

## **FWP 62**

### **ODXI: The Beaker accompanying Burial 1a**

*Note by pjf, 02/10/00: the description of the Burial 1a skeleton is based on an original, available in full in FWP 62a. The original note by Dr. Joshua Pollard on the Beaker is in typescript in the paper archive. The following is a much shorter edited version by pjf, as used in the 1997 volume (FWP 75):*

**Burial IA**, a child in a flexed position, was lying with its head to the SE and was facing NE, with a Beaker lying on its chest (LPP, fig. 6.4; otherwise illustrated in FWP 63). The majority of bones were represented although many, including the skull, were broken and too distorted by earth pressure for reconstruction. The face, five cervical vertebrae and five thoracic vertebrae were missing. The state of epiphyseal fusion, the lengths of the long bones and the eruption of teeth all suggest an age of about seven years (Brothwell 1981, Genoves 1969). There were no abnormalities or evidence of disease.

The accompanying vessel (SL, colour Pl. 31) was illustrated, described and discussed by Smith (1967). No close parallel exists locally though barrows Wilsford G51 and 52 contained similar vessels. Formal typological analysis would place the vessel within Clarke's Southern British Group (Clarke 1970). Traditionally, this would occur late in the Beaker 'sequence', with a date tending towards the middle of the 2nd millennium BC. Within its Fyfod context, a date in the first half of the 2nd millennium has always been in mind in extrapolating from Burial 1A and its beaker into landscape interpretation. A somewhat earlier horizon now seems, by inference, to be preferred by Case (1995) in his survey of the Avebury region which does not, however, mention this Overton Down beaker. Without a radiocarbon determination specific to Burial 1A, the Beaker's date can only be defined within the general currency of British Beakers, between c 2500-1500 cal BC.

It has recently been argued that Beakers from burial contexts were produced specifically for grave deposition (Boast 1995,72) and that the form and decoration of such vessels were explicitly linked to the status of the deceased, in terms of their age, (occasionally) gender and/or their position within a burial sequence. In particular, it has been observed that a significant number of interments of infants/juveniles are associated with vessels either with all-over decoration, or with a limited number of decorative 'zones'; and that such vessels are also characterised by coarseness of decoration and/or fabric (Mizoguchi 1995). This vessel from Burial 1A, in its decoration, fabric and association, accords with such observations. Both the similar

vessels from Wilsford cum Lake barrows G51 and G52 accompanied children (Smith 1991).