

BEAKER SHERDS FROM STENSON, DERBYSHIRE.

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A FEW years ago Mr. George Turton discovered what seems to have been a casual hearth, in a quarry face near to the village of Stenson, Derbyshire. This village lies to the south of Derby, and the grid reference for the site is 331301 (1-inch Derby and Burton-upon-Trent O/S map: 120).

The sherds came from an elongated patch of burnt earth and charcoal which showed up on the gravel face. This face has now been levelled down. The site lies on a ridge of old river gravel which rises some 60 ft.

From the hearth, Mr. Turton collected fragments of pottery, a sample of burnt wood, several heat fractured pebbles, a few flint scraps, and a little burnt bone. Recently he showed the finds to the writer, and kindly gave permission for their publication.

CONNECTIONS OF THE POTTERY.

This find of pottery is extremely important for the archaeology of the district, as these are the first known Beaker sherds found on the Trent gravels. All the other known examples of Beaker ware in Derbyshire come from within or on the edge of the limestone district, and are mostly from barrows. Our most low-lying find until now has been the Beaker found on gravel at Rocester. This Beaker is now in the Stoke-on-Trent City Museum and Art Gallery.

The affinities of our local Beakers which belong to the first half of the second millennium B.C., are with those of the north-easterly districts of Yorkshire, rather than with those of the East Anglian districts. It seems most probable that the first Beaker users to enter the region

came in from the north-east, during the later part of the Neolithic, via the Trent, and the Stenson sherds give support to such a view.

The pendant triangles on the lower part of Beaker I are paralleled locally at Grindlow,¹ and at Stanshope²; and they are paralleled in Yorkshire at Barrow 116, Aldro.³ The criss-cross lines in Beaker fragments 5 are paralleled locally at Smerrill Moor,⁴ and in Yorkshire at Barrow 63, Garton Slack.⁵

The coarse ware fragments found at Stenson are particularly interesting, as this is the only known instance in Derbyshire of coarse pottery being found in definite association with Beaker sherds. At the same time, there is no doubt from the colour, texture, and fabric of these sherds that they are closely allied to the Beaker sherds. On the other hand, they are much coarser, and they are decorated with motifs which are taken from the earlier Neolithic B or Peterborough, repertoire; it should be noted here that the style of ornament on sherd A is similar to that found on a roughly stab-decorated pot from the barrow on the rampart of Arbor Low circle. This pot was found there with another of Food Vessel type, but having marked affinities with Neolithic B ware.⁶ At the same time, it is as well to point out, that an A Beaker from Stakor Hill, in a fabric slightly coarser than usual for Beakers, was decorated with this motif.⁷

This union of Beaker fabric with Neolithic type decoration perhaps demonstrates overlap between earlier communities and intrusive ones in the transition period between Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age; but in view of the scarcity of unequivocally Neolithic B pottery sherds in the district, it is perhaps best to assume that the first Beaker users to arrive in the district had already

¹ The Reliquary, Vol III, p. 206.

² *Ten Years' Diggings in Celtic and Saxon Grave Hills in the Counties of Derby, Stafford and York.* Thomas Bateman. (1861), p. 158.

³ *Forty Years' Researches in British and Saxon Burial Mounds of East Yorkshire.* J. R. Mortimer, p. 54, pl. XII, 95.

⁴ *Ibid* p. 103.

⁵ *Ibid* p. 215, pl. LXXIII.

⁶ Archaeological Journal, 1932, p. 148. S. Piggott, *The Neolithic Pottery of the British Isles.*

⁷ *Ten Years' Diggings, etc.,* p. 80.

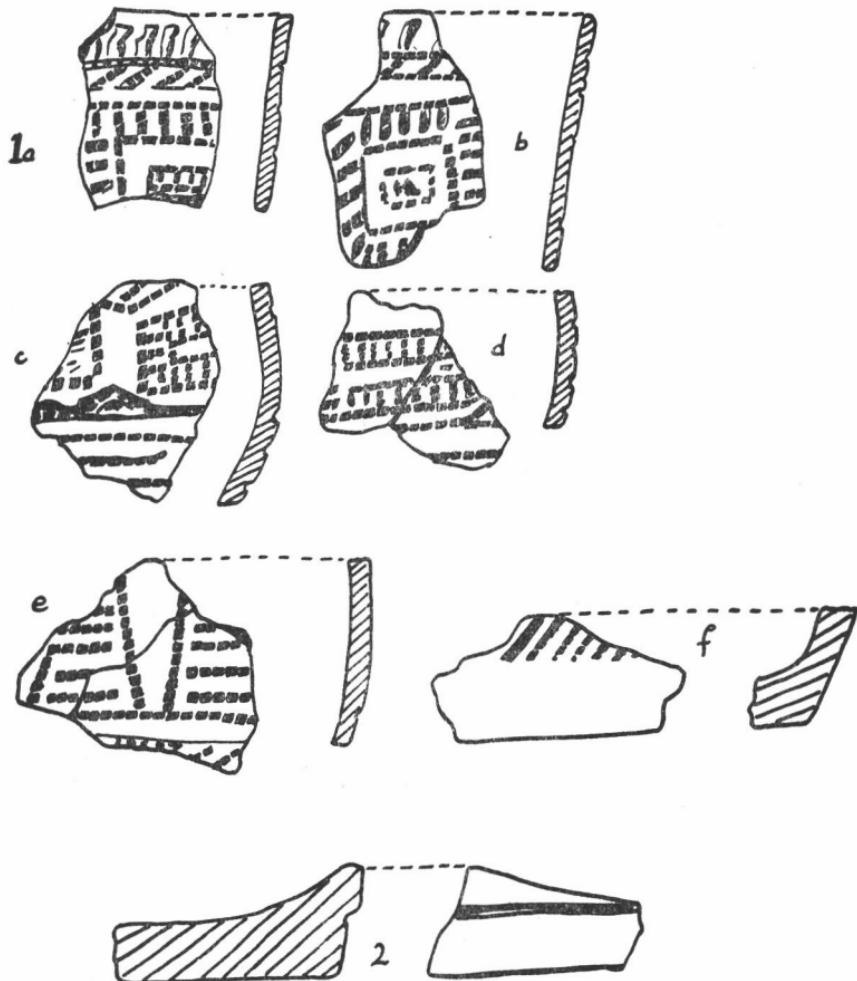


Fig. 1. All $\frac{1}{2}$

FIG. 1.—1a-b: rim fragment of A Beaker.
 c-e: fragments of body of same vessel.
 f: base fragment of same vessel.

FIG. 2.—base fragment of Beaker.

(Scale: half size).

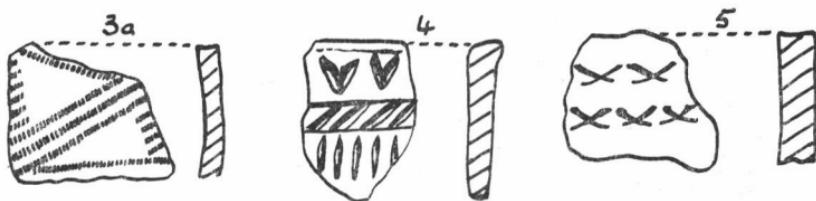


Fig. 2 $\frac{1}{4}$

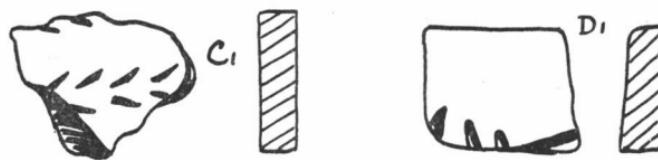
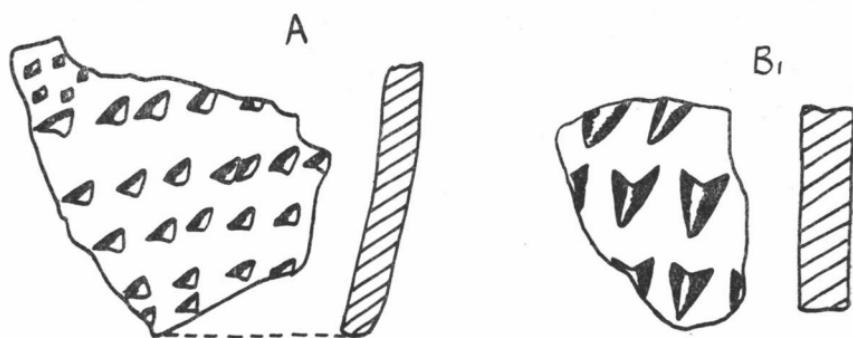


fig. 3 $\frac{1}{4}$

FIG. 2.—Small sherds of A Beakers.

FIG. 3.—Fragments of coarse ware found with Beaker sherds.

(Scale: half size)

picked up Neolithic B traits elsewhere, before their arrival in these parts.

At Easton Down, in Wiltshire,⁸ a Beaker settlement was found, in connection with the flint mines there, and true Beaker sherds were found along with coarser fragments, similar to Beaker ware in many respects. One Beaker from this site, of the A type, was decorated with rough stab marks. Other fragments, in material thicker and coarser than the usual Beaker fabric, were decorated with stab marks made with sticks and bird bones. It therefore seems possible that this coarser, more roughly decorated ware was used for the commoner domestic ware of the people who buried A Beakers with their dead. As domestic sites of these people are extremely rare, any indication as to what other types of pottery they used, besides the true Beaker, is most welcome.

Unfortunately, the site has now been levelled down, but it is possible that trenching in the area might reveal traces of other hearth.

DESCRIPTION OF POTTERY.

Beaker sherds. Figs. 1 and 2.

1a and b. Rim fragments.

1c and d. Upper curve of the belly of the vessel.

1e. Part of lower curve of the belly of the vessel.

1f. Base fragments.

The technique of the vessel, in buff-coloured fabric, is quite good, and the decoration is executed in a rather coarse notching, in normal Beaker style.

Figs. 1, 2. A Beaker base reddish coloured, rather poor fabric, though hard. It has an unusually well marked foot construction.

Figs. 2, 3a. Two scraps of fine light buff Beaker ware. These fragments are of hard thin fabric, and the decoration is clearly executed in finely serrated notching. Only one fragment is illustrated.

Figs. 2, 4. Rim fragment of another Beaker. Fine,

⁸ Wilts. Arch. Magazine. XLV, p. 350. J. F. S. Stone, *A Beaker Settlement at Easton Down*.

reddish-buff fabric. Finger nail impressions, or perhaps stick impressions just below the rim, and below these, lines made with a pointed stick.

Figs. 2, 5. Coarse Beaker sherd, with rows of criss-cross decoration, probably made with a pointed stick.

All these fragments seem to be of Abercromby's type A Beaker.⁹

Coarse pottery. Fig. 3.

A1. Sherds of an open bowl type of vessel, in a hard well baked buff-coloured ware. Decorated with roughly triangular stabs, probably made with the end of a stick. The fabric of these sherds shews distinct similarity to the Beaker fabric. It has few grits, and is quite hard. There are two fragments of this vessel, only one of which is illustrated.

B1. Fragments of a hard, well baked though coarse vessel. Few grits. The sherds are decorated with pointed stick impressions, arranged in such a way as to form triangular motifs. Only one fragment is illustrated.

C1. One of two small fragments of another hard baked coarse vessel, decorated in the same manner as B, but the stabs are executed with a thinner stick.

D1 and 2. Fragments similar to C, reddish buff in colour.

Both B and C sherds are of a reddish buff colour. A few other fragments of coarse type are too small for illustration.

BONE AND ASH.

Unfortunately the small amount of bone and ash from the hearth was not enough for analysis.

⁹ *Bronze Age Pottery.* Vol. I. J. Abercromby, Oxford (1912).