

ART. I.—*A Beaker burial on Sizergh Fell, near Kendal.*
By CLARE FELL, F.S.A.

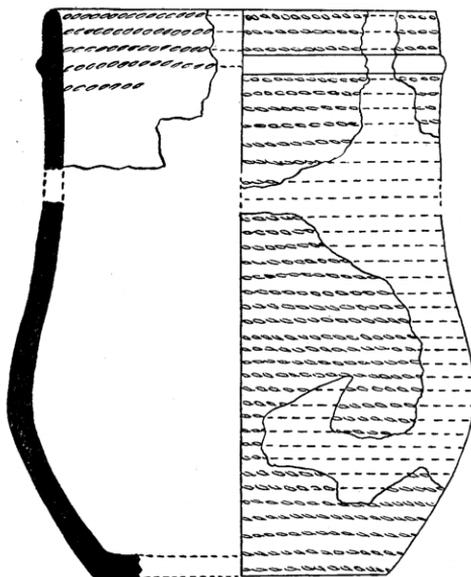
Read at Penrith, April 25th, 1953.

THROUGH the kindness of Mr H. Hornyold-Strickland, F.S.A., and of Mr B. L. Thompson on behalf of the National Trust, I have recently been able to study the fragments of pottery which Professor T. McKenny Hughes recovered from a cairn on Sizergh Fell in 1902 or 1903, and which have been preserved at Sizergh Castle.¹ These sherds are undoubtedly part of a type B.1 Beaker or, in Professor Stuart Piggott's recent terminology, belong to the Bell Beaker wares introduced into this country by a pastoral people, supplementing their livelihood by hunting, in the years following 1900-1800 B.C. The vessel has been reconstructed at the Cambridge University Museum of Archæology and Ethnology, and is now at Sizergh Castle once more.

Its original height was approximately 14.8 cm., the diameter at rim 10 cm. and at base 7.7 cm. (fig. 1). It is decorated all over the outer surface with horizontal rows of twisted cord, about 3 mm. apart, impressed into the soft clay before firing. There is a low cordon 1.2 cm. below the lip, and four or five rows of twisted cord ornament inside the rim. Thirty-five rows of ornament still remain on the outer surface, three above and the rest below the cordon. The vessel is too fragmentary for one to be certain whether or not the cord was wound spirally round it. The fabric is well baked, reddish brown on the surfaces and showing black in the fracture, and has been stiffened with small chips of silicious grit. The

¹ CW2 iv 71-79.

average thickness of the walls is 5 mm., and they have been built up by the coil or ring method, by hand. Mr G. F. Willmot, F.S.A., tells me that internal cord decoration is fairly common on beakers of this type both in this country and in Holland and Germany, but is rarer in France, and that the cordon is also found on the "Schnurbecher" of Holland and Germany.



Type B beaker from Sizergh Fell. ($\frac{1}{2}$)

Finds of the Beaker period in the Lake Counties are mainly confined to the Eden Valley, where the constricted or A/C type occurs, but there seems to have been a coastal movement by B or Bell-Beaker people, and it is to this group that the Sizergh Fell vessel belongs,² as was recently noted by the Hon. Marjorie Cross, F.S.A.³ Sherds of this type are known from the Dog Holes cave, Warton;

² Cf. my paper in "The early cultures of North-West Europe", *H. M. Chadwick Memorial Studies*, 43-50.

³ CW2 1 15 f.

Sizergh Fell; North End, Walney Island and Mecklin Park, Santon Bridge. A perforated stone axe-hammer found at Row Farm, Waberthwaite,⁴ is of a type usually associated with the A/C or constricted group and not with the B or Bell beakers.

In addition to the foregoing finds, the sandhills site at Eskmeals⁵ was probably occupied at the same time, and it is just possible that the pot mentioned in the following extract from *The Westmorland Advertiser and Kendal Chronicle* of Saturday, 29 March 1828 (for which I must thank Mr B. L. Thompson), was also a beaker—since the old name for such a vessel was “drinking-cup”:—

“There are now lying in our office two remarkable relics of antiquity, found in a Druid’s Temple about 21 miles from Lancaster, on the road to Richmond, by Mr John Tatham, coal proprietor of Hawes. One is a spearhead of bronze, about 4 inches long and one broad, with a rib on each side of the centre. The other bears more venerable marks of antiquity being a flint arrowhead about an inch and a quarter long and half an inch wide. The formation of the latter is very curious and even with the assistance of modern iron implements, would appear to be made with some difficulty. Mr Tatham informs us, that in exploring the ruins, a number of other curiosities have been found; one of them he describes as an antique drinking vessel.”

The “Druid’s Temple” in question may be the stone circle near Casterton, part of which still survives.⁶ I should also like to draw attention to the stone object found in a Middle Bronze Age urn on Lancaster Moor,⁷ which resembles an archer’s wrist-guard of a type usually associated with B Beakers. This may well represent a legacy from the B Beaker folk when they lived on our coastal fringe.

Beyond our district, Beaker pottery of type B has been found at Glenluce Sands, Wigtownshire,⁸ on a sandhills

⁴ CW2 xi 115.

⁵ CW2 xxxvi 20-23 and 226; xxxviii 311.

⁶ *RCHM Westmorland*, 66 f.

⁷ *British Arch. Assoc. Journ.* xxxiii (1877), 125-127.

⁸ PSAScot. lxviii 189, no. 285.

site similar to North End, Walney Island; in a barrow at Kirkhaugh, near Alston⁹; and with a burial at Lea Green, Grassington, Yorks.¹⁰ Further afield the type occurs at Newborough Warren, Anglesea¹¹; and in South Wales, beakers from Sutton 268', Llandow parish, Glamorgan, and from Penderyn, Brecknock, are of similar late B.I type, both having a cordon below the rim.¹² Sir Cyril Fox, in discussing the latter finds, put these vessels in a late stage of development in this country, and thought that the expansion of B.I Beaker folk from the Upper Thames area to South Wales may even have taken place as late as 1500 B.C. He showed that the central earthen barrow with stone defining ring was of Breton origin; these features appear to have been retained, though with reduced grandeur, in the cairn at Kirkhaugh and, with less certainty, at Sizergh Fell.

Finally, there are three possible routes by which these newcomers could have reached our district:—

(a) By the Tyne/Irthing gap to the lower reaches of the Eden, and then westward along the northern shore of the Solway and southward down the Cumberland coast.

(b) Across the Pennines from Yorkshire, by the Wharfe or the Ayre, and thence down the Wenning and the Lune to the head of Morecambe Bay.

(c) Northward by the Irish Sea—the Atlantic route—from Wales to the Cumberland coast and thence to Glencuce and the west coast of Scotland. It is possible, however, that this movement may at times have operated in reverse.

Whichever route was used, the Beaker people with their late Neolithic culture, already in contact with men who had a knowledge of the use of bronze and of gold, came by routes already known since the development of the

⁹ AA4 xiii (1936) 207-217. Mr G. F. Willmot tells me that the pot from this barrow, published as a food-vessel, is definitely a B Beaker.

¹⁰ *Yorks Arch. Journ.* xxix 361, fig. 8d.

¹¹ *Trans. Anglesea Ant. Soc. & Field Club*, 1927, fig. 3.

¹² *Archæologia* lxxxix (1943) 89 f. and pl. XXXIX a and b.

stone-axe trade in late Neolithic times.¹³ The traces of their habitation in our district are so few that it is impossible to give a firm date for their arrival here. As we have already seen, Sir Cyril Fox considered that the Bell-Beaker settlement in South Wales may even have been as late as 1500 B.C. Here, in the Lake Counties, it is probable that the settlement was also late, though 1500 B.C. seems to me rather too conservative an estimate.

¹³ CW2 l. 1 f.