



**Excavations in Megget Reservoir, Borders Region. 2004
Interim Report. Tam Ward. December 2004**

Summary

The excavation of features and enclosures recently discovered within Megget Reservoir has shown the area to have been occupied during the Late Neolithic and probably the Bronze Age. A probable enclosed cremation site and evidence of Late Neolithic settlement have been identified.

Introduction

Following the archaeological survey carried out within the Megget Reservoir, Scottish Borders, in 2004 (Ward, 2004/1) and which revealed a pre-historic landscape of cairns, burnt mounds and enclosures, it was considered necessary to excavate some features which were shown to be under direct threat of erosion.

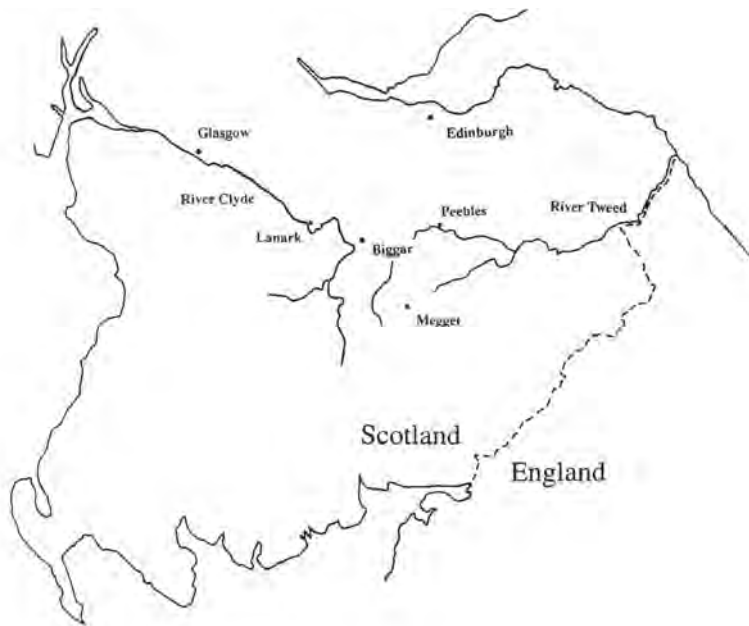
The survey report was immediately delivered to Borders Regional Council archaeologist and to Historic Scotland with an appeal to have further work carried out professionally; however, this was not possible. The Biggar Museum Archaeology Group therefore undertook the work on the basis of a rescue excavation, but unfortunately do not have the resources to carry out a full post excavation study of the fieldwork results. Nevertheless, it can be shown that the work carried out did pre-empt the inevitable destruction of some sites by the erosion effects within the reservoir.

This report describes the excavation results obtained from the sites, which were identified as being under the most serious threat, while reference is made to the problem of reservoir archaeology in southern Scotland.

This report will eventually be amalgamated with the reservoir survey report, and also with a forthcoming survey (winter 2004/05) of that part of Megget valley to the west of the reservoir, to form a more cohesive presentation of the archaeology of Megget.



Map of Scotland



Location Map of
Megget Valley

Excavation recording and methodology

The sites were drawn at 1:20 scale and photographed with 35mm colour slide, digital stills (produced here) and digital video.

Flotation was used to separate charcoal from the soil samples and it was collected in 2mm and 1mm sieves, the charcoal was then air dried at room temperature.

Site No 7 Burnt stone spread with charcoal, plus flint scraper and chert flake.
NT 17745 21130 c 335m OD

Survey report

This scatter lies on the lower northeast flank of Dead For Cauld (hill) and on a projecting area, which drops steeply down into the reservoir. The burnt stone and charcoal flecks were seen emanating from an old ground surface, which lies immediately below a thin horizon (50mm) of peat. Much of the area has been scoured away but small burnt stones protrude from the peat. It is unlikely that the burnt material represents a burnt mound; rather a hearth or hearths are more probable. A 0.6m long line of stones can be seen and these may indicate a fireplace.

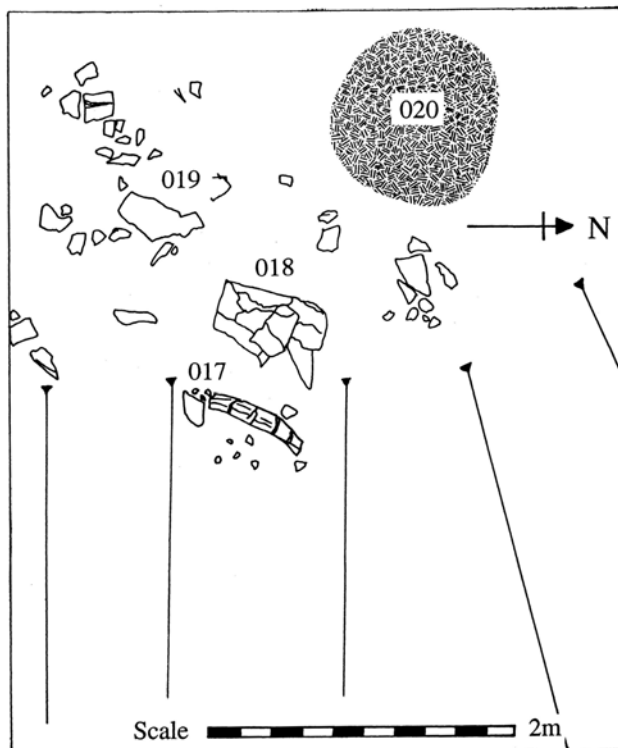
A chert flake and a flint scraper were found on the surface of the area. It is possible that this site may be a settlement or a cremation site. It is under serious threat of being washed away.



Site No.7



Site No.7 - Excavation



Site No. 7
Excavation Plan

Excavation Report

Methodology and ground description

The area surrounding the visible burnt stones was cleared by hoe of a layer of 50mm deep, surviving in situ peat (014). A trench of 4.8m by 4m (fig 7) was eventually opened and hand trowelled down to natural (016), which is an orange coloured gravely till. The material below the peat was a thin lens, >75mm deep, of old ground surface (015), which consisted of a mineralised light brown clayey soil, containing small bleached stones, many burnt stones and with charcoal fragments throughout, some areas had more concentrated charcoal.

The bulk of the activity evidence lay on the fairly level ground which was approximately 50% of the trench area and which contained the greater concentration of charcoal fragments, the remainder of the area was a break of slope downhill to the east. The apparent activity consisted of wood burning, which had affected stones found overall and also others scattered around the trench.

A line of stones 0.7m long (017), apparently set on edge had been burnt as a single rock and fragmented in situ, this had heat discolouration showing. The flat but cracked slab (018), measured 0.7m by 0.5m was not obviously discoloured by heat, however it is assumed to have been fractured by fire. This stone lay on the natural surface below, and a single, small-abraded sherd of pre-historic pottery was found beside it. Another smaller flat stone (019) was 75mm thick and it overlay a layer of charcoal enriched soil > 50mm deep and although this stone showed no obvious traces of scorching; the angular rocks surrounding it had been subject to intense heat and discolouration.

In the NW corner of the trench there was a concentrated patch of charcoal in the soil (020), the main concentration was about 1m in diameter. This area may have been a fire site although there was no evidence as such being betrayed by scorched ground as one may expect (see for example Site No 9, survey report). A sample of charcoal, c110 grammes with fragments over 2mm in size and up to 20mm was collected from a bulk sample for analyses. Much of the charcoal was encrusted with iron pan and the stone residue from the samples was clearly discoloured by heat, however, the colouration was much reduced by bleaching below the peat.

Small test pits on the south side of the trench showed that the main activity indicated by charcoal, seemed to be concentrated within the excavation area. About 20m to the east there was another concentrated patch of charcoal exposed on the surface of the ground, but this was not investigated. The ground on the north and northwest sides of the trench was totally scoured down the natural till.

Finds

ME/7/1

A triangular section greywacke pebble measuring 133mm long by 45mm/38mm and 35mm wide on the three long sides. The pebble sides and ends have been rounded and polished by use as a rubber/polisher. This polishing? stone is difficult to provenance chronologically; however it may have been used in association with the site activities.

ME/7/2

A small-abraded sherd of pre-historic pottery, *unfortunately this was mislaid during excavations.*

Discussion

The evidence of burning activity on the summit terrace of the glacial promontory on the valley side is clear from the charcoal and heat discoloured stones. There may be an extension to this activity or another period of similar activity represented nearby with the other surface charcoal noted. Given that several burnt mound deposits have been located around the area, it is possible that this may have been the start of such a process, however, the argument against this, is that there does not appear to be a nearby spring, which would be essential to 'whatever' happened at burnt mounds.

Although an actual fire site was not definitely established, it is probable that the burning took place on site; this is supported by the fragmented rock (017) and possibly by the fractured slab (018). It is the purpose of the burning that is unexplainable if the burnt mound activity is ruled out. Since no hard evidence of settlement, funerary or industrial activity was found in the limited trench, the reason for the burning remains uncertain.

There is still an extensive area of the level ground to the west of the trench, this has been subject to variable extents of erosion but certainly some ground is still in situ. The answer may lie there; however, it was not possible for the excavators to examine this area, as it was eventually re-submerged.

Neither the stone rubber nor the flint scraper assist a great deal with site interpretation, other than, with the (now missing!) sherd of pottery, indicate a pre-historic presence.

Site 15-survey and excavation report

Site 15 Stone alignments NT 17832 21613

This is a 12m long by 1.5m wide arc of un-quarried boulders. Apart from re-deposited gravel above and below the features, the ground is stone free. The ground is on a slight slope and the stones are seen to be proud of the gravel surface. It is possible that this is the frontal apron of an unenclosed platform settlement, however, there is no rear scarp, and the ground rises up gently from the stone arc.

Two, 1 square metre trial pits were opened above this feature but no archaeological evidence was found below the re-deposited gravels which lay directly on the natural boulder clay.

Site No 16 Stone ring NT 17904 21685 c 335mOD

Survey report

A single layer of stones about 1.5m wide forms a ring of c5m internal diameter, it lies on a gradient of about 0.5m. Slightly offset and to the east there are a few stones that may have been a fireplace. Some stones lying within the feature may be heat reddened. However, this is unclear since such stone when exposed to weathering below peat, tends to have a bleached surface that reduces the discolouration. The site has a thin lens of in situ peat covering it, with some peat also lying around the stones.

However, only 1m down slope, severe erosion is taking place. A section of boulder clay 0.3m high shows a lens of old ground surface lying below the thin layer of surviving peat.



Site No.16
Before Excavation
Looking North East



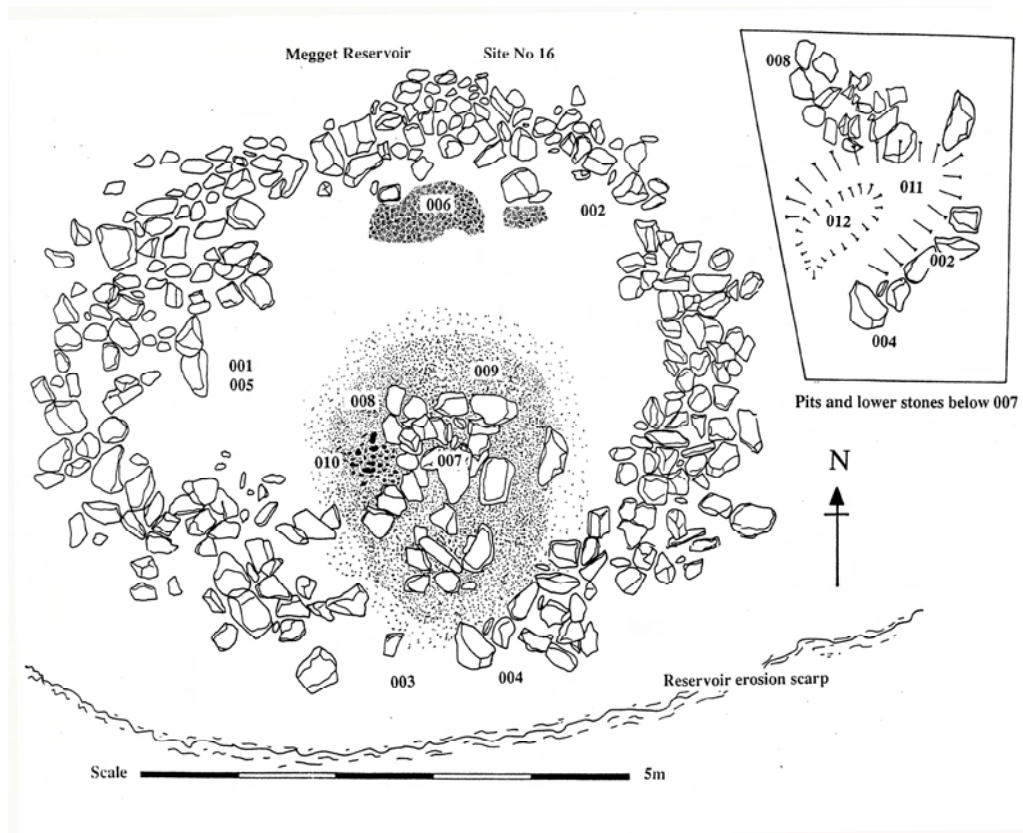
Site No.16
During Excavation
Looking North East



Site No.16
During Excavation
Looking South



Site No.16
During Excavation
Looking North East



Site No. 16 – Excavation Plan

Excavation report

Stripping the layer of peat (001) and slight vegetation off by hoeing was first carried out. Thereafter hand trowels were used to complete the total excavation of the stone ring (002) and its interior. Excavation out with the stone ring was not done.

After clearing the peat from around the stones of the ring it was fundamentally unchanged from its pre excavation appearance. It consisted of a single layer of stones up to 0.5m in size, although most were about 0.3m or less. The stones were mostly sub angular with bleached surfaces and angles; they were obviously the product of the local boulder clay drift and were similar to the general mass of stones found along the beach. The stones had been laid directly on the natural till, indicating that the site had been prepared by turf/soil stripping.

Overall, the enclosure measured 8m along the beach contour (E/W) by 6m down slope. The internal area was about 4.5m across by 4m down slope, which was a drop internally of 0.5m. It is possible that these structural dimensions are slightly different from the original size due to movement of stones on the slope. The feature may originally have been more circular and with a more regular shaped boundary. However, the original design of a circular enclosure on the slope was well preserved. The lower or south side of the ring had a gap (003) of about 1.5m wide in the circuit of stones, which may have been an entrance.

On the east side of this is a possible standing stone (004), although now only slightly earth fast, this was the only stone which was apparently embedded into the sub surface, below the old ground surface (ogs) (005), it may have functioned as a portal on that side.

The bulk of the interior was covered in a light brown coloured, clayey mineralised soil (005), up to 75mm deep, however patches of this were water eroded away in the upper or northern half, to reveal the orange coloured till (006) below. The soil contained only small bleached stones but had charcoal fragments throughout.

The main internal feature was an unconsolidated layer of stones (007) measuring 2.1m by 1.8m, the long axis being aligned N/S. The feature was offset to the southern side of the interior and near to the possible entrance. Some of these stones were apparently lying in a depression near the possible entrance. A setting of three flat stones (008), lying as if subsiding into a central pit, lay on the NW side of the main pile. A concentrated patch of charcoal enriched soil lay above these stones and a similar texture of soil (009) lay below them and directly on the orange coloured till. There was no pit below these three stones.

A patch of heat reddened burnt rocks (010) lay immediately on the west side of the larger stones. These burnt stones lay in a matrix of the ogs but with a dense concentration of charcoal (009), which caused the soil to be significantly darker in appearance than the rest of the internal area excepting for the ground immediately surrounding the internal stones, which was similarly darker by the inclusion of charcoal. This same charcoal enriched soil underlay all of the main pile of stones and with the inclusion of further burnt stones was the base of the internal feature.

It is probable that the patch of burnt rocks (010) was the site of a fireplace, although this is uncertain, as the stones may have been embedded into the charcoal enriched soil after being discoloured by heat.

When the layer of stones (007) was removed, a lesser layer of smaller stones lay below. These were lying within the matrix of charcoal soil (009), which was found to be lying directly on the natural till below.

However, the appearance of two sub surface cuts were then exposed, an oval shaped pit or depression (011) and measuring 2m by 1m by 0.25m deep was cut near the edge of the enclosure; it had gradual sides and on the lower side opened to a level area where the possible entrance lay.

Cut into the larger pit 011, the secondary depression (012) was irregular in shape and measured 1m by 0.5m by 0.15m deep.

Both of these cut features had the charcoal enriched soil within them and below the stones that covered the hollowed areas. The charcoal enriched soil 009 was consistent in colour and texture throughout its distribution on site.

A bulk sample was taken from the entire feature 009, including the deposit within the pits. When wet sieved, about 170 grammes of charcoal above 2mm in size was retrieved. Some of the charcoal fragments were up to 10mm in size.

Particular attention was given to the samples to check for any burnt bone, which may have indicated a cremation on site, none was found and no bone was noted during excavation.

Finds

The following items were retrieved from Site 16. All were found as surface finds within the enclosure.

ME/16/1

Chert scraper, 15mm diameter.

ME/16/2

Chert chips, 11 of

Discussion

This particular ring of stones has close parallels in appearance with others within the nearby Talla Reservoir to the west (Ward, 2004/2), there, several rings of stones and stony banks are found as a group of features. These sites have no known comparables in Upper Tweeddale and their age and function are unknown. Given the existence of numerous types of sites such as burnt mounds and cairns in close proximity to the rings in both Talla and Megget, and which are assumed to date to the Bronze Age, then the current theory is that the rings are also of that period, and possibly funerary monuments.

The evidence from Site 16 is of wood burning within a ring of stones, which may have had an entrance. The burning event, judging by the location of the charcoal concentration, offset to the lower and southern side of the enclosure, was the principal activity, which has left tangible evidence. The actual fire site was probably 010 and which extended slightly below the pile of stone 007. Adjacent to the fire burnt stones were three flat stones (008), which were quite different in their appearance to others within the ring, these stones may have been a preparation or working surface within the site, a similar arrangement was found in the cremation cemetery at Camps Reservoir in Clydesdale (Ward, 1994) where three discretely positioned flat stones had beaker sherds scattered around them. The pile of stones 007 were probably originally more like a cairn over the fire place, and have since fallen down slope. If so, the pits were never covered with stone. The pits contained no appreciable difference in their concentrations of charcoal, nor were the contents appearance any different from the main deposit 009. The purpose of the two pits is therefore unknown.

This site is possibly a cremation monument on the basis of the burning evidence within. Although no bone was found; such material may have been unlikely to survive in the shallow deposit here, being vulnerable to decaying agents. However, burnt bone was retrieved from the soil at nearby pottery location Site 34 (just up hill).

A form of habitation is considered unlikely given the slope of the interior and the absence of any artefacts other than the few chert flakes, which may themselves have been residual and pre date the stone ring.

The finds of chert may actually be residual from an earlier period, with the Mesolithic being suspect. The small scraper would fit that period. However, more expert opinion will be sought regarding these items.

Site 24 Survey and Excavation report

Site 24 Stone setting NT 17941 21868

Stones form a semi circle that is an arc 4m in diameter. The ground is clay silt and gravel and is level.

Only a small area, circa 2m square within the arc of stone was trowelled down to the natural gravely till. No features or finds were made.

Site No 25 Stone setting NT 17944 21875 c 335m OD Survey report

Site 25 Stone setting NT 17944 21875

A few metres to the east of Site No 24 there is another arc of stone forming a semi circle. These are larger stones, some earth fast and others not and they form an area which would be 6m in diameter. The ground is clay silt and gravel and is level.



Adjacent to the stones and on the west side, a 12m long pile of boulders curves around and slightly above the arc of stone. At the upper end this pile is 2m wide but expands to 6m wide at the lower side.

The two stone settings, (Sites 24 and 25) lie between groups of cairns on ground, which has been stone, cleared.

Excavation report Site 25

The entire area within the arc of stone, and the area which would have formed the interior assuming the feature had been completed as a ring, was excavated. Surface gravel was removed and the area was cleared down to the natural till, which lay almost immediately below the re-deposited gravel.

The only feature encountered was an apparent setting of stones (013), which was offset to the southeast quadrant of the site. This showed as a patch of cobble sized stones lying level with the surface of the till, a few larger stones lay on the ground surface at the southern end of the feature.

In the preliminary stages of excavation the entire plan of the feature was shown to measure 2m by 1.3m, the long axis being on a north/south alignment. In an east/west section through the centre of the feature it was shown that the stones were lying within a matrix of light sandy soil and in a hollow about 0.25m deep. Because the fill of the potential pit was stone set within a soil matrix, it was considered to be anthropogenic in origin. About 75% of the feature (the northern part) was excavated down to the natural gravely till but without any positive archaeological evidence, the pit was filled with cobble sized stones for the most part, all enveloped in soil.

The surface ground within the arc of stones contained occasional flecks of charcoal, however, there was no trace of charcoal within the fill of the feature.

It is entirely possible that this feature is of natural formation, although just how it could be formed is unclear.

Finds

Finds were recorded along a baseline, which was established over Sites 24 and 25. The only items found were pieces of radiolarian chert, which had obviously been struck. Some of these flakes were located within the arc of Site 25 as surface finds, but it is possible that these items are unconnected with the site and may belong to an earlier period.

Chert core	0/0 on base line (near cairn)
Chert flake	Base 10m offset 3m north
Chert flake	Base 19.5m offset 3m south
Chert flake	Base 20m offset 1m north
Chert flake	Base 21.5m offset 1.5m north

The purpose of Site 25 remains uncertain. It may have been a monument, which was never completed, and judging by the non-presence of loose surface boulders in the vicinity, it is unlikely that the 'missing' portion of a circle of stones has been eroded by the reservoir. Stones could of course have been removed from the site at any time in the past, however, a more readily abundant supply lie in the adjacent cairn. Further excavation or other techniques around the site may help to clarify the true nature of this monument.



Site No. 34
Pottery Finds Spot
Looking North



Site No. 34. Pottery Finds Spot. Looking West

Site No 34 Pottery scatter NT 17878 21691 c 335m OD

This location, with a scatter of pottery was only discovered during the excavation work. A few isolated, random sherds were retrieved as surface finds among the beach gravel. A decorated rim sherd (ME/CE/1) was found in situ, protruding from the reservoir edge bank. On further inspection, an area of ground measuring circa 7m by 6m was shown to be a relict patch of old ground surface up to 0.3m deep and comprised of a homogenous dark brown mineral soil, relatively stone free and with charcoal flecks and fragments throughout, it lay 6m south of the reservoir edge. This soil lay directly below a hard iron pan crust, which was probably the reason for its survival. The ground surrounding the soil was totally scoured down to glacial till and with re-deposited gravels on top. The soil therefore survived in a depression in the natural till, but whether this feature was anthropogenic or natural in origin was uncertain. An area of 5m long by 4m wide was excavated down to the natural till, this comprised of nearly all of the soil deposit. No features were found within the area. A sporadic assemblage of sherds and fragments was retrieved from the soil profile

Sherds

All of the pottery is coarse fabric with angular and some small pebble inclusions up to 8mm in size. Much of the interior fabric is black in colour and several sherds have surfaces covered in soot. Exterior surfaces are generally orange coloured. The pottery was air-dried at room temperature and lightly brushed to reveal any detail, much of the sherds still retain a covering of silt.

ME/CE/1

A decorated rim sherd with a steep bevelled interior lip upon which are four lines of cord impression. There is possible further impression (accidental?) on the exterior surface. The exterior surface is covered in soot. Some broken surfaces appear to be fairly fresh, possibly indicating modern breaks while the sherd was exposed, and other parts are worn indicating breakage in antiquity. The sherd was found protruding from the in situ ground at the reservoir edge, it lay in the soil profile, which was about 0.3m deep and lying on top of an eroded face of glacial till 0.4m deep. The sherd is 70mm long by 48mm high by 17mm thick and it has a rim diameter of c 360mm.

ME/CE/2

A round topped rim sherd with a straight body. Exterior surface coated with soot plus adjoining fragment. The sherd is 40mm long by 40mm high and 18mm thick. Rim diameter c 280 – 360mm.

ME/CE/3

A rim sherd with possible bevelled rim interior, black coloured fabric, interior surface only. It measures 35mm long by 30mm high by 10mm thick and has a rim diameter of c 240mm.

ME/CE/4

A rim sherd with rounded top 8mm thick tapering out to body thickness of 10mm. Straight sided; the sherd measures 38mm long by 25mm high.

ME/CE/5

A sherd with possible line of cord decoration on internal? side. Other side covered in soot and with a black fabric. The sherd measures 50mm long by 21mm high and is between 15mm and 21mm thick.

ME/CE/6

A sherd measuring 40mm long by 35mm high and 18mm thick.

ME/CE/7

A sherd with one side heavily sooted, other side missing. It measures 38mm long by 30mm high and is 19mm thick.

ME/CE/8

A sherd with black coloured fabric. It measures 40mm long by 32mm high and is 20mm thick.

ME/CE/9

A sherd of black fabric, possibly sooted on external side. It measures 38mm long by 25mm high and is 19 – 26mm thick.

ME/CE/10

A sherd with a possible sooted interior? It measures 40mm long by 35mm high and is 22mm thick.

ME/CE/11

A sherd, which measures 38mm long by 30mm high and is 24mm thick. A groove is probably a trowel mark.

ME/CE/12

A sherd, which measures 38mm long by 25mm high and is 17mm thick.

ME/CE/13

A possible rim sherd of black fabric, interior surface black in colour, external side is buff.

ME/CE/14

A sherd, which measures 35mm long by 28mm high and is 21mm thick.

ME/CE/15

A sherd, which measures 30mm long by 20mm high and is 21mm thick.

ME/CE/16

A sherd, which measures 37mm long by 25mm high and is 14mm thick. Black fabric and with one side missing.

ME/CE/17

A sherd, which measures 30mm long by 22mm high and is 12mm thick.

ME/CE/18

A sherd, which measures 30mm long by 26mm high and is 8mm thick. One side only surviving.

ME/CE/19

A sherd, which measures 25mm long by 20mm high and is 10mm thick. One side only surviving.

ME/CE/20

A sherd, which measures 20mm long by 20mm high and is 8mm thick. One side only surviving, which is sooted.

ME/CE/21

A sherd, which measures 20mm long by 20mm high and is 15mm thick

ME/CE/22

Small sherds/fragments. 7 of.

ME/CE/23

A rim sherd with flat rim 15mm thick with slightly rounded corners and sooted both sides. One side fairly straight while the other is curved, uncertain which side is interior. The sherd is 30mm high by 30mm long and up to 15mm thick

ME/CE/24

A sherd, which measures 55mm by 35mm by 20mm thick. Exterior smoothed with orange/buff colour, black interior and sooted surface on interior.

ME/CE/25

A sherd, which measures 35mm by 30mm by 16mm thick. One surface sooted.

ME/CE/26

A sherd which measures 35mm by 25mm by 20mm thick, one surface only which is sooted.

ME/CE/27

A sherd which measures 25mm by 20mm by 10mm thick, one side orange, other side black.

ME/CE/28

A sherd, which measures 25mm by 25mm by 10mm thick, one surface only.

ME/CE/29

A sherd, which measures 25mm by 16mm by 16mm thick, one surface only (with a fresh section break).

Lithic

Excepting one item, the lithic (ME/34/1) is all chert and comprises of three chunks, 8 small flakes and one small scraper (ME/34/1a), which measures 17mm by 12mm.

One chunk of a possible Type VI axe head (ME/34/2) was recovered. This is the butt end of a flaked roughout for a lentoid section stone axe, which appears to have been used as the leading edge is obviously blunted. The fragment measures 70mm by 55mm by 21mm.

Charcoal

Eleven fragments of charcoal were retained because of their relative large size, including one piece measuring 35mm and three pieces of round wood.

Discussion

This was a fortuitous survival of an old ground surface, retained only because of the depression within which it was found and possibly the fact that it was sealed below a very hard iron pan crust. Based on the finding of the rim sherd ME/CE/1, it is likely that the pottery scatter extends further upslope from the reservoir and within the undisturbed ground there, although it is evident that for several metres above the reservoir bank, the ground is subject to movement by landslip.

The assemblage covers at least five different pots judging by the incompatible rim types, and the style and decoration indicate Late Neolithic impressed wares. It is possible that the chert finds are not chronologically associated and these may be residual from an earlier period. It is also uncertain whether the charcoal retrieved and the smaller fragments within the soil profile were associated in time with the pottery. The stone axe fragment compliments the pottery in time and is further evidence of Neolithic presence on the site.

Lying a few metres west of the find spot for sherd ME/CE/1 and above the reservoir erosion scarp, there is an amorphous shaped pile of boulders. What, if anything archaeological, these stones represent is unclear, but their proximity to the lithic scatter could mean association. Other features have been noted in the ground above the location under discussion here, including a further burnt mound; these will be encompassed in the forthcoming survey of the valley.

The pottery therefore appears to represent a settlement aspect of the pre-history of the area, and since the sherds are the only diagnostically aged finds retrieved from the reservoir, they may indicate the period of activity involving the other nearby features. It is possible that the chert finds are not associated with the pottery.

Other surface finds from the area

Chert chunk		NT 17946 21851
Chert chunks	2 of	NT 17960 21782
Chert flakes	3 of	NT 17948 21862
Chert flakes	2 of	NT 17994 21948

General discussion

The archaeological work now carried out within Megget Reservoir has established a landscape of suspected Bronze Age activity involving possible funerary rituals within enclosures. The cairns may be representative of agricultural aspects of that period and the burnt mounds remain problematic as to purpose.

However, the pottery, which was found at Site 34, is more likely to represent the Late Neolithic period, and suggests, by the decorated types (impressed ware) and the presence of several incompatible rim sherds, that the reason for its presence is settlement.

It is possible therefore that the entire suite of features in Megget Reservoir are dateable to the Late Neolithic period, however a more probable explanation is that the period of activity represented by the features, pottery finds and some of the lithic, spans the interface between Late Neolithic and Bronze Age.

The sporadic scatter of radiolarian chert, including the pieces from the various excavations are suspected as being evidence of Mesolithic activity. If this is so it would be an important link to other tantalising finds towards the west, and which may indicate a through east/west route for Mesolithic travellers between St Mary's Loch, connecting the Rivers Tweed and Clyde at Crawford, and in the process, walking through the areas of Talla and Camps reservoirs.

A few chert flakes were recently found at Talla Reservoir, as part of the Tweed Project by the Biggar Group (Ward, 2004), and a collection of similar material has been found at Camps Reservoir, near Crawford (Ward, 1992). More recent discoveries of proven and dated Mesolithic sites have come to light during the Daer Valley Project by the same group.

This all offers an important new research approach into inland routes used in the Southern Uplands of Scotland during the Mesolithic period. The Rotten Bottom bow find site lies on the high tops just 6 –7 km south of the connecting valley between Talla and Megget Reservoirs, indicating the presence of hunter gatherers in the surrounding hills.

Further work for Megget Project

Samples of the charcoal will be identified for species types and dating samples prepared. However, funds are currently not available for dating. It is planned to survey the entire Megget Valley in winter of 2004/05 and produce a more complete report on the archaeology of the valley.

Archaeology and reservoirs

The discovery of archaeological sites and assemblages within Megget Reservoir and the threat to them brings the total of such circumstances, investigated by the writer, to six. These are Megget, Fruid and Talla in Scottish Borders, and Camps, Daer and Peden in South Lanarkshire.

It is hardly surprising that such archaeology exists in these areas as it abounds in the surrounding landscapes in each case. Although these discoveries offer a great opportunity, and one that would otherwise not exist, nevertheless, a considerable loss of information is taking place at a continuous if indeterminate rate, this loss will be exacerbated if the reservoirs are not inspected at every available opportunity. Even so, if the burden falls on amateur groups who are prepared to react to the opportunity, the quality of results may be impaired through lack of funding and available time to salvage evidence from the sites.

The results of the various campaigns of work by the Biggar group in reservoirs have now amassed data of national significance as well as being important locally. This is especially true for pre-historic sites and assemblages.

The effects of erosion within the reservoirs are being studied by the writer (paper forthcoming), and the destructive effects on the sites have been easily demonstrated in each instance. It must be said that if this phenomena of erosion of archaeological sites is taking place in these upland reservoirs, it is likely to be taking place in many other reservoir around the country.

This begs the question; should there be a national strategy to deal with the problem?

Acknowledgements

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