

Bronze Age Pottery from Stanton Moor.

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In this paper the terms used for the various parts of a cinerary urn are those given in Abercromby's "Bronze Age Pottery." It is hoped that the accompanying rough diagram (fig. 1) may help readers to follow the descriptions in the text.

STANTON Moor is roughly $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles long, and $\frac{3}{4}$ mile wide. To the east of it lies the valley of the Derwent, and from the west there is a view of Elton and Youlgreave and the hills beyond. The road between Stanton and Birchover forms its western boundary. The cinerary urns and incense cups to be recorded in this paper were found on the Stanton Estate in a quarry which lies close to this road and to the east of it. It is the most northerly of a series of three or more quarries leased and worked by Mr. Ralph Twyford, and is situated $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles south-south-east of Bakewell and 4 miles west-north-west of Matlock.

Judging from his "Ten Years' Diggings" Bateman did not invade Stanton Moor to any great extent, and found nothing of special interest there. Many urns found by various people on this moor are, however, recorded in his "Vestiges," and at the Barn Farm, Birchover, there is a large plain cinerary urn, and another rudely ornamented, as well as two incense-cups, one of which is plain and hardly looks like a genuine incense-cup, while the other is attractive in form and decoration.¹ At this farm there is also

¹ A list of urns found on Stanton Moor and figures of those at Barn Farm will be found in "Birchover, Its Prehistoric and Druidical Remains" by J. P. Heathcote.

an early type of bronze celt, flat and wide and devoid of flanges. All these were found on Stanton Moor. Moreover, during 1926, Mr. J. C. Heathcote and his son have been working at a barrow there, and have found a plain incense-cup and fragments of pottery representing four or more cinerary urns. One of these fragments is particularly ornate and interesting, but it is later than the Bronze Age. In addition it may be worth mentioning that quarrymen declare that in the ordinary course of work numbers of fragments of pottery are carted away to the refuse-tip.

Whenever it is desired to extend the area of a quarry, the superficial beds of softer material covering the solid rock must first be removed; and during such a process at Mr. Twyford's quarry in August, 1925, some workmen unearthed three urns. Of one of these only the lower portion, or "body," was recovered. The second was in small fragments; but the third (Fig. 2), though not complete has been skilfully repaired by Mr. J. W. Baggaley of Weston Park Museum, Sheffield. Its height is 15.2 inches; its diameter at the lip is 11.6 inches, and at the base 5 inches. On the inside of the lip there is a concave projecting moulding ornamented with crisscross incised lines, and having six perforations. The upper tier, or "rim" was made separately and applied to the second tier, or "neck." The rim is ornamented with a chevron-pattern, formed of triangles hanging and upright between two single lines of indentations made with a finger-nail. All the upright triangles are filled with lines parallel to one of their sides, and in most cases to the left side. Some of the hanging triangles are similarly filled, but four consecutive ones contain finger-nail prints. Possibly the neck was also made as a separate piece and then applied to the bowl-portion, or "body," while the paste was still wet. It is ornamented with crisscross lines terminated below by nail-prints. As is usually the case,

the body is plain. This urn is on view in the window of the Post Office at Birchover.

Again, at the end of August, 1926, during the process of "baring" the rock at the same quarry a workman found two urns, one (no. 1) of which is represented by a few fragments, while the other is capable of restoration. As seen in figure 3 the rim of no. 1 has a chevron-pattern of hatched triangles resting on three horizontal lines. No trace is left of similar lines above the triangles, which are filled with lines drawn parallel to one of their sides; in those that are upright these lines slope downwards from left to right; in the hanging ones they incline the reverse way. On the neck are crossed lines forming diamonds or a lattice resting on five horizontal ones. The other urn (no. 2), which has one side complete, and most, if not all, the fragments from the other side preserved, has its rim filled with herring-bone pattern. The ornamentation of its neck is very rudely and irregularly traced, but it consists of upright triangles shaded with lines parallel to the right side, except in an individual instance where they are reversed. Between these the spaces are filled with hanging triangles with three (once four) lines parallel to the right side and others to the base.

The workman who found these urns at once reported the matter to Mr. Twyford, who in turn communicated with Mr. Moore Wilson, the agent for the Stanton Estate. Mr. Moore Wilson asked me to go with him to inspect the site of the discovery and to make arrangements for a thorough investigation of it; and it was decided that this should be undertaken as soon as possible. But Mr. Twyford declared that work of the kind was opposed to his interests, as he intended to erect a steam crane on this very spot, and that each day that he was prevented from doing so would result in financial loss to him. However, in the end he consented on condition that the digging should be done with all possible speed. Under these

circumstances it was impossible to spend any of the available time in making a plan of the site; and, what was equally disconcerting, it was inevitable that the work should be carried out more hastily and roughly than was desirable. At once a small band of voluntary workers was collected, and the main part of the digging was done from the morning of the 6th till midday of the 9th of September. A start was made where the two above-mentioned urns had been found, the first object being to make a clean working face. All the urns met with during this short period had been deposited at the bottom of a bed of sand with a maximum depth of about 2 feet. This was covered with stones of moderate size over-grown with turf and it rested on a clayey bed. The conditions favoured the diggers: the sand could be easily removed with a light fork; and, when the interments had been originally made, in each case a hole had been dug, the urn had been placed in it, and then the cremated remains—bones and charcoal—had been thrown in. As these were probably collected and carried to the hole in a cloth or skin, and it would be no easy matter to direct them from such a source to the mouth of the urn, part of them had been scattered outside each urn; and, consequently, wherever an urn occurred, the diggers were first warned of its proximity by a black layer of charcoal and bone. In a few instances interments had been made in a hole without an urn.

Not one of the urns was inverted: three (nos. 5, 6 and 12) were lying on their sides, presumably through carelessness in the original filling-in of the holes; and two more were in a sloping position. Only one (no. 8) can be said to have been deliberately covered with a large stone, and even here there were no upright supporting-stones. Two urns (nos. 5 and 6) were lying so close together that there was only the merest fraction of an inch between them. During this period of $3\frac{1}{2}$ days

eight urns and three incense-cups were found. Of these, six urns and all the incense-cups are practically complete. Of the other two urns, one (no. 11) had the neck telescoped into the body, which consequently was thrust out of shape and broken. The other (No. 3) was made of such poor material that it fell to pieces when lifted.

Fig. 4 gives a general idea of the ornamentation of the urns, but some detailed description of it seems to be called for. As stated above, No. 3 fell into small fragments, which individually were extremely fragile. Figure 5 shows the ornamentation of its rim as represented on one fragment. The oblique lines are deeply incised, and are bounded above and also below by a horizontal line produced by means of cord impressed upon the soft paste. The inner margin of the lip is slightly widened out, and has two cord-pattern lines. There is no marked overlap of the lower margin of the rim separating it from the neck, but only a slight moulding reminiscent of the "shoulder" which in earlier cinerary urns separates the neck from the body. Below this moulding and parallel to it is a line of cord-marks.

The height of No. 4 is 10.2 inches; the diameter at the lip is 8 inches, and at the base 4 inches. Both rim and neck are covered with herring-bone pattern. No. 5 is very different from the others in shape: the rim is short, the neck long, and the body short in proportion to the whole. The ornamentation is also peculiar. The rim is encircled by four lines. At first sight the neck appears to have the same pattern; but on closer inspection the lines on it are seen to be formed spirally, the spirals being drawn from left to right downwards. Below they are bounded by a fringe of vertical notches placed on the shoulder. This one and No. 6, lying in close proximity and on their sides, had been crushed slightly out of shape, so that their mouths are oval instead of circular. No.

5 is 7.3 inches high; the diameter at the base is 4 inches, but at the lip it varies from 5.7 to 7 inches.

The height of no. 6 is 4.5 inches; at the lip its diameter varies from 4 to 4.2 inches, at the base from 2.9 to 3 inches. Much of the ornamentation is obliterated, and nowhere is it very clear. On the rim is a chequer-pattern, the panels being filled alternately with vertical and horizontal lines of impressed cord. The neck appears to have been encircled by three lines crossed at intervals by vertical ones, all of impressed cord (Figure 6). The sides of the body are slightly concave.

All the ornamentation of No. 7 is very boldly executed: that of the rim consists of evenly placed vertical lines enclosed between three horizontal ones above and three below. That of the neck is clearly shown in the plate. It should be noticed that the shoulder is absent, so that neck and body have become one. The pattern on the rim of No. 8 is not unlike that of No. 7, but has been effected by means of impressed cord instead of a sharp instrument. The neck has oblique parallel lines resting on a fringe of vertical indentations.

No. 9 is an elaborately decorated incense-cup. It was found inside and at the bottom of urn No. 3. It is strange that a vessel of such good ware should be associated with one of such coarse and friable material. The pattern on the sides and base are shown in Figures 7 and 8. The inside of the lip is dotted with pin-pricks. There are two perforations an inch apart at the base of one side. The height of the sides is 1.3 inches; the diameter at the lip 2.7 inches, at the base of the sides 3.1 inches.

No. 10 is as rude as no. 9 is exquisite. It lacks regularity of shape, and in places pieces have flaked off the outside surface. It was found near urn No. 8 and under the same covering-stone.

No. 11 is a large plain urn. It was found with the neck telescoped into the body, which consequently was

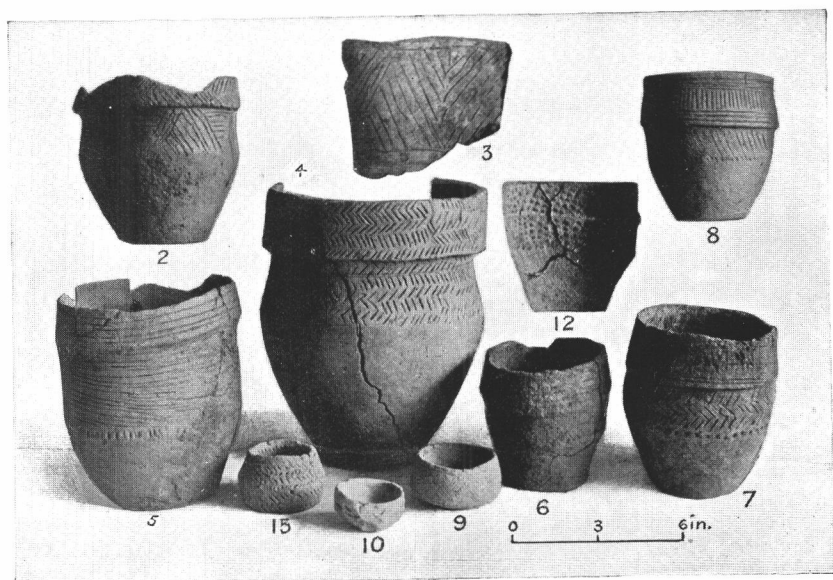


Fig. 4.—Urns and Incense Cups.

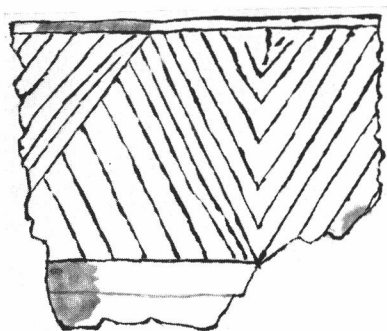


Fig. 5.

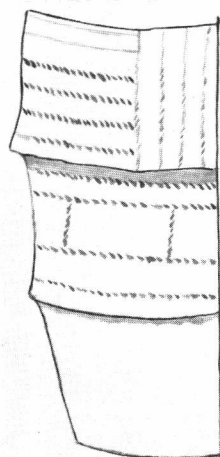


Fig. 6.

Fig. 5.—Fragment of Urn No. 3— $\frac{1}{2}$.

Fig. 6.—Ornamentation of Urn No. 6.

much cracked and broken: and the upper part of the rim was missing. In its original and complete form it must have been rather more than a foot high.

The decoration of No. 12 is entirely different from that of any other vessel from this site. Indentations have been made with a toothed or comb-like tool, and these are arranged in rows, obliquely on the rim and vertically on the neck.

No. 15 was found near Nos. 5 and 6. It is a shouldered incense-cup ornamented with rows of short, oblique lines forming some resemblance to a rude herring-bone pattern. It has six perforations on the shoulder.

As stated above, the foregoing were found up till the time when the limits of the bed of sand in an easterly direction had been reached on the 9th of September. But two more urns were found later as the result of digging towards the south and west.

No. 13 was of soft and coarse ware, and was lying beneath a large, upright, pillar-like stone, the weight of which had crushed it. It was impossible to extract it whole, but the complete set of fragments is in the possession of Major Harris. One of these (Figure 9) shows the type of ornamentation. On the rim were upright hatched triangles of impressed cord, the spaces between these being left blank. Their apices were cut by two encircling lines, also of cord-pattern. On the neck there was a series of arrowhead-shaped indentations placed at irregular intervals.

No. 14 was found by quarrymen during the absence of the authorized diggers. Like No. 11 it is entirely devoid of decoration, and nearly the whole of the rim is lost. When complete it was probably about 10 inches high, about 8 inches in diameter at the lip, and 6 inches at the base.

No implements were found: in fact the only relics of any

interest were two quartz pebbles, two flakes of flint, and two small fragments of bronze.

The following extracts from the *British Museum Guide to the Bronze Age* throw light on the subject of this paper. "All [the Bronze Age sepulchral pottery] was made without the potter's wheel, and the baking was often imperfect, owing to the use of an open fire; but the mistake of calling any of it 'sun-baked' is as common as it is elementary. The clay is generally mixed with minute pebbles, or fragments of broken flint, quartz, chalk, or shells, perhaps added intentionally to strengthen the ware: while for some finer vessels the clay was tempered by the admixture of grit or sharp sand."¹

"It is not surprising that many of these [cinerary] urns, being of considerable size as well as of coarse and ill-baked ware, have only been recovered in a very fragmentary condition. Their magnitude, however, says something for the technical skill of the potter, and the grit that is noticeable in the paste was necessary to prevent the clay from cracking during the process of firing. The usual form consists of two truncated cones placed base to base, the upper one forming a deep overlapping brim to which the ornamentation is in many cases confined. . . . The decoration was executed with a twisted thong, with a pointed tool, or with the finger-point and finger nail, the size of which suggests that the potters belonged to the female sex, as is generally the case among savages at the present day."²

"*Incense-cups*. The name of this division is due to Colt Hoare, and though purely conjectural, may be retained till some more plausible explanation of their use is forthcoming. They are intimately associated with the burning of the dead, but are not by any means as common as cinerary urns, inside which they are very frequently

¹ B. M. G. (1920 ed.), p. 66.

² B. M. G. (1920 ed.), pp. 70, 72.

found. In shape and decoration they vary considerably, but are generally pierced in one or more places as if to assist combustion In some cases the bottom is ornamented with cruciform or other designs which are in all probability devoid of any special significance. As some specimens are unpierced it is unlikely that they were used for incense, even if we suppose incense was then procurable, but the same objection is valid against their use as braziers to carry sacred fire from the family hearth to the funeral pyre; and the perforations negative the idea that they were used as lamps.”¹

It has been suggested that the perforations were intended for the insertion of thongs for suspension; but this could hardly have been their object when there were only two holes, and those two very near to one another, as in No. 9, or in the Barn Farm example.

As regards the depth at which the urns were buried, Lord Abercromby in his “Bronze Age Pottery” writes as follows:—“When cremation became the prevailing manner of disposing of the dead, it was no longer necessary to dig a deep grave. . . . A circular hole from 1½ to 2 feet deep was dug for the reception of the urn, and the hole was sometimes covered with a flat stone.”²

According to Abercromby cinerary urns were first used in Bronze Age II (B.C. 1400-1150), and continued to be used till the end of the Bronze Age. Some of the earlier types appear to be adaptations from the food-vessels. At first the rim was narrow; but as time went on it became broader and deeper, and inclined outwards towards its lower margin. In the earlier examples the neck was concave, and remained so for a long time, but gradually became flatter, till finally it united with the body as an undivided whole, through the disappearance of

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 75, 76.

² *Bronze Age Pottery*, published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, vol. II., p. 82.

the shoulder which originally separated the one from the other. The body was usually rounded and convex; and the diameter of the shoulder, when it was well developed, was as great as or even greater than that of the lip. Ornamentation is not very different from that of food-vessels: the same motives occur in both types of vessels, but in cinerary urns it is more simple. Incense-cups, though contemporary with cinerary urns, also occurred with later types of vessels.

Some time before cinerary urns fell into disuse, barrows were found to be unnecessary, and the cremated remains were then interred in small flat cemeteries or urn-fields; and it is natural to ask which of these was the site at Birchover—barrow or urnfield? It has already been pointed out that there was urgent need for the work to be carried through speedily, and that consequently no ground-plan could be attempted. If it had been possible to plot the position of each urn, some clue to the answer to this question might have been provided. But undoubtedly there was nothing to suggest that they had been deposited in regular lines and at fixed intervals. Before the excavation was begun there was no surface indication that this site differed in any respect from the rest of the fringes of the quarry. It did not rise above the natural slope of its surroundings to any perceptible extent. Large blocks of waste stone had been dumped on it, and close by lay two immense beams from an old crane. Externally, the only possible hint that man had meddled with the place in prehistoric times was the presence of two or three large stones above the turf, and these might have suggested a cist to an imaginative mind. As it turned out, it was here that the large flattish stone covering urn No. 8 was met with. Internally, the bed of sand was found to grow thinner towards the east and south, but this might equally occur whether the bed was a natural deposit or had been put there artificially;

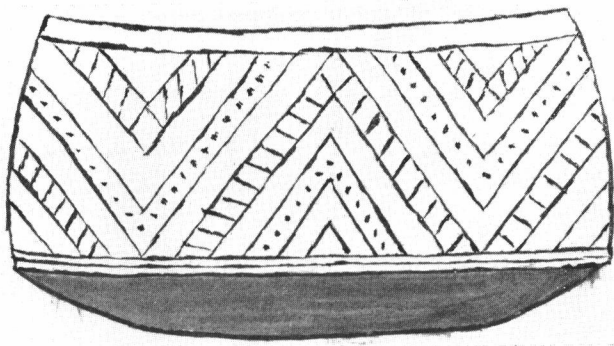


Fig. 7.—Side view of Incense Cup (No. 9).



Fig. 8.—Ornamentation of base of Incense Cup No. 9.

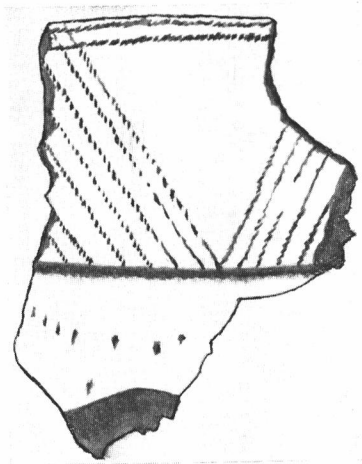


Fig. 9.—Fragment of Urn No. 13.

on the west it had been partly removed before our excavation began; and on the north the quarry had cut into it. Such flimsy evidence as this may suggest that the sand had been laid down by human agency in order to construct a barrow; but it must be borne in mind that there is at least one other patch of sand in the close vicinity of the same quarry. Moreover, when at a later date, digging was carried forward in a south-westerly direction and an urn was found there, the regular bed of sand had disappeared, and only small irregular pockets of it were met with lying among large blocks of stone apparently in their natural positions; and this sand was more ferruginous and of firmer texture. Here the surface consisted of stones imbedded in peat.

My thanks are due to the volunteers whose energy made the excavation possible, and especially to Major Harris, who not only worked indefatigably, but also undertook the preliminary cleaning of the vessels. I wish also to thank the following:—Mr. A. Leslie Armstrong for his help; Mr. J. W. Baggaley for his admirable restoration of those urns which required it, and for the repeated trouble he has taken in producing excellent photographs, and for permission to use them; the Keeper of the Department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities, British Museum, and the Director of the Clarendon Press, Oxford, for permission to make extracts; and the Society of Antiquaries for the loan of their illustrations of the urns and the ornamentation of the base of an incense-cup.
