HARBOROUGH ROCKS — EARLY IRON AGE SETTLEMENT, NEAR BRASSINGTON, DERBYSHIRE. SECOND REPORT

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with contributions from

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THE SITE

Harborough Rocks is an impressive limestone outcrop rising in three terraces and overlooking Brassington Common and Carsington Reservoir (SK 242551). Much of the recent archaeological material has come from the middle terrace, with a smaller amount from the edge of the lower terrace, close to the excavations undertaken by Ward in 1889 (Ward 1890, 108–38).

Since 1990 (Makepeace 1990), further fieldwork has recovered additional archaeological material in the form of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery sherds; Romano-British pottery (mainly Derbyshire and Grey wares); flint; a jet or shale 'V' perforated button; a bone handle and animal bones. All of this material came from eroded areas around the rocks or from the old spoil heaps in front of Harborough Cave.

THE FINDS

Pottery (GAM) (Fig. 1)

The majority of the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery with coarse calcitic inclusions was probably made locally, although as stated in the earlier report (Makepeace 1990, 24), some of the finer pottery may have been imported to the site. Much of it is very coarse though some sherds have a fine slip-like surface. Over 100 sherds have been collected since 1990, varying greatly in size and preservation; the more diagnostic are described and illustrated below.

1 Rim and body sherds: large vessel *c.* 40cm diameter; finger tip decoration around belly and oblique cabling on the rim; brown exterior, dark-light brown interior, dark-grey-black core; gritty fabric, some larger (up to 5mm in size) inclusions; some smoothing surface marks on interior.

2 Rim and body sherds: large vessel *c.* 37cm diameter, inturned neck —form bipartite situla; creamy-brown exterior and darker interior with a dark staining on rim; gritty fabric with larger (average size *c.* 2–3mm) inclusions and dark brown core.

3 Rim-body sherd: small vessel *c.* 14cm diameter, constricted neck and finger tip decoration on shoulder; brown exterior, grey interior and dark brown-black core; gritty fabric, large (average size *c.* 1–3mm)inclusions; smoothed surface, slightly crazed.

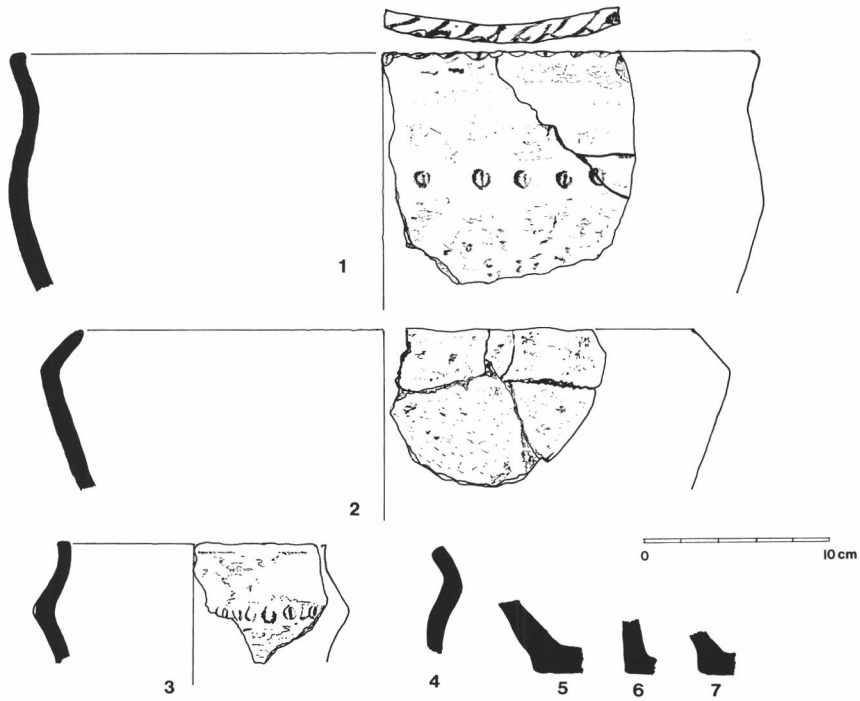

Fig. 1: Harborough Rocks: pottery.

4 Rim sherd: everted and one finger nail impression below rim; black exterior, dark brown interior and black core; gritty fabric with larger (average size 4–6mm) quartz-calcite inclusions; smoothed surface.
5 Base sherd: heeled base; creamy exterior, grey-brown interior, grey core; coarse fabric with smaller (average size 1–2mm) gritty inclusions; outer surface smoothed finish.
6 Base sherd: creamy exterior, black interior, grey core; gritty fabric with inclusions 1–2mm in size; carbonised material on internal surface.
7 Base sherd: heeled base; fabric and inclusions similar to number 6.

Other artefacts (GAM) (Fig. 2)

Harborough Rocks

1 Bone handle: 90x20x18mm (see report below).
2 Flint arrowhead: hollow based derivative; white flint, bifacial retouch.
3 Flint scraper: side type; white flint, steep retouch, cortex on ventral side.

Harborough Cave (spoil tips)

1 Flint scaper: thumb type; translucent grey-brown flint, sub-parallel retouch, cortex on dorsal side.
2 Jet or shale 'V' perforated button: 17x16x7mm, top broken, two holes bored in base and intervening bridge broken; fine striations and surface cracked.

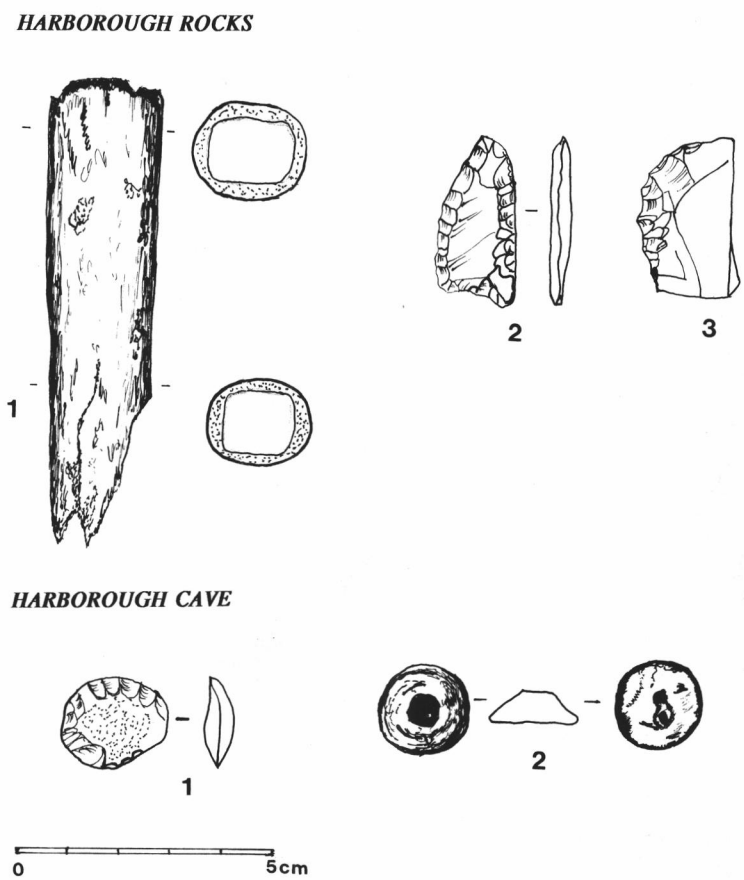

Fig. 2: Harborough Rocks and Cave: other artefacts.

Bone Handle (CS)

This has been formed from a length of metapodial shaft (cannon bone) of a cloven-hoofed animal, one of the ruminants, indicated by the remains of the internal division running lengthwise down the hollow of the bone. The shape of this hollow in cross-section is more rounded than D-shaped, indicating that it is a hind leg cannon bone (metatarsus) and the general size and width of the internal cross-section is consistent with a cattle or red deer bone.

The original squarish exterior section has been worked down, probably by scraping, to a gradually tapered cylinder, slightly elliptical in section, which fits well in the hand. There appear to be tool marks about 10mm long running roughly lengthwise down one side, and what remains of the edge at the wider end, where the shaft was cut across, has been rounded to a smooth finish. Slightly polished areas are evident lengthwise on the sides. The interior hollow appears to be rectangular in cross-section at the wider end, and could have held the tang of a blade, but there are no signs of metallic staining. At the narrower end where the bone is thinner, part has broken off and three major cracks run lengthwise, otherwise the bone is in a good state of preservation.

Bone Report (CS)

A minimum number of individual animals represented is one each of the following species: ox (*Bos*), sheep (*Ovis*), pig (*Sus*) and badger (*Meles*). Apart from the single badger bone, the other bones may represent more than one individual from each of the other three species (Table 1). The bone from which the handle was made may not be from any of these animals. All were small in comparison with today's animals, although only a rough estimate of size is possible. The cattle teeth do not show much wear and indicate a nearly fully grown animal. There is insufficient evidence to indicate the sex of any of the animals.

Bone	Ox (*Bos*)	Sheep/Goat (*Ovis*)	Pig (*Sus*)	Badger (*Meles*)
Skull	3			
Lower jaw			1	1
Teeth	3		1	
Vertebrae			1	
Scapula			1	
Radius		1		
Metacarpal		1		
Pelvis	1	2		
Femur	1			
Tibia	2			
Astragalus	1			
Metatarsal	1	1		
Phalanx			1	
Total identifiable	12	5	5	1
Unidentifiable 29				

Table 1: Harborough Rocks; animal bone by species and type.

The presence of bone fragments from the head, trunk and limbs of cattle suggests that one or more of the animals was probably killed or butchered nearby and the same may be true of the pig, for these heavy animals were usually driven, rather than transported, to a place where they were slaughtered and butchered. There are butchery marks on a number of the bones. A sagittally chopped pig vertebra indicates that this animal was probably bisected lengthwise for ease of handling in butchery.

The presence of a badger's lower jaw is probably incidental for this animal has seldom been used for food and may be a much later deposit. Lower jaws of badgers are notable because they carry teeth and very little meat therefore are least likely to be found attractive to a predator or scavenger. It is not possible to disarticulate a badger's jaw without breaking either the jaw or the skull.

Harborough Cave entrance area

The site was excavated by Storrs Fox in 1907 (Storrs Fox 1908) and by Armstrong in 1920–21 (Armstrong 1923). Only in Armstrong's report is there a record of Beaker pottery being found at this site, close to the junction of layers 2 and 3 (Armstrong 1923, plate XXII). 'V' perforated buttons are closely associated with Beakers and the Early Bronze Age (Megaw and Simpson 1979, 183–84) and the nearest similar local find is

from Bateman's excavations at Net Low, Alsop Moor, where he found two larger and finer jet or shale 'V' perforated buttons together with an extended skeleton and a round heeled bronze dagger (Bateman 1848, 68–69; Howarth 1899, 7–80; Fowler and Corcoran 1955, 89–90). Such buttons, named after the way the two converging holes are bored into the back of the button so as not to be visible at the front, appear to have formed part of clothing and perhaps were used for fastening items such as a cape, and apparently have exclusively male associations (Megaw and Simpson 1979, 205).

Comments

The pottery is very similar to that described and discussed in the earlier report (Makepeace 1990) and close dating is extremely difficult unless it is associated with dateable artefacts such as metalwork or material suitable for radiocarbon dating. The animal bones are also similar to those reported in 1990 and from earlier excavations (Ward 1890, 115–16; Armstrong 1923, 415).

Given the prominence of Harborough Rocks in the landscape it is not surprising that material from many periods is present, as was also demonstrated by excavations by Ward at a barrow close to 'Pulpit' rock (Ward 1890). Fieldwalking is continuing because of the severe erosion taking place around some areas of the rocks and the cave floor in Fissure Cave has been almost destroyed by erosion. The area of the spoil tips outside Harborough Cave may repay future serious archaeological investigation, particularly of the buried land surface and material missed by earlier excavators.

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