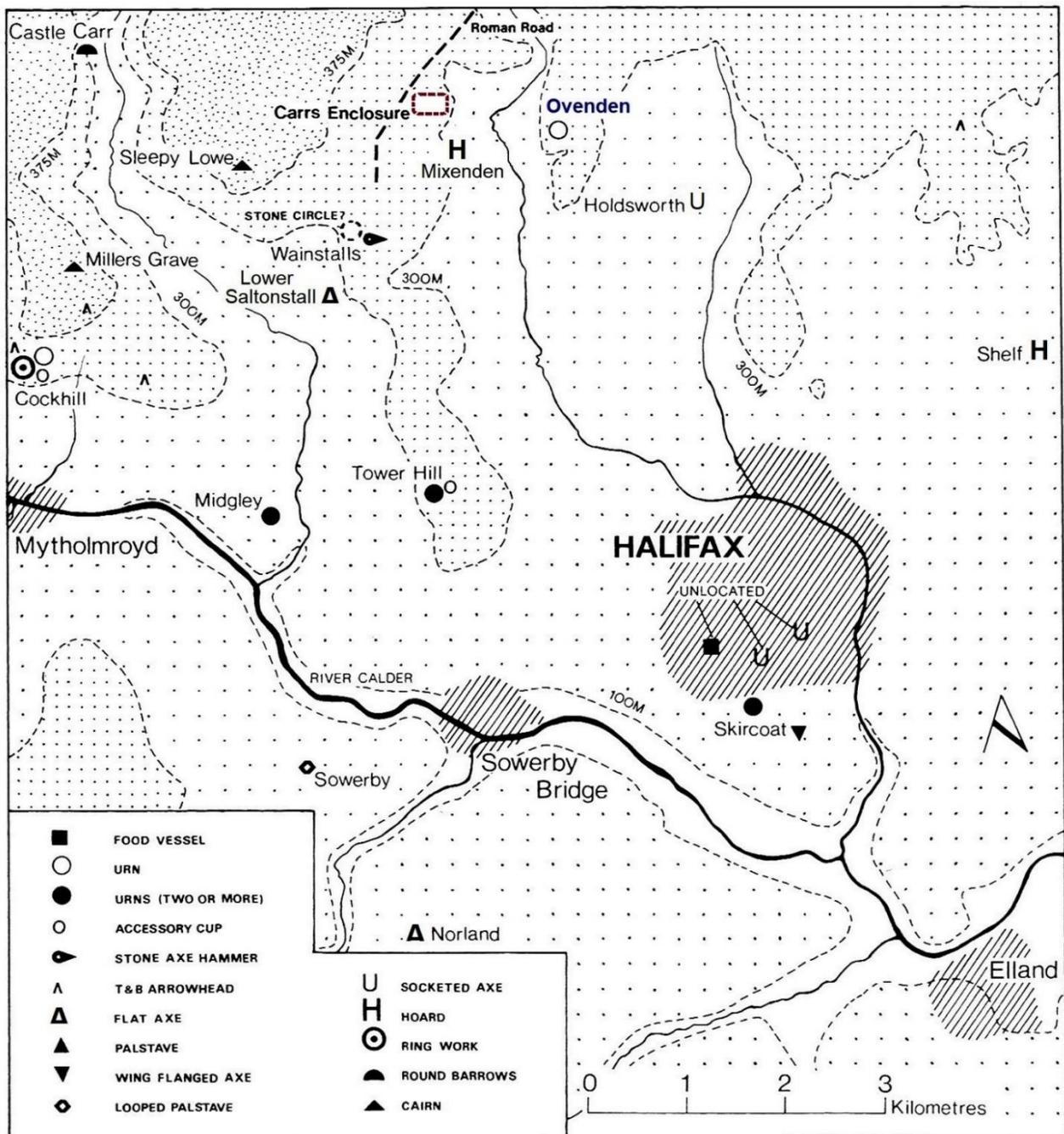


Figure 9. Location map illustrating the site of the Ovenden Collared Urn with the distribution of Bronze Age finds in the area of Calderdale.

Discussion

The Stone Cist

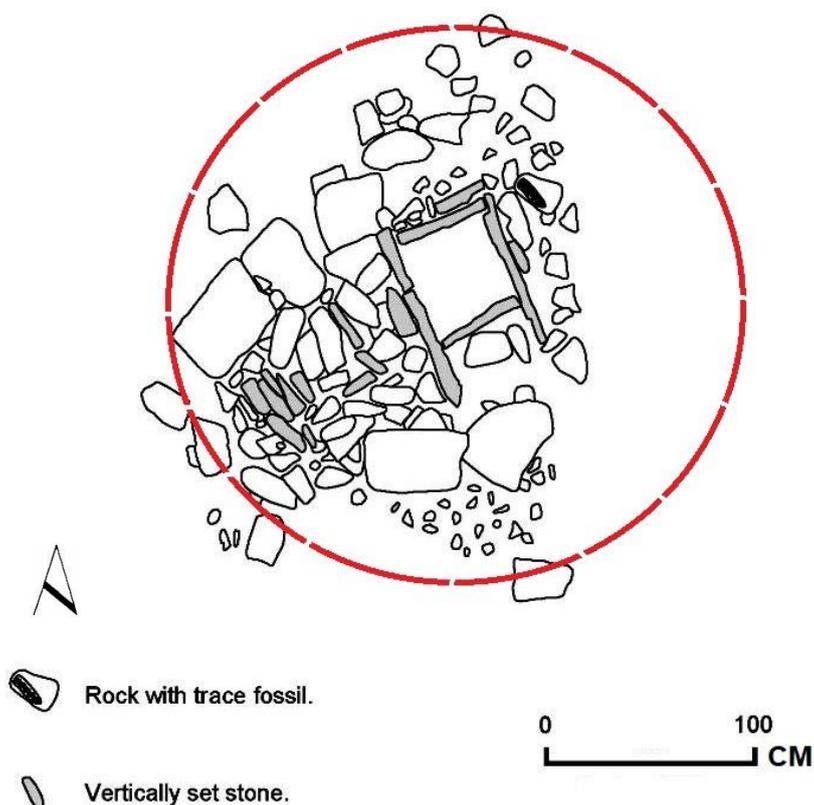
The large Collared Urn found at Mount Zion Chapel, Ovenden was presented to the Halifax Literary & Philosophical Society in 1878 by F. A. Leyland. It was probably Leyland who was informed of its discovery, being a well-known Halifax Antiquary. Leyland²⁰ was a prominent member, and one of the archaeological curators of the Halifax Literary & Philosophical Society's Museum, besides which in 1867 he had written the additions and corrections to John Watson's *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Halifax of 1775*. The Mount Zion Chapel Collared Urn was found after his additions to Watson's book.

The only measurement given is for the depth of the capstone which was found about 2 feet. (61 cm) below the surface of the ground. This may indicate that the stone cist was originally covered by a low earthen mound. The dimensions of the cist were at the time not recorded, however, considering the size of the urn and that the cist was small and square in size, hypothetically it could have measured approximately 0.9 meter square with a depth of about 1 meter contained within a small close-fitting construction pit. The floor was of a stone slab upon which had been placed the inverted urn in the centre.

The remains of a cairn containing a stone cist have recently been discovered at Ringstone Edge Reservoir, near Barkisland to the north-west of the Ovenden stone cist. It was found when the water level was unusually low in 2014 which exposed a stone cairn on the east shore SE 05089 18246²¹. The stone-built cairn had a diameter of about 3.4 meters and the well-preserved exposed stone cist was approximately at the centre with a missing capstone (Figure. 10). The stone cist was almost square 50 cm long by 46 cm, with vertical stone sides of 20 cm by 30 cm. No single capstone was found, however, two slabs were located that may have covered the cist (Figure 11). The cist did not contain a burial or any graded goods, if it originally did they would have been washed away long ago by the water of the reservoir. This stone cist found at Ringstone Edge Reservoir can perhaps be compared with the one found at Ovenden which gives an idea of its construction, which was built to contain a large Bronze Age Collared Urn.



Figure 10. Remains of the Stone Cairn and exposed Stone Cist on the east shore of Ringstone Edge Reservoir (Photograph David Shepherd)



Not far away from this cist to the south-west on Ringstone Edge Moor near Barkisland, another stone cist was excavated in the 'Ring of Stone' SE 043184. A stone circle is shown for this site on the Ordnance Survey maps, which indeed it was up until the mid-nineteenth century when the stones which made up the circle were removed in an attempt to cultivate the moorland. It was excavated by Mr A. T. Longbotham in 1905²²; the centre of the mound was avoided which had been dug into many years previously. A stone cist containing an urn was discovered to south-west of the centre of the circle. The cist was originally made of two sides of upright stones with a flat stone on top, but at some time one of the supporting stones and subsequently the capstone had fallen. The result of this cave-in was that the urn had been knocked onto its side and the cist was filled with earth.

Figure 11. Modified plan of the Cist (after D. Shepherd and F. Jolley)

On excavation, the urn was found to be rather 'soft' and could not be removed completely. The fragments of the urn from the cist were in the possession of Longbotham in 1932 but are now presumed lost. No plans were made of the excavation or the cist.

About five very badly and almost destroyed stone cists are recorded in the Blackheath Ringwork (Figure 13) at Todmorden SD 94332543²³ to the north-west of the Ovenden cist. It would appear that a deep plough passing over them first dislodged the capstones and then pushed over the upright standing stones smashing the pottery vessels they contained. One cist was formed of flat upright stones arranged in a rectangle and contained two upright Collared Urns. The cist, was probably about 95 cm long by 80 cm wide with a depth of about 40 cm. A photograph (Figure. 12) was taken of the urns in this cist after the stone slabs had been removed.

The stone slabs that formed another cist had been arranged in a rectangle and probably included five upright stones on the north side and four upright stones on the south side. A large flat stone was discovered just to the east, which probably represented the capstone of the cist. The stones of this cist on excavation were found to be inclining at an angle of about 45 degrees presumably pushed in this position by the plough which completely destroyed the pottery vessel or vessels it contained has numerous fragments of disintegrated and crushed pottery were found both inside and outside the cist area. The Collared Urns from the Blackheath Ringwork are typical 'Pennine Urns', a form distinguished by Dr W. J. Varley FSA in 1938 for urns comparable to those from the Bleasdale Circle Lancashire²⁴. The construction of the Blackheath Ringwork was a complex procedure, and if the site had been first occupied the time lag between occupation and use as a burial ground may not have been very long. The Blackheath Ringwork can be dated to about 1960-1750 cal. BC in the very early period of the Early Bronze Age.

The urns found in the stone cists at the Blackheath Ringwork and the Large Collared Urn found in the Ovenden stone cist are the only ones to have survived from the cist burials in this part of Calderdale.

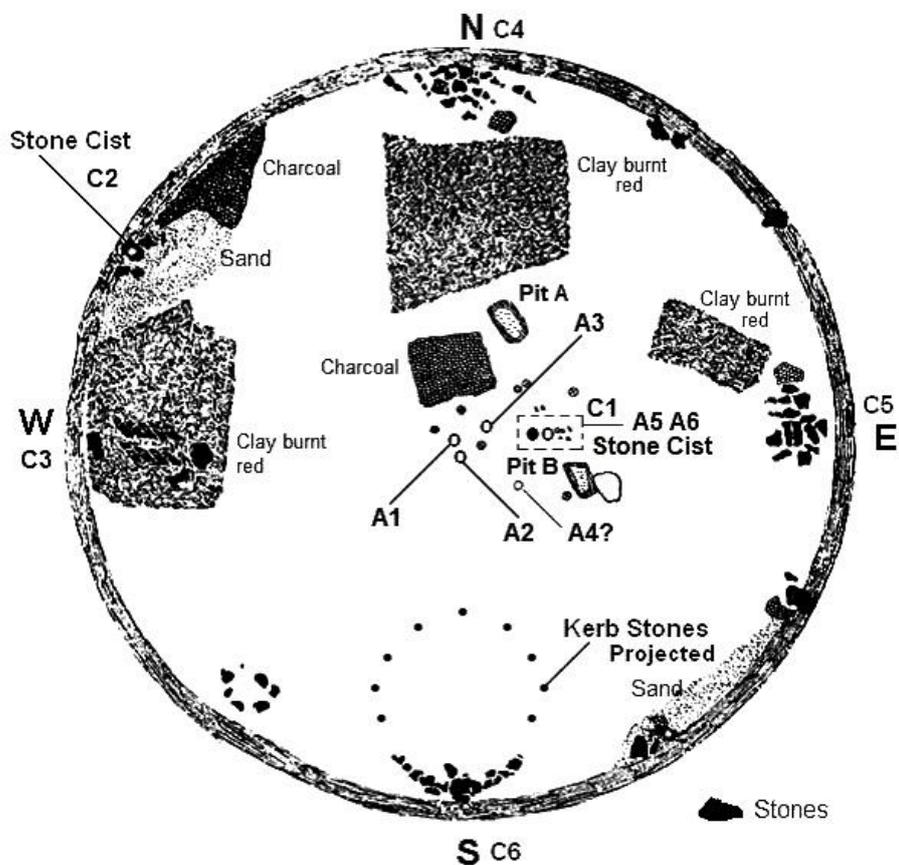


Figure. 12. This photograph was taken after the stone slabs of Cist 1 had been removed and the earth was cleared, but not completely around the two Collared Urns (A5 and A6) that were found in situ. Photograph by Mr J. T. Binnes of Todmorden

Figure 13. Modified plan of the 1898 excavation by J Lawson Russell, identified urns have been added to the plan with the letter A and stone cists with the letter C.

The Large Collared Urn

The Ovenden urn was specifically made to contain cremations and is one of the largest Collared Urns recorded, having a capacity far greater than necessary to hold the average Bronze Age cremation. The making of such a very large urn would require considerable skill in potting, firing and general handling. Grit was first mixed into the clay to give it strength, then the urn was coil built on a prepared base, the surfaces were smoothed out by using a bone scraper or similar tools and then decoration was applied by using a broken stick end when the clay was soft. After drying out the pottery urn was put into the flames of the fire which would build up around the pottery urn turning the soggy clay into a solid pot. The hyphenated colours in the fabric descriptions indicate the colour variation expected from poorly controlled firing conditions.

This urn is assigned to Longworth's Primary Series Form 1A of Collared Urns based on a series of formal and decorative traits²⁵. He demonstrates that jabbed pits imprints found on the Primary Series had their ancestry in the Later Neolithic ceramic traditions of the Peterborough Culture²⁶.

The jab pits decoration on the neck of the Ovenden urn is comparable with Collared Urns from Lancaster Moor²⁷, North Newbald, East Yorkshire²⁸, and Westbourne, Sussex²⁹. All these urns are decorated with jabbed pit imprints made by the end of a stick on either the neck, collar or both and belong to the Primary Series In Yorkshire, the decoration of jabbed pit imprints on the Primary Series is a rare technique found on Collared Urns. The Ovenden urn possesses three of Longworth's traits making it early in the series. However, in 1986 Burgess³⁰ proposed an alternative typology consisting of a three-fold development for Collared Urns of Early, Middle and Late Groups. These two typologies for Collared Urns appear to fail in assisting a chronological framework for the British Early Bronze Age.

It is beyond the scope of this report to enter into a full discussion of the typology and chronology of Collared Urns. Needless to say, there is a considerable overlap of pottery types. It is highly likely that the next generation will study the Bronze Age in light of new progressive scientific techniques which will include DNA enabling the understanding of the movements of the Bronze Age people and tracking them throughout Britain in a nationwide network. Until then the Ovenden Collared Urn is reviewed here in current terms of conventional chronology of the Early Bronze Age with a date of about c.1600-1400 BC.

The Ovenden Cist and Urn in their Context

The location of the Ovenden cist in this vicinity of Calderdale is significant for the concentration of Bronze Age finds made since the late eighteenth century. The wide variety of finds mainly consists of artefacts, tools, ornaments, burial urns, and monuments such as stone circles and enclosures (Figure 9). Many were discovered as the result of stone quarrying, building and agriculture activities. It is difficult to assess the importance of the Ovenden cist burial, it may be an isolated find or related to a settlement in the nearby area.

There are no apparent archaeological features in the immediate vicinity of the cist and the only obvious occupation site in the locality is the Carrs Enclosure situated 1.3 kilometres north-west of the cist which could have its origins in the Bronze Age or earlier. It is named the Carrs being located on 'The Carrs' which forms part of Ovenden Moor and is marked on early Ordnance Survey maps of circa 1852 as a '*Roman Camp*' with the course of the Roman Road nearby (Figure 9).

The enclosure is situated on Ovenden Moor at 330 metres O.D which commands extensive views over the surrounding country. It is located near the probable course of the Roman road 720a³¹ which once linked the Roman Fort at Ilkley (Olicana)³² to the one at Manchester (Mamucium)³³ and is sub-rectangular in plan with a ditch all the way around (Figure 14). The enclosure is now badly mutilated by quarrying and is covered with thick tufty grass, which makes it difficult to see properly. It is best preserved on the northern side where the ditch can be clearly distinguished. There is no sign of any internal features such as hut circles, but the terrain is so difficult to ascertain this enclosure.

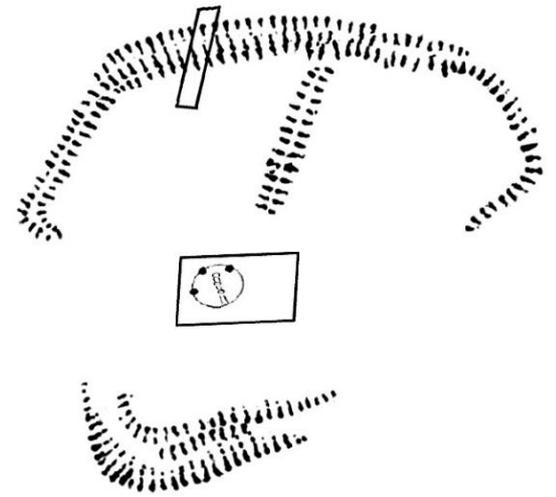


Figure 14. Left: Areal view of the Carrs Enclosure. Right: Plan of the Carrs Enclosure with a reconstruction of the 1951 archaeological excavations.

A trial excavation was undertaken on this enclosure in 1951 by the Halifax Antiquarian Society, but only a summary of the excavation is recorded³⁴. A long section was excavated through the north ditch which established the outer rampart to be constructed of dug-out earth and clay from the ditch, which was about 1.83 meters wide. The ditch was 2.25 meters wide, which had been cut into the rock face on the inner side to a depth of 2.06 meters. An area inside the enclosure was excavated on the west side.

Three postholes with packing stones were found in the central excavated area; these would have been the main upright interior timber posts that supported a structure of some kind, most probably a roundhouse. A channel covered in some places by flat stones ran through part of the area (Figure 14).

During the excavation of the central area shards of prehistoric pottery were found which were at the time described as 'Brigantine', indicating a later Bronze Age date for this wooden structure and possibly the enclosure. It is most unfortunate that they have since been lost as they would have helped to date this site. However, further investigations by the writer have discovered that the pottery shards belonged to a plain 'Late Bronze Age' bowl in a dark grey fabric. From this limited excavation we can perhaps conclude that the Carrs Enclosure was not an elaborate defence system, the excavated section consisted of only a simple constructed rampart of earth which could have had a timber palisade, although no evidence for one was found in the excavated section.

There was also no apparent evidence that the rampart bank had been revetted. The enclosure could have also been reused by the Romans as a temporary encampment while constructing the Roman road that runs nearby. Although no Roman remains were found during the 1951 excavation to substantiate that it was reused by the Romans. However, only a larger scientific archaeological excavation will resolve the nature and dating of the enclosure. At present we can only conjecture that the Carrs enclosure was a pastoral function, there is no evidence for a substantial fortifications. It also may be significant that a group of Bronze Age implements³⁵ including a bronze palstave axe were discovered near to this enclosure (Figure. 9).

Another so-called enclosure in the immediate vicinity must also be recorded, only to be dismissed as a possible Bronze Age settlement. It is located about 0.5 kilometres immediately south of the Carrs enclosure and only survives as a superficial outline of a curvaceous quadrilateral depression. The site is marked on earlier Ordnance Survey maps of circa 1852 as a circular outline and named 'Camp' underneath in brackets is written '(Portions of Gun barrels, Locks, Flints & etc. found here)'. It has been suggested that from its form it compares with other Iron Age enclosures. Apart from the late 17th century armoury finds, no other discoveries have been recorded at this site and no archaeological excavations have been carried out. The site was surveyed in the 1970s by the writer who concluded that an archaeological excavation would not be worthwhile, as what remained of the earthwork appeared to be modern features of about 1700 rather than prehistoric.

There are a number of isolated burial urns that have been recorded in this area of Calderdale, many were found casually. To the south two Collared Urns and an accessory cup with cremations were found at Tower Hill, Warley by quarrying and at Skircoat³⁶ three collared urns were found, one of which contained a cremation. At the head of Luddenden Dean, Midgley were found two urns in a field³⁷. Only one Food Vessel³⁸ has been discovered in Calderdale, but there is no site other than Halifax for this vessel and no burial associations.

These Bronze Age burial sites provide the most comprehensive evidence for some probable settlements in the area. These can also be associated with Bronze axes and spearheads, which have recently been reviewed by the writer in a study of the Bronze Age material from the Calder Valley³⁹. Most of these have been found throughout Calderdale, which come from surface finds and lacking in association with other cultural material.

Three individual simple flat axes have been found in the Calderdale area by chance at Hipperholme, Norland Town, and Saltonstall which cover a date span of about 2000-1700 BC. Two flanged axes have been recovered at Rishworth Moor, on Booth Moor, and recently at Heptonstall. Both axes have a widely splayed cutting edge and can probably be attributed to the metalworking period of 1550/1500-1400 BC.

An early palstave axe was discovered with stone and flint implements on Mixenden Moor in about 1776, these implements and the axe are now lost. Most recently another early palstave axe was found at Brighouse. These two palstave axes date to the middle part of the Bronze Age c. 1700-1400. A wing-flanged axe was found at Skircoat before 1775 which possibly dated to about 1400-1200 BC.

A tanged bronze knife with one rivet hole was found at Thief Clough on Rishworth Moor which may date to around 1400 BC. A looped palstave axe found in Sowerby the Shelf hoard and a large basal looped spear from Hoveringham Gravel Pit, Brighouse all dated to about 1000-800 BC. The Shelf hoard is well known in Calderdale and is an important industrial hoard containing palstaves and spearheads. This was probably a 'traders' hoard' because it contained unfinished and pristine implements.

Two socketed axes were also found in the parish of Halifax in about 1868, although the exact location is not known and the larger of the two axes is now lost and part of a socketed axe has been found at Holdsworth, these probably date to about 800-700 BC. The range of these bronze implements can be attributed to chronological phases as early as about 1500 BC to those as late as the eighth century BC. The combination of all these finds demonstrates that this area of Calderdale was occupied over a considerable time in the Bronze Age.

Conclusion

There is a wide range of evidence for Bronze Age burials, stray axes and other finds that support the growing view that Calderdale was occupied at various locations. Further evidence is supported by a stone axe-hammer found at Robin Hood's Penney stone Wainstalls⁴⁰ which is 2.5 kilometres south-west of the Ovenden cist and represents an isolated find dated to about 1650-1250 BC, which is a distinctive Early Bronze Age type. It is most unlikely to have been a weapon, weighing about 2.730 kilograms but employed as a handled wedge in splitting large timbers⁴¹, used in the felling of timbers⁴² or that it formed the point of a plough⁴³ and used in cultivation.

Also, Robin Hood's Penney Stone axe hammer was found in isolation in what probably would have been an arable area. This and the concentration of Bronze Age burials and isolated finds all indicate occupation which continued to increase throughout the Bronze Age in Calderdale, although the economic basis for occupation still remains unknown. In the Bronze Age, as in the Neolithic period, this region of Calderdale was almost universal forest cover; exceptions were at the highest and lowest altitudes.

The Ovenden urn found in the stone cist contained at least one female and a child, they may have belonged to a family group living in a settlement nearby that has not been identified or part of a Bronze Age community occupying the Carrs Enclosure high up on the exposed Ovenden Moor. The only dating evidence associated with the enclosure is pottery shards described as *Brigantine* indicating that the enclosure was occupied in the Later Bronze Age but could have its origins in the Early Bronze Age or earlier.

Acknowledgements

The writer would like to thank Mr. R. A. Innes late curator of Bankfield Museum, Halifax for permission to publish this account of the Ovenden Urn which was first undertaken when making an inventory of the archaeological collection in Bankfield Museum. To Anthony Greenwood, Mount Zion Chapel for his research work on the possible location where the cist burial was found. Also to Calderdale Museum Services for checking Henry Ling Roth's documents and records. To Joyce Varley for reading through my paper and making corrections and suggestions. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the late Dr R. M. Butler former Editor of the Yorkshire Archaeological Journal for his continuous support given to me over the years.

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- ³ Roth, H. L. 1906. *The Yorkshire Coiners 1767-1783 and Notes on Prehistoric Halifax*. 293-294 Fig. 193. Halifax F. King & Sons. Henry Ling Roth was an anthropologist and curator of the Bankfield Museum Halifax between 1900 and 1925.
- ⁴ Davis, J. W. 1881. On The Discovery of Chipped Flints Beneath the Peat on the Yorkshire Moor, Near Halifax. *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* **6**. 126.
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- ⁶ Halifax Literary & Philosophical Society 67 Annual Report of the Council and Proceedings for 1897. In 1838 Edward Akroyd (1810–1887) a rich worsted mill owner, bought Bankfield House; by 1887 his business was in decline and at this time Akroyd was dying. In the same year he sold Bankfield House to the Halifax Corporation and it was subsequently turned into a museum and a branch library.
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- ⁹ Varley, R. 1997a. The Excavation of Castle Stead at Manywells Height, Near Cullingworth, West Yorkshire, *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society* **19**, 32-42 Fig. 8. Can be read and downloaded as a pdf at: https://www.academia.edu/85577753/The_Excavation_of_Castle_Stead_at_Manywells_Height_near_Cullingworth_West_Yorkshire.
- ¹⁰ Varley, R. 1999. Lost Neolithic and Bronze Age Finds from Mixenden, Near Halifax, West Yorkshire. *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* **70**, 25-33 Fig. 1. This report was revised and updated in 2022 and can be read and downloaded as a pdf at: https://www.academia.edu/86327985/Lost_Neolithic_and_Bronze_Age_finds_from_Mixenden_near_Halifax_West_Yorkshire.
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