

Upton Lovell



Bell Barrow Amber Necklace



The necklace is comprised of 10 shale beads and two shale rings found with 11 amber and 10 faience beads, found with a primary cremation in a bell barrow (with outer bank) at Upton Lovell, Wiltshire - excavated by William Cunnington.

Site Name – Upton Lovell Great Barrow

No. 6, the last barrow which I have to describe on this Down, from its superior size and commanding situation, has been called UPTON GREAT BARROW. It is bell-shaped, well formed, and surrounded with a deep ditch and small vallum This was also first opened by a labouring man who was often employed to dig up flints on these downs for the turnpike roads, and who had hopes of finding a treasure; but on meeting with nothing but bones and ashes, he sent for Mr. Cunnington, who, on coming to the barrow, found at the depth of eleven feet, a cist like a shallow bason, cut in the native chalk, and containing the burned bones of one person. With this interment were deposited forty-eight beads, sixteen of which were of green and blue opaque glass, of a long shape, and notched between so as to resemble a string of beads ; five were of canal coal or jet ; and the remaining twenty-seven were of red amber; the whole forming a most beautiful necklace, and such as a British female would not in these modern days of good taste and elegance disdain to wear. On a supposition that this large tumulus could not have been appropriated to the remains of a single person, Mr. Cunnington made several sections in it, but found only fragments of rude pottery, pieces of stags' horns, animal bones, and vast quantities of ashes and charred wood.

Heytesbury, June 29, 1802. On my return from Stonehenge last Wednesday, (where I had been to open some barrows with Mr. Coxe) I was surprised to find a large firing of beads, which had been taken out of the large barrow on Upton-Lovell Downs near you. This barrow is bell-shaped, surrounded with a deep ditch, and small

vallum, the diameter at the base is 105 feet, its elevation in feet, and from its large size is called Upton Great-Barrow. On enquiry I found it had been opened in my absence by a labouring man, who is often employed, in digging flints on the Downs for the turnpike roads; his views were the hopes of finding treasure, but on finding nothing but burnt bones and the beads, he sent for me; but being absent, my brother and one of my daughters went, and having persuaded him to desist from further pursuits till my return, they brought away the beads. When I saw the barrow, I found he had made a large trench near the centre, when, at the depth of nearly eleven feet, he found a circular cist in the native chalk ; this contained burnt human bones, with which were deposited 48 beads; of these 16 were of green and blue glass in long pieces notched between, so as to resemble a firing of beads, 5 were of canal-coal or jet, and the remaining 27 of red amber; among the latter was one of a large size ; the very small ones fell to pieces soon after their exposure to the air, but the large ones are in good preservation. Mr. Crocker has drawn a sample of each very accurately, as you will see on comparing. A neighbouring farmer, Mr. Baker of Chiltern, having brought two labourers to assist; these with the same man worked all day in making further researches, but we were not able to discover anything else, except a variety of animal bones; and abundance of black allies and charred wood. I am therefore of opinion that this large tumulus was erected over the remains of some illustrious female, for such the beads indicate; had there been more than one interment, I think we should certainly have discovered them, as we made some very large sections in those parts of the barrow where they are generally found.

(Wiltshire Heritage Museum)