

ART. I.—*The Beaker Period in Cumbria*. By T. H. MCK. CLOUGH, M.A.

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IN 1950 Miss C. I. Fell published a full account of Beaker finds from Cumbria, with an additional note on cord-ornamented Beakers in 1953 (Fell 1950 and 1953). Since then there have been a few new finds, and it is also fitting that the situation in Cumbria should be reviewed in the light of current thought, as reflected in, for example, Professor Piggott's survey of British Beaker development (Piggott 1963). Many of the Cumbrian Beakers have not previously been illustrated in these *Transactions*; this paper presents the pottery and contemporary material. It will be emphasized that two separate groups of Beakers can be distinguished, and the paper concludes by discussing their chronological and cultural position.

In his classic work on Bronze Age pottery, Abercromby (1912) arranged the three major types of British Beakers in a chronological order which has been amended in later works. The publication of Piggott's paper in 1963 brought a new descriptive nomenclature: his Long-Necked Beaker is equivalent to Abercromby's type A; his Bell, Barrel and Cord-Zoned Beakers to Abercromby's types B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub> and B<sub>3</sub> respectively; and his Short-Necked Beaker to Abercromby's type C. Although more minute research into British Beakers may be able to define their origins more closely, Piggott's classification satisfactorily embraces the different types.

#### *Cumbrian Beaker Pottery and its Associations.*

The pottery can be divided into two groups, the first of Cord-Zoned Beakers found in coastal areas to

the south and west, the second of Short-Necked Beakers and Bell Beaker derivatives whose distribution is concentrated in the Eden Valley and the fells at its head (map).

### I. The South-West Cumbrian Group.

There are only three certain finds in this group. The best-preserved example is that from a cairn on Sizergh Fell, excavated by Professor McKenny Hughes, but more recently reconstructed by Miss Fell. It is now seen to be a Cord-Zoned Beaker with a single cordon near its lip; the exterior bears horizontal cord impressions, although not enough survives for us to determine whether they were applied in the form of a continuous spiral; several lines of the same decoration are found inside the rim.

The other finds of Cord-Zoned Beaker pottery come from a carefully built cairn with a kerb of granite boulders in Mecklin Park, Santon Bridge; and from the North End of Walney Island as a surface find in association with a mixed flint industry. The Mecklin Park find consists of a single sherd decorated with horizontal cord impressions. The Walney Island find includes several sherds with the same decoration, two plain rim sherds with traces of a cordon, and also a few other sherds which are decorated with maggot-pattern.

No other Cumbrian Beakers are cord-ornamented. However, it has long been accepted that the sherd from Dog Holes Cave, Warton, Lancashire, was a cord-ornamented sherd. Although I was unable to examine the actual pottery, it seems to me from the original published photograph more likely to have been decorated by a combined technique using a notched instrument and a point of some kind. The pattern, so far as it is revealed by this small sherd, is not one typical of cord-ornamented Beakers. I therefore con-

sider it likely to be part of a Bell Beaker derivative; it should be thought of as connected with such Beakers in south Lancashire and similar latitudes, not as forming part of either group of Cumbrian Beakers.

## II. The Eden Valley Group.

This group is entirely separate from the South-West Cumbrian group. It includes thirteen finds, most of which are well-preserved; only one could not be traced. The decorative techniques used here are those of simple incision or of impression with a notched instrument. All known associations are with crouched inhumations, which may be in simple cairns, or in stone cists with or without a covering mound; none have been recovered from settlement sites. No grave-goods have been found with these Beaker burials except a small bone pin from a cist burial at Clifton; the other two Beakers from Clifton were found together in a single cist. That from Brougham is said to have been accompanied by a Food-Vessel, an association which must remain unproven since the Food-Vessel sherds cannot be traced; the original report is mistaken in saying that the Beaker is cord-ornamented (Harkness 1873-6; Harkness and Stalker 1880).<sup>1</sup> The Crosby Fell Beaker is fragmentary, only part of the rim and neck surviving (Clarke 1929, pl. XXVIII);<sup>2</sup> the sherd from Greenwell's Barrow CLXXV in Crosby Garrett is believed to be in the British Museum.

There are obvious similarities between some of these Beakers. Those from Ainstable and from an unknown site in Cumberland are both Short-Necked Beakers,

<sup>1</sup> The Food-Vessel sherds, which have never been illustrated, were apparently presented to either the Society of Antiquaries or "The Museum" in Oxford; but Mr F. H. Thompson for the Society and Mr H. J. Case for the Ashmolean Museum have informed me that there is no record of their ever having entered either collection. See also Fell 1950, 45.

<sup>2</sup> The apparent association of two lumps of putty with this Beaker remains unexplained.

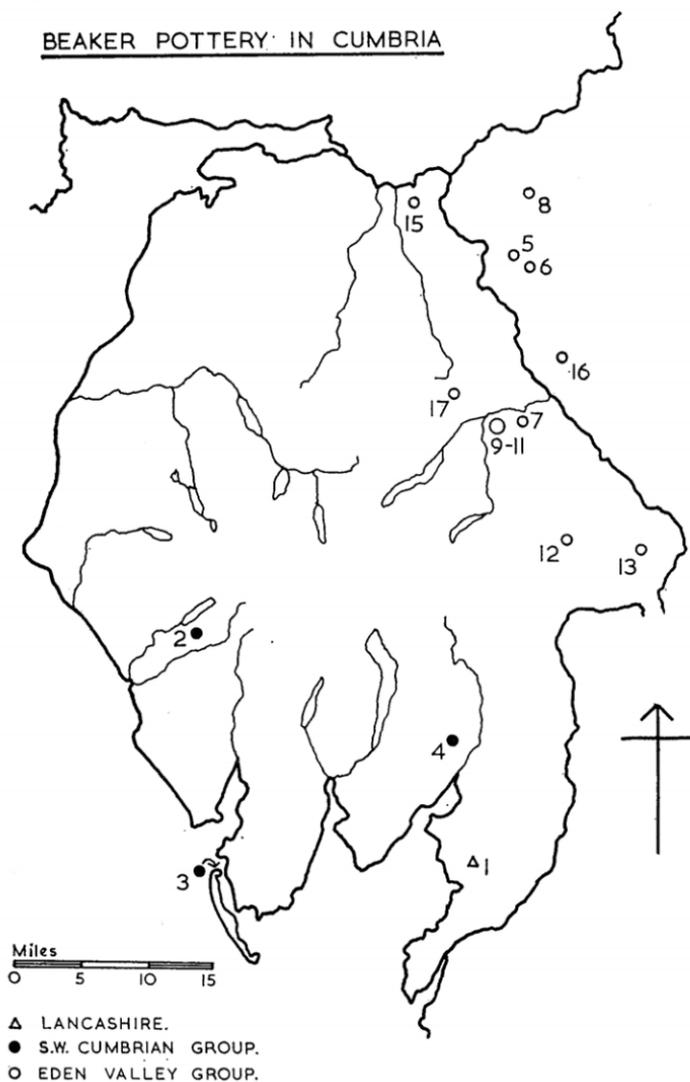


FIG. 1.—Distribution map.

with closely similar profiles; they share the decorative motifs of horizontal lines and chevron bands, with a plain bottom zone. The Ainstable example, which is very weathered, also has diagonal shading with hatching at its edges, a less common motif which is shared with the Garlands Beaker and one from Clifton. The two last-named are best classified as Bell Beaker derivatives because of their more sinuous profiles; of the other Clifton Beakers, one is a Bell Beaker derivative and the other is Short-Necked. The more elaborately decorated Beakers from Newton Reigny<sup>3</sup> and Hunsonby are also comparable, both being Bell Beaker derivatives; hanging triangles with quadruple outlining, shaded bar-chevrons and running chevrons are among the decorative motifs on these vessels.

The remaining Beakers in this group are more individual in form and decoration. The small Brougham Beaker is somewhat more roughly made than most of the Cumbrian Beakers, and is decorated with horizontal lines and hatching. The Beaker recently found at Broomrigg, near Ainstable, which I am able to illustrate by the kindness of Miss K. S. Hodgson, recalls the Sizergh Fell vessel in its cordon and profile, but its rather irregular decoration is entirely that of the Eden Valley group. Miss Hodgson has also told me of a small cordoned Beaker rim-sherd from a site near the source of the White Lyne, not far from Bewcastle. Finally, the Castle Carrock Beaker is quite distinctive; although heavily restored, its profile and decoration make it the only Cumbrian Beaker which does not fall easily into the Short-Necked or Bell Beaker derivative types.

#### *Other Archaeological Evidence.*

There are few indications that Beaker groups were

<sup>3</sup> This Beaker was previously published as from Skirwith Moor (Fell 1950); I am grateful to Miss Fell for the correction.

present in Cumbria apart from the burials with their associated pottery. Miss Fell (1950, 50) listed two perforated stone axes of a type which can be associated with Beakers; one came from Waberthwaite, near Eskmeals, and the other from Dunmallet, at the head

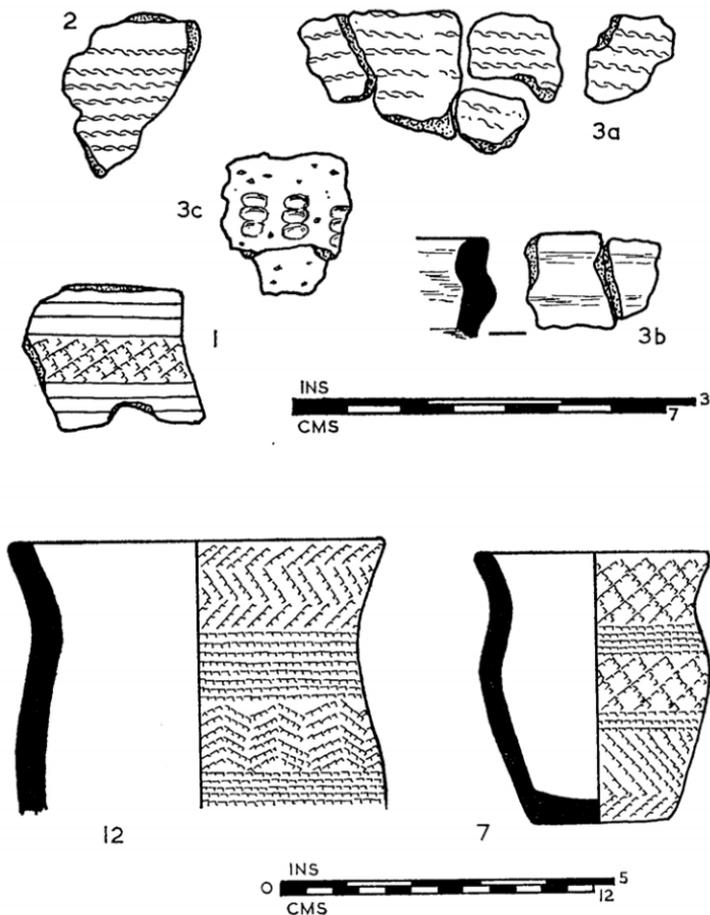


FIG. 2.—1, Dog Holes Cave; 2, Mecklin Park; 3 a-c, Cord-Zoned, cordoned and maggot-pattern sherds, Walney Island; 7, Brougham; 12, Crosby Fell.

of Ullswater. In her recent study of British Battle-Axes, Mrs Roe (1966) has listed two other Cumbrian axes among her earlier types, from Stanger Farm, Embleton, and from Vickerstown, Walney Island.<sup>4</sup> These are all isolated finds, as also is the flint dagger of Beaker type found at Irthington (Fell 1950, 46). Miss Fell (1953, 3) has also drawn attention to the beautifully polished limestone wristguard, with a single perforation at each end, which was found in a Primary Series urn on Lancaster Moor, a find which may serve to illustrate the survival of Beaker traditions.

Settlement sites can only be attributed with certainty to the South-West Cumbrian group. There are numerous chipping-sites among the coastal sand-dunes; of these, Walney Island (Cross 1950 and earlier papers), Eskmeals (Cherry 1963) and Drigg (Cherry and Pennington 1965) are the most important so far published. Stratigraphy hardly exists at these sites, but small scraps of pottery and a variety of flint arrowheads and other implements form sufficient evidence for occupation. The great majority of the arrowheads are barbed-and-tanged, although there are some hollow-based examples as well as a few petit tranchet derivatives. The barbed-and-tanged arrowheads include some of ogival form (Cherry 1963, 44 f.).<sup>5</sup>

The only site which has been postulated as a Beaker settlement within the area of the Eden Valley group is at Woodhead, near Bewcastle. A pulley-ring and a V-perforated button, both of jet, and a small flint flake were found here. The main feature of the site was an arrangement of piled or fallen stones reminiscent of the collapsed walls of a Beaker or Bronze Age hut-circle (Hodgson 1940). Similar structures, associated with

<sup>4</sup> Roe 1966: Stanger Farm, cat. no. 37, type I B; Dunmallet, no. 38, type II C; Vickerstown, no. 97, type II B.

<sup>5</sup> I am grateful to Mr J. Cherry for information about these flint industries.

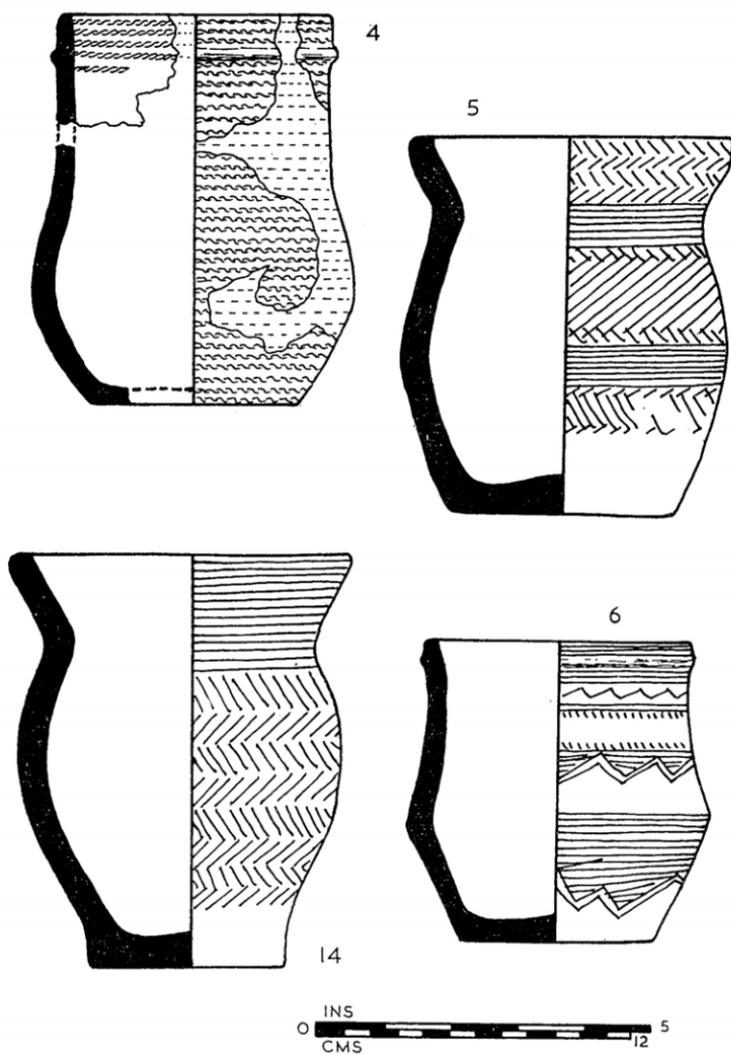


FIG. 3.—4, Sizergh Fell; 5, Ainstable; 6, Broomrigg; 14, "Cumberland".

Beaker pottery, were found at Muirkirk, Ayrshire (Baird 1913-4); they too were thought to be hut-circles, but Professor Clark (1952, 163, n. 118) considers that they were cairn-circles, and this suggestion may be relevant here. The two holes filled with "dark greyish material containing ash" found at Woodhead (Hodgson 1940, 164) could have been cremation pits such as are found in some cairn-circles. Two other V-perforated buttons have come from Cumbrian sites, one from Broomrigg, near Ainstable, and the other from Moor Divock, Askham (Fell 1967, 25).

Study of the local antiquarian literature reveals that many crouched inhumations, whether in cists or in simple cairns, have been disturbed at various times. In most of these cases there is no record of pottery or of other associated finds, but some, like the five inhumations (including a child) recovered from another cairn on Sizergh Fell (Hughes 1904b), may have been Beaker burials; but such burials may also be either of Neolithic or of Iron Age date.

Among the prehistoric earthworks of Cumbria are the two important henge monuments of Mayburgh and King Arthur's Round Table, both near Eamont Bridge. Extensive excavations at the latter failed to yield datable finds (Bersu 1940); until part of it was destroyed in road-making, it had two opposed entrances typical of Class II henges, which elsewhere have been associated with Beakers. The only finds recorded from Mayburgh are "a brass Celt" of unknown type and an unfinished, broken, polished stone axe; blasting and quarrying have removed all but one of the orthostats which were originally grouped within Mayburgh.<sup>6</sup> Another monument which may have had Beaker associations is the stone circle near Casterton, Kirkby Lonsdale; Miss Fell (1953, 3) has suggested

<sup>6</sup> Stukeley, W., *Itinerarium Curiosum* ii (1776) 44; CWI iii (1876-7) xvi, Proceedings; A. H. Smith, *Place Names of Westmorland* (1966), pt. 2, 205-206.

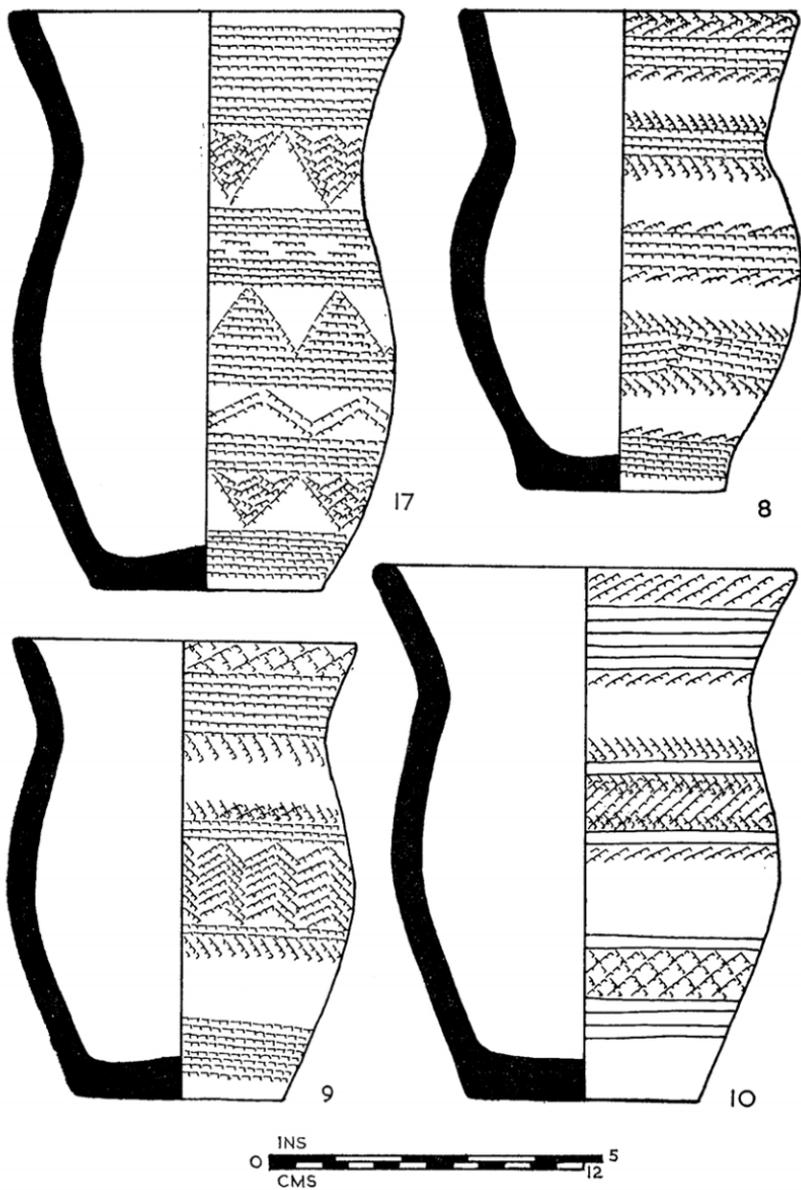


FIG. 4.—8, 9, 10, Clifton; 17, Newton Reigny.

that the "drinking cup" found in it or nearby may have been a Beaker.

*Discussion and Chronology of the Beakers.*

Both Miss Fell (1953) and the Hon. Marjorie Cross (1950) have noticed the coastal distribution of the cord-ornamented Beakers of the South-West Cumbrian group, linking them with similar finds from Anglesey and Wales in the south and from Luce Sands in the north. The pottery from the latter site has been studied most recently by Miss McInnes (1963-4), who found that corded Beakers with one or two cordons, often with internal decoration, were the most frequent Beaker type there. The similarity between Luce Sands and Walney Island is emphasized by the presence at both sites of pottery with maggot-pattern decoration. The Sizergh Fell vessel, and another from Kirkhaugh, Northumberland, which was found in association with a gold basket ear-ring (Maryon 1936; Tait 1965, no. 31), both seemed to Miss McInnes to belong to a Scottish group. However, it is likely that the Kirkhaugh Beaker at least represents a movement up the South Tyne; there is an important settlement site at Ross Links on the Northumberland coast, as well as several other Cord-Zoned Beaker finds from that area (Tait 1965, nos. 1-25 and 31-3). There is little to suggest that the South-West Cumbrian group is derived from the south, in spite of the Anglesey and other Welsh finds and another from Grassington, Wharfedale, which may be of directly eastern origin (Raistrick 1929). Especially now that the Dog Holes sherd cannot be accepted as belonging to this group, we can see that the Cord-Zoned Beakers are more likely to have been derived from the north or east, and thus may be associated with the Luce Sands/Kirkhaugh/Ross Links series.

Miss Fell considered that all the Eden Valley Beakers

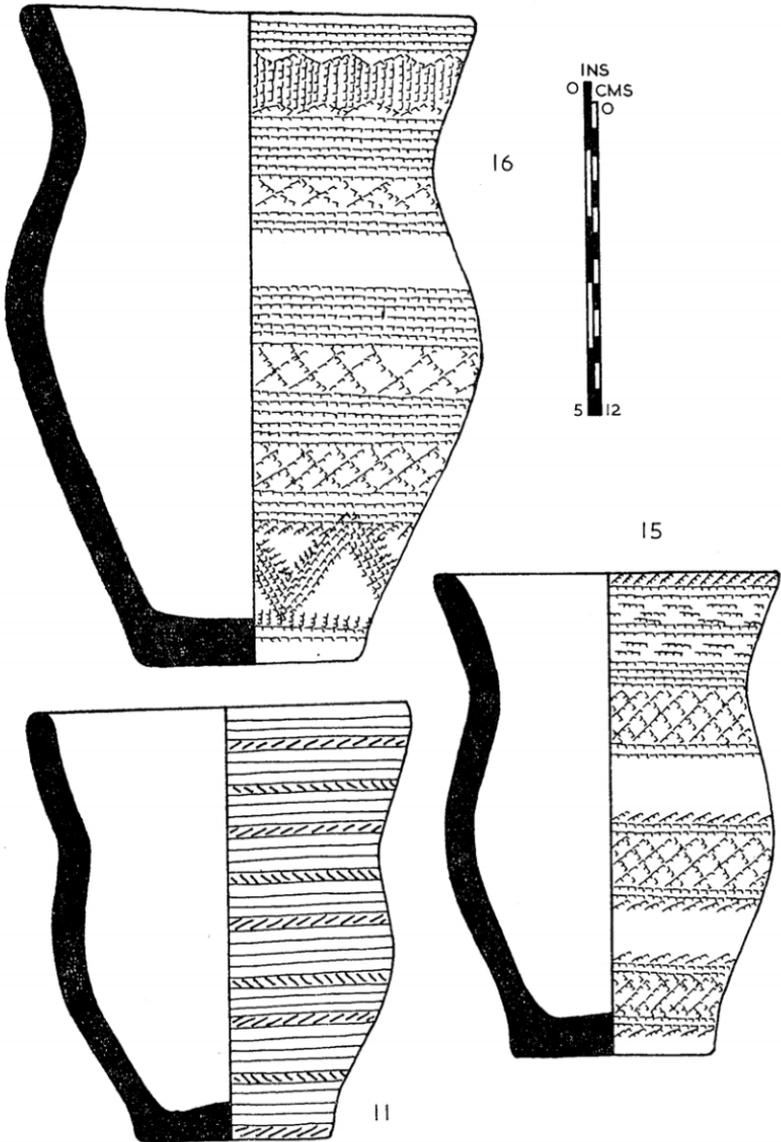


FIG. 5.—11, Castle Carrock; 15, Garlands; 16, Hunsonby.

were of Abercromby's type C, although many had affinities to his type B. In Piggott's terminology, many are now to be included in the Short-Necked class, although a number show considerable Bell Beaker influence in their decoration and profiles. Parallels for these Beakers are most easily found in north-east England and Yorkshire (Fell 1950; Abercromby 1912, I, 17-49; Piggott 1963, 57; Tait 1965, fig. 1 and nos. 52-5), and our Eden Valley group must form an extension of this distribution. Certain aspects of their decoration, including the frequency of chevron patterns (in particular the shaded bar-chevron) are most typical of Beakers from Northumberland and Yorkshire. Similarly, we find that the Eden Valley Beakers can be paralleled in southern Scotland, although perhaps to a less extent (Mitchell 1933-4). There are two routes by which these Beakers may have reached the Eden Valley: first, and more easily, by the Tyne-Irthing Gap; and secondly from the Yorkshire Dales, either across Stainmore or over the Ure-Eden watershed, lines of communication which were probably used in the Neolithic and again in the Bronze Age. Both routes have points in their favour, but the heavier distribution of the Beakers in Northumberland suggests that the former was more important. Tait's fully illustrated corpus of Northumberland Beakers (1965) demonstrates eastern parallels, and Miss Fell in her survey (1950) quotes other parallels from northern England.

Before radiocarbon dates were available, Miss Fell suggested that a date before 1600 B.C. for the arrival of Beakers in Cumbria would be unlikely, and she could see them surviving here well into the second half of the second millenium B.C. Her chronology now seems to be too low rather than too short.

Piggott (1963) has shown that the main elements of the Bell Beaker cultures in Britain are to be associated with the Reflux Movement of Beakers from the Low

Countries and the Rhineland. The Cord-Zoned Beakers may be given slight priority over the other Bell Beakers from which are developed the Short-Necked variety, themselves the antecedents of the Long-Necked type. Radiocarbon dates show that in the Netherlands Bell Beakers came into contact with the Corded Ware tradition rather before 2000 B.C. Their distribution, both in continental Europe and in Britain, is wide, and their associations with chambered tombs and henge monuments illustrate the Neolithic contexts in which they are first found in Britain. Among the few radiocarbon dates for British Beakers is one of  $1794 \pm 150$  B.C. from a Cord-Zoned Beaker burial at Windypits, Yorkshire (Tait 1965, 27); this may serve as a guide to the dating of the South-West Cumbrian group. The gold ear-ring from Kirkhaugh, already mentioned, which is paralleled by the well-known find from Radley, Berkshire (*Inventaria Archaeologica* GB 2) is of a type also found on the Continent in Reinecke A contexts, where they might date from *c.* 1800-*c.* 1600 B.C. These ear-rings, which are thought to be of British origin, are also discussed by Butler (1963, 187-90). The present evidence thus suggests that the first appearance of Cord-Zoned Beakers in Cumbria took place near to 1800 B.C., although the individual finds cannot be closely dated. The rarity of Food-Vessel pottery from the south of the Lake District argues against strong continuity between Beakers and Food-Vessels there, although it may be due to an accident of discovery and survival.

The Eden Valley Beakers are more heterogeneous, and many bear ornament of a developed or degenerate nature. Again, however, the absence of associated finds, both in Cumbria and in Northumbria, makes close dating of the individual Beakers impossible. There can be no doubt that the Short-Necked Beakers and the Bell Beaker derivatives are contemporary

here, since a representative of each type is found in the same cist at Clifton. Although these types may have slightly different Continental origins, the Bell Beaker derivatives in the Rhineland, the Short-Necked Beakers in the Netherlands, when they arrive in Cumbria they seem to represent a single movement in which both types are found, datable to soon after 1800 B.C. Tait (1965, 30 ff.) has suggested that the importance of Beakers in Northumbria declines by *c.* 1600 B.C. A similar date for Cumbria is supported by the close cultural sequence between Beakers and Food-Vessels where both types of pottery occur in northern England and southern Scotland.

#### Conclusions.

Botanists are at present carrying out a programme of research which aims at reconstructing the vegetational history of the Lake District in the post-glacial period.<sup>7</sup> Vegetation changes at about 3000 B.C. in the areas investigated are in agreement with what would be expected to be the form of land use practised by farmers with livestock, who arrived in a totally forested countryside. Subsequent changes reflect extended farming activity at some sites. In spite of the growing body of evidence, the relationship between the operators of the Neolithic axe factories of the Great Langdale/Scafell area and their successors, among them the Beaker communities, does not yet seem to be shown in the pollen diagrams. The decline in the importance of the axe factories is likely to have taken place in the first quarter of the second millennium B.C., since there is no definite evidence of Bronze Age activity at these sites. No implements of Group VI or Group XI rock were included among the Bronze Age battle-axes listed by Mrs Roe (1966); this suggests that

<sup>7</sup> Among the most recent papers are Oldfield 1963 and Pennington 1965, both with extensive references.

even by her earliest phase, which has Beaker and Food-Vessel connections, the Langdale sources may no longer have been in operation. There are, however, a few examples of Group XV implements among the axes of her early Stages I and II; these are made of micaceous sub-greywacke (Shotton 1959), a rock which, as Miss Fell has pointed out to me, is better suited to making perforated implements than the more splintery Borrowdale Volcanic tuffs of the Great Langdale sites. The Group XV implements are thought to come from a source in the Coniston and Torver fells, an upland area where a number of Bronze Age burials have been recorded.

The decline of the Great Langdale axe industry cannot be attributed to any single factor. Important reasons for this change are likely to have been the introduction of the shaft-holed stone battle-axe, and the flat bronze axe, into parts of southern England, to which the finished products of Great Langdale were previously traded. However, it is also possible that the arrival of a group of Beaker people, who did not use the polished stone axe in their equipment, contributed to its decline. The Cord-Zoned Beakers of the South-West Cumbrian group probably arrived from the north rather than from the south, and thus would have no direct trade connections of their own with southern England. Their distribution along the Cumberland coast, albeit somewhat thin, might help to prevent forest regeneration there. It is also noticeable that although both groups of Cumbrian Beakers probably have their immediate origins in the same area of north-east England, the histories of the two parts of Cumbria in which they settled are, so far as we know them, dissimilar. In south-west Cumbria, there is as yet very little evidence for the Food-Vessel communities which might be expected to overlap with Beaker groups there — one Yorkshire Vase and two pots of

uncertain type, one find of jet, two flint knives and a rock carving (Fell 1967). There is indeed something of a shortage of archaeological information about the Early Bronze Age from this area, and it is noticeable that much of the stronger evidence for occupation in the Middle Bronze Age reflects important connections with Ireland. In contrast, the presence of the second group of Beaker settlers in the Eden Valley represents one stage of its long-lasting prosperity; much evidence for Food-Vessel occupation has been recorded (Fell 1967), and the main concentrations of Bronze Age metalwork in Cumbria are found there. This apparent preference for the Eden Valley is partly due to the geographical advantages of fertile soils and good water supplies which satisfy some of the major requirements of permanent settlement; but it may partly be due to the accidents of discovery and recording.

#### **Acknowledgements.**

I am indebted to the following for permission to illustrate the Cumbrian Beakers: Barrow-in-Furness Museum; the Trustees of the British Museum, London; the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge; Tullie House Museum, Carlisle; Lancaster Museum; the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; also to the Society of Antiquaries, London; Miss K. S. Hodgson, F.S.A.; and H. Hornyold-Strickland, F.S.A. I am grateful to Mr R. Hogg of Tullie House for allowing access to material on display, and to other Museum curators for providing facilities for study. This paper originally formed part of a thesis submitted to the University of Edinburgh in 1967; I most warmly thank Professor Stuart Piggott for his encouragement and Miss Clare Fell for her very valuable advice and criticism during its preparation.

### Catalogue of Cumbrian Beakers.

Abbreviations: BBD=Bell Beaker derivative; C-Z=Cord-Zoned; S-N=Short-Necked; TH=Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

The numbers refer to find-spots marked on the map and to the figures.

#### *Lancashire.*

1. Dog Holes Cave, Warton, Lancs. BBD. Jackson 1912; Fell 1950. Lancaster Museum.

#### *South-West Cumbrian Group.*

2. Mecklin Park, Santon Bridge. C-Z. Spence 1937; Fell 1950. TH.
3. North End, Walney Island. C-Z. Cross 1950; Fell 1953. Barrow Museum.
4. Sizergh Fell. C-Z. Hughes 1904a; Fell 1953. Private possession.

#### *Eden Valley Group.*

5. Ainstable. S-N. Hodgson 1938; Fell 1950. Private possession.
6. Broomrigg. BBD, cordoned. Present paper. TH.
7. Brougham. S-N. Hartness and Stalker 1880; Fell 1950. Society of Antiquaries, London.
8. Clifton. S-N. Taylor 1879-80; Fell 1950. Ashmolean Museum.
9. Clifton. BBD. References as 8. TH.
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11. Castle Carrock. Atypical. Greenwell 1877, 379; Fell 1950. British Museum.
12. Crosby Fell. S-N. Clarke 1926; Fell 1950. University Museum, Cambridge.
13. Crosby Garrett. Type unknown. Greenwell 1877, 391; Fell 1950. British Museum.
14. "Cumberland". S-N. Abercromby 1912, I, no. 182; Fell 1950. TH.
15. Garlands. BBD. Fell 1950. TH.
16. Hunsonby. BBD. Abercromby 1902, pl. XXIX; Fell 1950. TH.
17. Newton Reigny. BBD. Fell 1950. TH.

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## Additional abbreviations:

<i>Ant. J.</i>	Antiquaries Journal.
<i>Arch.</i>	Archaeologia.
<i>J. Anth. Inst.</i>	Journal of the Anthropological Institute.
<i>JBAA</i>	Journal of the British Archaeological Association.
<i>PPS</i>	Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society.
<i>TLCAS</i>	Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society.
<i>YAJ</i>	Yorkshire Archaeological Journal.

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