

Brandon's Bronze Age Barrow

A barrow is a burial mound that contains the remains of people who have died, it can either be 'long' or 'round'.

Barrows were constructed in England from Neolithic times, (c. 4000 BC), until late pre-Christian times, (c. AD 600). Barrows of the Neolithic Period were long and contained the various members of a family or clan, while those of the Early Bronze Age (c. 1900 BC) were round and were used to bury a single important individual, perhaps a chief or clan leader. The bodies were placed in stone or wooden vaults, over which large mounds of soil were heaped. Both types of barrows continued to be used in England until the advent of Christianity.

Barrows, sometimes described as tumuli on early maps, are mounds of earth and/ or stone, (stone examples are often called cairns), of various shapes and sizes that are characteristic earthwork monuments of the prehistoric periods from about 5,800 until 3,400 years ago, (3800-1400 BC). They can be identified as round mounds, often surrounded by a 'ring ditch' from which the earth and stone for the mound was dug.

The Barrow in Brandon is believed to be the largest Bronze age, round barrow in the UK. Many of you may have walked across it without realising what it is.

The barrow is visible as an earthen mound, encircled by a ditch and a low bank and has an overall diameter of 33m. The mound stands to a height of 1.6m and covers a circular area 21m in diameter. The surrounding ditch, from which earth was quarried during the construction of the barrow, has become largely infilled but survives as a buried feature and can be traced around the eastern and northern side as a slight hollow in the ground surface. The external bank, measuring up to 3m in width at the base and 0.25m in height, is visible around most of the circumference. A depression in the surface of the mound, extending from the south-eastern edge towards the centre, probably marks the site of an antiquarian investigation.

The monument includes a bowl barrow which is located on a slight east-west ridge on the south side of the valley of the Little Ouse River in the Breckland region. Bowl barrows, the most numerous forms of round barrow, are funerary monuments dating from the Late Neolithic period to the Late Bronze Age, with most examples belonging to the period 2400-1500 BC. They were constructed as earthen or rubble mounds, sometimes ditched, which covered single or multiple burials. They occur either in isolation or grouped as cemeteries and often acted as a focus for burials in later periods. Often superficially similar, although differing widely in size, they exhibit regional variations in form and a diversity of burial practices. There are over 10,000 surviving bowl barrows recorded nationally, (many more have already been destroyed), occurring across most of lowland Britain. Often occupying prominent locations, they are a major historic element in the modern landscape and their considerable variation of form and longevity, as a monument type, provide important information on the diversity of beliefs, and social organisations, amongst early prehistoric communities. They are particularly representative of their period and a substantial proportion of surviving examples are considered worthy of protection.

The bowl barrow, 580m northeast of The Lodge, survives well, with a variety of identifiable features, and although there is evidence that it has been the subject of an antiquarian investigation, the area of disturbance indicated by the depression in the surface of the mound is small in relation to the monument. Archaeological information concerning the construction of the barrow, the manner and duration of its use, and the local environment at that time will be contained in the mound, the fill of the surrounding ditch, and in soils buried beneath the mound and the external bank. The buried soils

are also likely to retain evidence for earlier land use, pre-dating the construction of the barrow. The monument has additional interest in relation to the prehistoric flint mines of Grimes Graves, which lie 3km to the northwest, and, together with other barrows preserved in this part of the Breckland region, provides evidence for the study of the general character and development of prehistoric settlement in the area.

****Please see the Gallery below for some pictures****

Sources:

Historic England

heritagecalling.com

britannica.com

Ancient monuments.uk

Some links to websites with maps and additional information.

<https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/Monument/MSF15727>

<https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/thesaurusterm/70010>

