SOME PREHISTORIC FINDS FROM THE BURTON UPON TRENT AREA

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1 A BEADED TORC FROM CLAY MILLS NEAR BURTON UPON TRENT, STAFFORDSHIRE

During the February of 1944 part of a bronze torc was found by workmen at Clay Mills, a village to the North-East of Burton upon Trent and on the Staffordshire bank of the River Dove (National Grid Reference SK 266265). It was discovered 'five feet deep in gravel' at a spot close to what is the probable course of Ryknild Street, the Roman road from Wall near Lichfield to Little Chester, Derby. The torc is now the property of Mr. H. J. Wain of Bretby who kindly consented to its publication.

As it now survives the torc (Fig. 1) consists of a single piece of cast bronze forming just under one third of a full circle. It is 105 mm long and has a mean radius of curvature of 64 mm. When complete the mortices in the terminals would have held the ends of a plain bronze loop. The ten beads are graduated in size and are in the form of 2 mm wide discs decorated with three circumferential lines the central one of which is dotted. Each bead is separated from its neighbours by diablo shaped spacers with milling on their cylindrical surfaces. The terminals are each composed of two cylinders, the inner bear moulded chevrons, the outer have two circumferential lines with a milled band between them. It is notable that the surface decoration has been omitted from areas not visible when the torc was being worn, the workmanship is however generally neat and competent.

There exist two basic forms of beaded torc, one having simulated beads as on the Clay Mills example, the other form has individually cast beads threaded onto a bar of bronze or iron. Macgregor (1976, 97) lists fifteen beaded torcs of which eight have simulated beads. The two forms share the same geographical distribution (Fig. 2) coming in the main from an area bounded in the North by the Forth-Clyde line and in the South by a line from the Mersey to the Humber. It is probable that these torcs were, as Macgregor

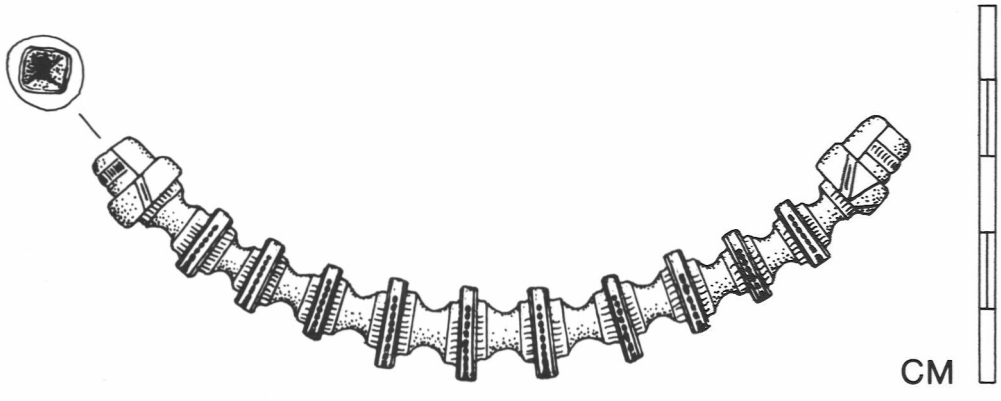

Fig. 1 Beaded torc from Clay Mills.

Fig. 2 Distribution of beaded torcs.

suggests the products of Brigantian workshops. Clay Mills lies just outside of what is believed to have been the southern limit of Brigantia. Other outliers come from Tre'r Ceiri, Caerns. (Hughes, 1906, 42) Perdeswell Worcester (Archaeologia, 30, 1844, appendix 554–5 and fig) and Lambley Island, Co. Dublin, Eire (Rynne 1976). In discussing the latter Rynne suggested that the outliers were due to the disruptions caused by Roman military activity in the North of Britain.

Some confusion surrounds a torc listed by Macgregor (1976, Number 209) as having been found in Lancashire or Cheshire. The reference given, 'Victoria County History, Derbyshire, 1, 1906, 248' is incorrect but probably refers to the V. C. H. Lancashire, 1, 1906, 248 where a 'torque of three beads' is mentioned as having been displayed by the Lancashire and Cheshire Society. Cited as the source in the Lancashire V.C.H. is the 'Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire Vol. XXXI, 117 plate XII'. The object shown there is the horse bridle bit from Ulceby on Humber, Lincolnshire (Megaw 1970, 169 and plate 293) wrongly provenanced as 'Lancashire'. It seems likely that this is the 'torc' which misled Macgregor and it may now be discounted.

As the Clay Mills torc has no known associations it is only possible to date it typologically. Parallels come from Carlisle, Cumberland (Macgregor, No. 199) and Rickerby Park, Stanwix, Cumberland (ibid, No. 208). Both come from Roman contexts the latter having a terminus post quem of A.D. 128. Other dated torcs have been found in both Roman and native contexts dating from the first and early second centuries A.D.

2 AN EARLY BRONZE AGE AXE-HAMMER FROM ROYLE FARM, DRAKELOW, DERBYSHIRE

This implement was found during the summer of 1953 when a pipe trench was being dug amongst the buildings at Royle Farm, Drakelow (SK 254191). It was found about two feet beneath the surface lying on or in the sandy subsoil. Following the discovery it was taken by the finder, Mr. D. R. Mountford to Burton upon Trent Museum; on its identification Mr. Mountford generously donated it to the collection.

The axe-hammer (Fig. 3) is 203 mm long and has a maximum width 93 mm. Its outline, when viewed with the perforation vertical is shield shaped. Both the upper and lower faces are slightly dished, this dishing is restricted to the area between the perforation and the cutting edge. The butt of the implement is flat and bears what may be signs of ancient battering together with some recent damage, the surface as a whole is rough and unpolished. A perforation 33 mm in diameter with a slight hour-glass shape is situated towards the implement's butt and is partially incorporated into the surface dishing. It is notable that the length of the cutting edge is at 65 mm slightly less than the equivalent measurement on the butt (72 mm).

A petrological examination of the axe-hammer was carried out by Professor F. W. Shotton of Birmingham University in 1955 and the result included in the register of sectioned implements (Db 179, Moore and Cummins 1974). The stone was identified as a Quartz Dolerite but it was not possible to assign it to any of the known petrological groups. Parallels for the Drakelow axe-hammer come from the Manor House, Chartley, Staffordshire (Gunstone 1962, 28 Fig. 9) and Allenton, Derbyshire (Moore and Cummins 1974 Db 60). Both share the convex outline and the dished faces of the Drakelow specimen.

As axe-hammers are invariably discovered as stray finds without any associations their dating is somewhat problematical, Roe, (1967, 57) proposed a dating based on parallels with polished stone battle axes which are found in datable contexts. The simple convex shape, narrow cutting edge and dished faces of the Drakelow axe-hammer resemble the early battle-axes of Roe's stage I 'Woodhenge Group'. Battle-axes of Stage I have been found in association with long necked southern beakers and food vessels of the Yorkshire vase type (Roe 1966, 218). A contemporaneity between the

Stage I battle-axes and the axe-hammers of the Drakelow type is supported by the petrology of the Allenton and Chartley examples, these belong to group XV, a Micaceous sub-Greywacke from the southern Lake District which was used to make the early stage I and II battle-axes.

The function of axe-hammers is uncertain, many of them are too unwieldy for use as weapons and the absence of polished cutting edges makes any wood working application unlikely. A use in agriculture as perhaps the point of a plough is possible but no corresponding signs of wear have been noted. The only signs of use ever found on axe-hammers are percussion marks on butts, the implements seem however to be rather elaborate to be simply hammers.

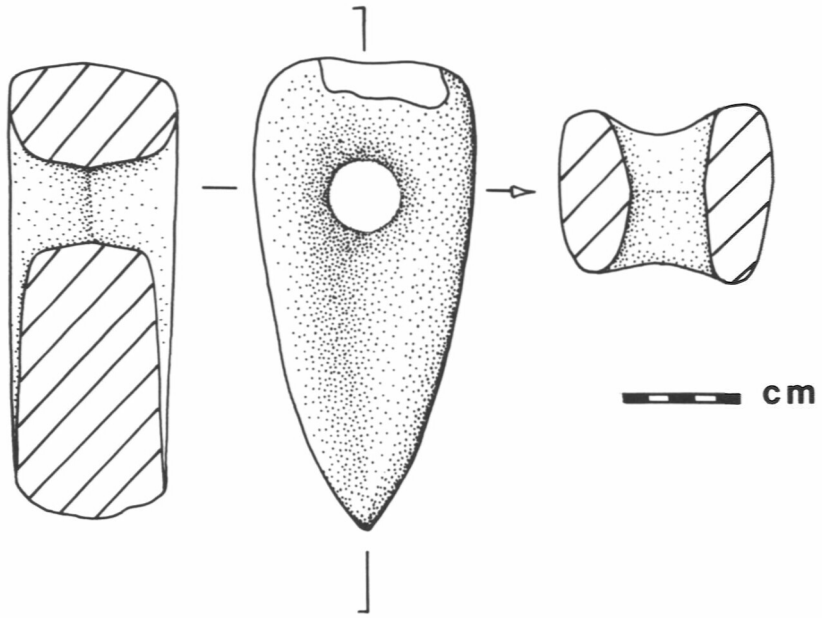

Fig. 3 Axe-hammer from Royle Farm, Drakelow.

3 AN IRON AGE QUERN STONE FROM MIDWAY, DERBYSHIRE

The quern stone was presented to Burton Museum in 1952 having been found some time previously in a sandpit belonging to Messrs. Searanke Ltd. in Eureka Road Midway (SK 312204). It was presented to the Museum by Mr. E. J. Searanke.

Only the upper part of the quern was found and it is not known if it had any associations. The stone is made out of Millstone Grit and its whole surface is covered with course tooling marks (Fig. 4). It has a maximum diameter of 280 mm and a height of 174 mm, the inside of the feed hopper is 114 mm diameter and feeds grain through a 24 mm diameter pipe to the grinding face. This is flat but set at 10° to the axis of the feed pipe and hopper. The socket for the handle is oval and breaks through into the hopper.

The form of the Midway quern links it strongly with the Iron Age querns of the Hunsbury type (Philips 1950). These are characterised by their beehive shapes, narrow feed pipes, flat grinding surfaces and handle sockets which penetrate the hopper. The

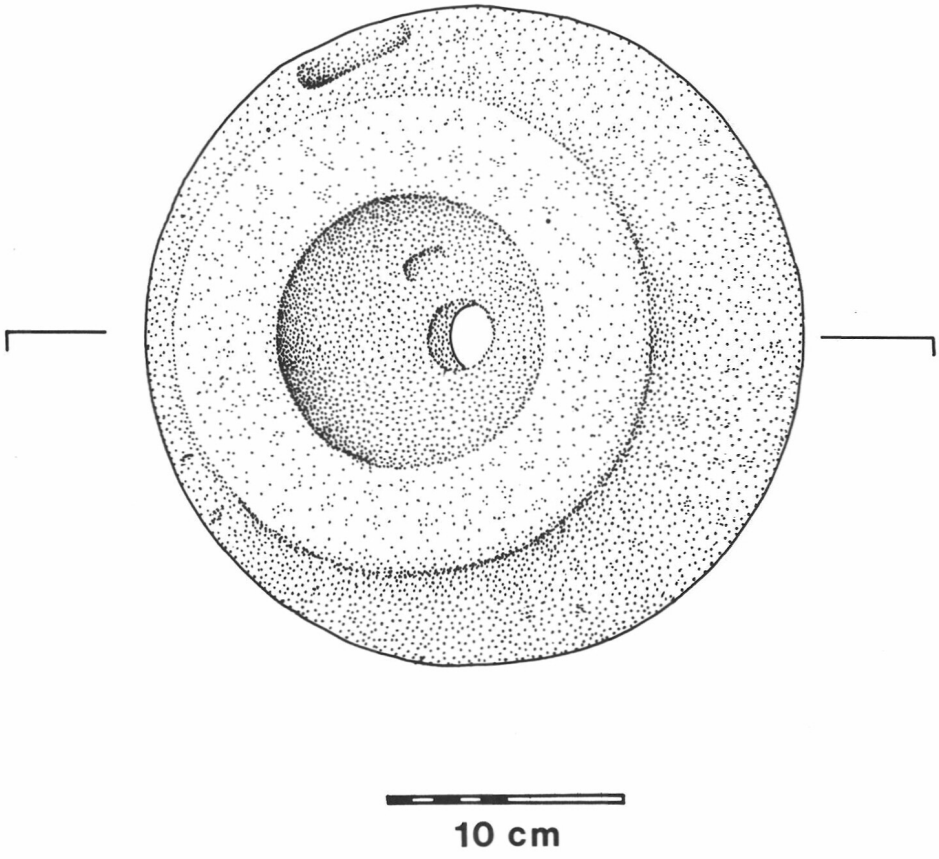

Fig. 4 Hunsbury type quern from Midway

type takes its name from the hill fort in Northamptonshire where they were discovered in large quantities. Querns of this type are found throughout Leicestershire with a concentration from the Breedon-on-the-Hill hill fort (Philips 1950). Other examples from the area have been found at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire (Leicester Museum) Willington and Swarkeston (both in the Derby Museum). The provenance of a quern found at Stretton is doubtful (Garlic, 1955). So far as is known no comparable querns have been found in South Staffordshire (Gunstone 1964).

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