

Interpretation

The excavation has proved that the circle is not a Middle Bronze Age cremation circle, although it could still be a circle of that date. The fragment of pottery has a poor flakey fabric, is brown and quite light, and appears to be a piece of the body of a cinerary urn. The sherd presents several problems. It could have been scraped up with the earth and stones for the cairn, which may be simply an unintentional swelling in the original bank. If the cairn is a deliberate feature, then it is possible that someone mistook the circle for a cremation circle, or that the circle was held in some reverence, and added a burial to its perimeter.

The one acre enclosure held two circles, the second of which when sectioned yielded a reddened patch, which may have been a hearth, and may be another pointer to the circles being huts. However, the enclosure is in a very exposed position, and could never have been more than a bothie for summering animals on the moors, assuming that the enclosure is not just a line of cleared stones and is related to the two circles.

If the excavated circle is a hut, the absence of occupation remains inside the ring-bank is strange. The entrance, facing S.W., is where it might be expected. The large overlapping flagstones have been found on Romano-British sites in the Pennines, but the absence of the ubiquitous pottery suggests a pre-Roman date. Ignoring the single sherd, the depth of accumulated soil and peat inside the ring-bank suggests a remote date for the structure; and a consideration of the other features on Beeley Moor suggests a pre-Roman date and a non-sepulchral explanation for the earthworks.

The Totley circle was excavated in search of a hut, and a cremation circle was found; the Beeley circle was excavated in search of a cremation cemetery but, while no funerary evidence was found to explain the very substantial ring-bank, it seems probable that a pre-Roman hut was found. It would be satisfying to be able to say that this is a Bronze Age hut, the occupants of which were buried in the vicinity, but the evidence has not been found.

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ARMOUR IN DERBYSHIRE CHURCHES

By R. JEAVONS

ON the death of a member of the landed gentry, it was for a long time the custom to display on his coffin, and then hang above his tomb, his funerary achievements. These achievements consisted of a helmet bearing the deceased's crest, a sword, a pair of gauntlets and a pair of spurs, an escutcheon of his arms, and often a tabard and banner as well. This

custom was most widely carried out from the mid-16th to the late 17th century, although there are examples of earlier achievements, and occasional cases of the revival of this custom during the 18th century.

The types of armour used were at first diversified, but during the 17th century came to follow a standardized pattern. During the 16th and early 17th centuries, genuine helmets were decorated and adapted for funerary use. The funerary armourer would often use an outdated helmet of plain design, and would insert a lining and fit a spike and wooden crest. Sometimes he would have to add gorget plates to the helmet, and thus we find 17th-century gorgets fitted to late 16th-century helmets. Much of our knowledge of English helmets before 1600 comes from funerary examples. English armour tended, as a general rule, to be less decorated than continental pieces, and it is often only the latter that have survived to be placed in museums or private collections.

However, by the mid-17th century, the funerary helmet had become standardized into a made-up open-face helmet, often with five face-bars. The pattern was the same with swords and gauntlets. By the mid-17th century genuine pieces were no longer used, and a special type of funerary gauntlet with flat blades instead of lamed finger-joints, and a short cruciform funerary sword, had come into general use.

Most of the armour to be found in churches today can be traced to funerary use, although sometimes armour used by a town guard or trained band may still remain. However, by the end of the 17th century the general custom of hanging achievements had ceased, and the examples in churches became a prey for restorers, vandals, thieves and neglect. As such, it is now rare to find examples of this once widespread custom.

Derbyshire has only three traceable examples still in churches, and is poorly off when compared with other counties. Of the three specimens, the helmet at Swarkeston is of a type made in the third quarter of the 16th century, and may have been used at a funeral at the start of the 17th century. The Bonsall helmet was constructed for a funeral during the first quarter of the 17th century, and the gauntlet at Hartington could well have been placed in the church by 1650.

The helmet at Bonsall

This helmet is of the type specially made for funeral use during the first quarter of the 17th century. It consists of a two-piece skull with a low, rimmed comb. It has a combined visor and upper bevor unit pivoting at the same two points. The upper bevor has a five-hole breath pattern on both sides, and on the visor is a single continuous slit to represent sights. The gorgets are deep 17th-century pikeman's gorgets, riveted together and to the skull, but still with the original keyhole-fastening device showing. The helmet is painted black outside, and red inside. There is a wooden crest, of a mount of fern, attached by a funerary spike to the top of the skull.

Location: On the north wall of the north aisle.

Associated funeral: Ferne family.

The gauntlet at Hartington (Plate XIIIa)

This is a good-quality gauntlet, c. 1600, designed for the left hand. It is unusual in that it is complete, with all the finger and thumb lames in position. These lames have squared ends, and not the more usual triangular sections. The leather inner-gauntlet is in position and in fair condition, although this may possibly be a somewhat later addition. This inner lining, the lames and knuckle-section are secured by brass rivets. The gauntlet has been painted black, and has been decorated for funerary use by three yellow bands painted around the cuff. On the palm end of the lower wrist section, a triangular-shaped section has been cut away, and has been partly replaced by a small plate being riveted on.

Location: In a glass case on the north wall of the chancel.

Associated funeral: Bateman family, mid-17th century.

The helmet at Swarkeston (Plate XIIIb)

This is a genuine English helmet, c. 1580. It has a one-piece skull with a 2-in. comb. There is a reinforce plate fitted over the brow, which was fitted when the helmet was made. The sights are divided by a central bar, with a projecting rim under the sights. The visor and the bevors pivot independently, and the upper bevor is badly corroded. The original gorgets are in position, consisting of two plates front and rear, both with rope borders on the edges. The helmet has a wooden crest of the Harpur family affixed by a spike to the top of the skull. The crest is a boar with a crown around its neck. The crown and the spine of the board are painted red, the remainder of the crest unpainted.

There is also the base of a 17th-century coronet, with alternate diamond and oval embossing on the base.

Location: The Estate Office, Ticknall. Formerly in the Harpur-Crewe chapel in the church.

Associated funeral: Sir John Harpur, 1627.

(With grateful acknowledgements for the assistance of Mr. Cox, of Messrs. Shaw and Fuller, the Estate Office, Ticknall).

Until the early 19th century, there was armour to be seen in Wingerworth church. At Chelmorton church, until some ten years ago, there was a sword to be seen in the south aisle.