

Does the Wessex Culture exist?

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The Leverhulme project has analysed 160 Beaker and 410 Early Bronze Age grave groups in detail. The site database includes standard details of location, the nature of the grave itself, body position, and age and sex of the individual, together with a summary of the grave goods present, and their disposition in relation to the body. Data informing changes and continuities between Beaker and Early Bronze Age graves will be presented for three key regions: East Yorkshire, the Peak District and Wessex. Topics will include object categories and combinations, burial types, age and sex distributions, the variation in raw materials employed and the incidence of heirlooms. Discussion will consider the contrasting nature of Beaker and Early Bronze Age graves and grave good assemblages within the three key regions, and how the resulting patterns relate to the distribution of such burials in England as a whole. Throughout such analysis, the current lack of absolute dating is a serious problem. However some clear distributions are apparent, and a signature for Early Bronze Age graves within the Wessex region can be defined.