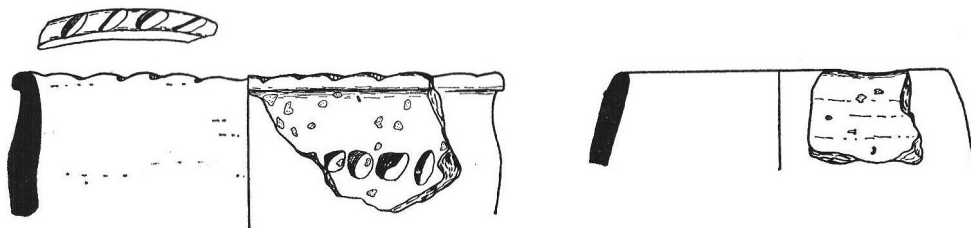


IRON AGE POTTERY FROM BRASSINGTON COMMON

By J. RADLEY and F. RADFORD

A GROUP of iron age sherds has been found in a ploughed field near Moot Low at 1,075 ft. O.D. above Grange Mill, in the parish of Brassington (SK 240563). Six sherds of similar fabric include four body sherds, possibly a fragment of a base, and a rim sherd. These sherds exhibit smooth grey-brown surfaces and are rather abraded. The fabric is a flakey black clay virtually sand free, but with frequent lumps of very soft brown sandstone, which, where they erupt in the surface, have been rubbed down to the level of the vessel's surface; this sandstone may well be triassic sandstone from southern Derbyshire. The rim (fig. 1. 1) suggests that the vessel was a medium-sized jar, about 18.5 cms. in diameter. The rim is flattened and rolled with a slight neck swelling downwards into a gentle shoulder. The rim and shoulder are decorated with a row of finger-tip impressions.



1

FIG. 1. (1/3).

2

Fig 1. 2 is based on a rim sherd found in a rabbit scrape below Harborough Cave (SK 242552) and has a crude dark fabric ruptured occasionally with quartzite fragments. This hand-made pot has a gently inturned plain and irregular rim, and is presumably a small cooking-jar.

These two types of iron age pottery are the first recorded finds from this area for many years, and they draw attention to the need for a reappraisal of the finds from the Harborough Cave excavations, and the need for further intensive fieldwork in an area which has yielded the best collection of domestic remains of the early iron age in the Peak District.

There appear to be three broad groups of early iron age pottery in the Derbyshire-Yorkshire area. First there are the large jars with finger-tip decorated shoulders and rims. Associated with these are, second, plain jars and bowls with flared rims and sharply rounded or carinated shoulders. Third, there are rather featureless jars and bowls of a crude undecorated fabric.

The first two types occur together and are best known from Castle Hill, Scarborough,¹ but have also been found at Staple How,² Grimthorpe,³ Roomer Common and Grafton,⁴ the last two being on the eastern edge of the Pennines. In Derbyshire, these types have been recently found inside Mam Tor hill-fort.⁵ The Moot Low sherd is similar to the medium sized jars from Staple Howe,⁶ but also appears to be similar to some of the sherds found in the Harborough Rocks excavation by John Ward.⁷ This forgotten excavation yielded 45-50 vessels of the early iron age from a surface site near Harborough Cave, some of which were finger-tip decorated jars of large size, and some of which had gracefully everted rims and distinct shoulders and carinations but lacked decoration, all quite comparable with the Castle Hill, Scarborough, material. Two broken toggles or handle cross-pieces were also found by Ward, and these are like one from Staple Howe.⁸

The third fabric, probably represented by the sherd in fig. 2, may be comparable to the later iron age Brigantian ware defined by Wheeler at Stanwick and found in Derbyshire in the Ball Cross excavation.⁹

It is difficult to give any close dating to the pottery finds from Brassington, but it seems probable that the bulk of the pottery may belong to the early iron age, around the 6th-4th centuries B.C. Harborough Cave has yielded a fine brooch¹⁰ comparable to the one from Arras,¹¹ and a bronze ring-headed pin comparable to the one from Danes Grave,¹² all of which may be attributed to the La Tène¹³ cultural group.

Thus, in the Brassington area, past excavations have yielded pottery which is called Hallstatt, and metalwork which is called La Tène. What this means in terms of chronology, contemporaneity, and cultural development in the Peak District is by no means clear at the present time, but there is sufficient evidence to suggest that much more fieldwork and research needs to be done on the iron age remains at Brassington.

¹ R. A. Smith, *Archaeologia*, 1927, 77, 179-200.

² T. C. M. Brewster, *Staple Howe*, 1963.

³ I. M. Stead, *P.P.S.*, XXIV (1968), 148-90.

⁴ D. M. Waterman, *et al.*, *Y.A.J.*, XXXVIII (1954), 383-97.

⁵ D. Coombs, *D.A.J.*, LXXXVII (1967), 158-9.

⁶ Brewster, fig. 39, 6: 45, 2.

⁷ J. Ward, *D.A.J.*, XII (1890), 108-38.

⁸ Ward, fig. 5; Brewster, fig. 69, no. 5.

⁹ R. E. M. Wheeler, *The Stanwick fortifications*, 38-44: J. Stanley, *D.A.J.*, LXXIV (1954), 85-99.

¹⁰ W. Storrs Fox, *D.A.J.*, XXXI (1909), 109.

¹¹ I. M. Stead, *The La Tène cultures of eastern Yorkshire*, 1966, 46.

¹² G. C. Dunning, *Arch. J.*, XCI (1934), 267-95; J. R. Mortimer, *Forty years' researches . . .*, 1905, fig. 1023.

¹³ Stead, 1966, 45-6.