

Cairn, Chatton Sandyford

II.—EXCAVATIONS OF CAIRNS AT CHATTON SANDYFORD, NORTHUMBERLAND

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SUMMARY

One large and five small cairns were excavated. The large cairn yielded three Beaker inhumations and two cremations, one in an Enlarged Food Vessel the other not accompanied by any grave goods. A final burial may have been inserted into the cairn during the third century A.D. The radiocarbon date for the earliest Beaker burial is 1670 ± 50 B.C. and the second Beaker burial followed closely on this. The third inhumation, accompanied by a late type of Beaker, was probably inserted into a cairn already raised over the first two and, at this stage, perhaps c. 1500 B.C., the cairn could have been enlarged by the addition of a well constructed kerb.

The true nature of four of the small cairns was not entirely resolved and they may have been no more than the results of field clearance. A fifth apparently covered a grave, lacking any grave goods, but for carbonized material from this there is a radiocarbon date of 2890 ± 90 B.C. which poses a problem in itself. Further work had to be postponed because of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease.

An appendix gives field observations on possible enclosed cremation cemeteries and on cairnfields generally in north Northumberland. [*N.B. Radiocarbon dates quoted in this report are based on Libby half life of C-14, 5570 years.*]

THE SITE (fig. 1)

The cairnfield situated on Camp Hill and Whitehill Head, Chatton Sandyford (NU: 1026), is typical of many to be found on the cuesta and higher ridges lying between the valley of

the Till and the coastal plain in north Northumberland. It consists of two large round cairns and some one hundred and fifty smaller stone mounds. The two large cairns, lying on the highest part of the ridge at an altitude of just over 700 ft., have been recorded previously on Ordnance Survey maps, the northernmost appearing as a "Camp" on some editions. The smaller mounds have not received notice hitherto although most of them have clearly been "opened" at some time. They extend along the flat crest of the ridge for a distance of some three quarters of a mile from north to south with some spill over on to the upper slopes. Three unrecorded cup-marked rocks are located amongst the smaller cairns on Whitehill Head, forming minor additions to the well known series of inscribed rocks to be found on the great arc of the Fell Sandstones in this region.

For the most part, the soils are acidic and now support typical heather moorland. There has been ploughing at some time on part of Whitehill Head, where heather gives way to coarse grass and invading bracken. Faint traces of an old boundary wall run from north to south along the ridge, but ground survey failed to establish the presence of any early field systems that could have been related to the small overgrown cairns, had these resulted from field clearance. On the other hand, when the heather is sufficiently low to allow observation, the surface of the ridge has in places a somewhat smooth appearance which may be suggestive of earlier cultivation.

The views from the ridge are extensive, embracing to the east, on Rayheugh and Rosebrough, the so-called Generals' Graves, some of the largest extant round cairns in the county¹ and, at a distance, a sweeping vista of the coastline, including the site of the Beaker settlement on Ross Links.²

Despite the proliferation of cairns in the immediate area of Sandyford, no finds have been recorded hereabouts other than those from the larger monuments on Rayheugh and

¹ Greenwell, *British Barrows*, CXCI ff.

² Brewis & Buckley, *Arch. Ael.*⁴, V (1928), 13 ff.

CHATTON SANDYFORD: NORTHUMBERLAND

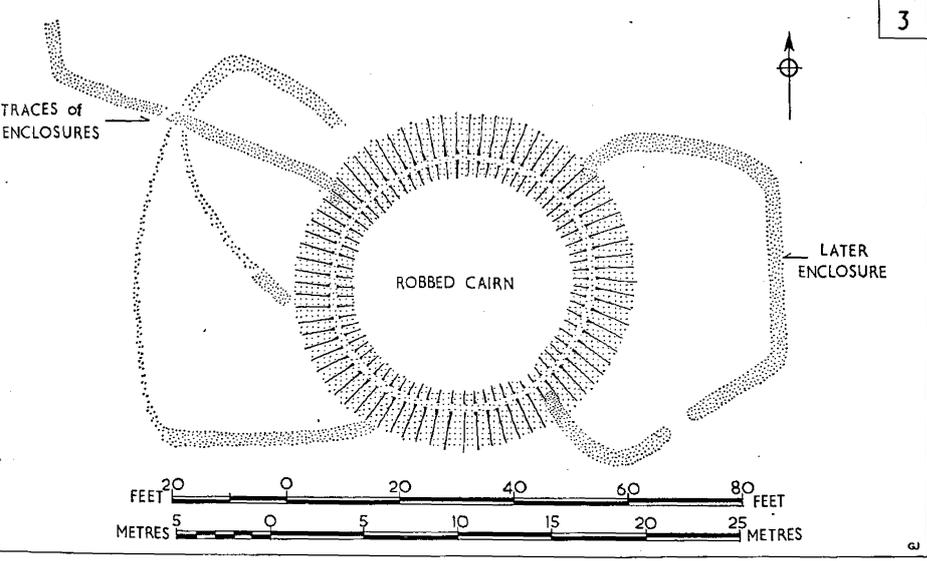
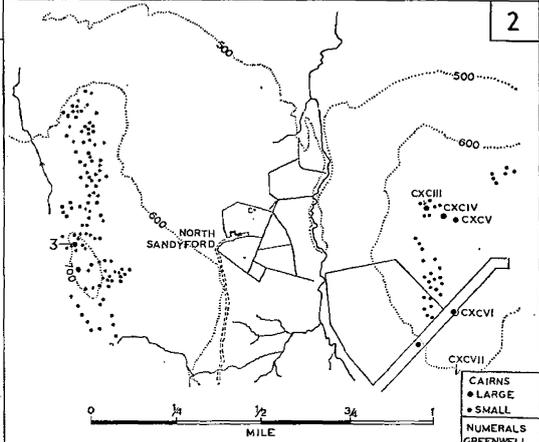
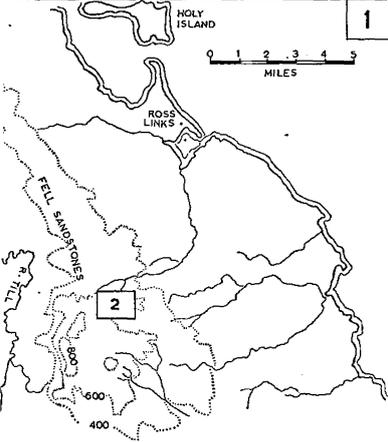


FIG. 1

Rosebrough. A short cist was ploughed up three years ago in the in-by field on the north side of the farm at Sandyford, but on this occasion no grave goods were found.³

The farm at Sandyford belongs to Mr. G. Houseman and one is grateful to him and to his farm manager, Mr. Robson, for permission to excavate. Work on the site was carried out during 1965/6 by students of the Department of Adult Education and sponsored by the Committee for Archaeology, University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The remains of the large cairn, marked as a "Camp", and five of the smaller cairns in its vicinity were excavated before work was abandoned because of an outbreak of "foot and mouth" disease elsewhere in the county.

THE LARGE CAIRN

(a) *Surface Appearance* (fig. 1)

Before excavation this cairn survived as a ring-mound of overgrown stone, forty feet in diameter from crest to crest, with an average height of 3 feet above the estimated periphery of the spill on the outside. There appeared to be some stone in the interior and, by and large, the remains agreed in form with that type of monument described as an enclosed cremation cemetery (Appendix A), then a subject of investigation in Peebleshire⁴ to the north and Dumfriesshire⁵ to the west. For this reason the old descriptive term "Camp" had already been discounted by the writer.⁶ Low rickles of stone marked a small enclosure on the east side of the remains, but this was clearly of later date since it partly overlaid the ring-mound. However, between the time of survey and the commencement of the excavation, the heather had been burnt off over the

³ Information from the farmer; the cover stone is at present on the edge of the field.

⁴ v. now R.C.A.M. *Peebleshire* (1967), I.

⁵ J. Scott-Elliott, *Trans. D. & G.N.H. & Soc.*, XLII (1965), 51 ff.

⁶ G. Jobey, *Arch. Ael.*, XLIII (1965), 59.

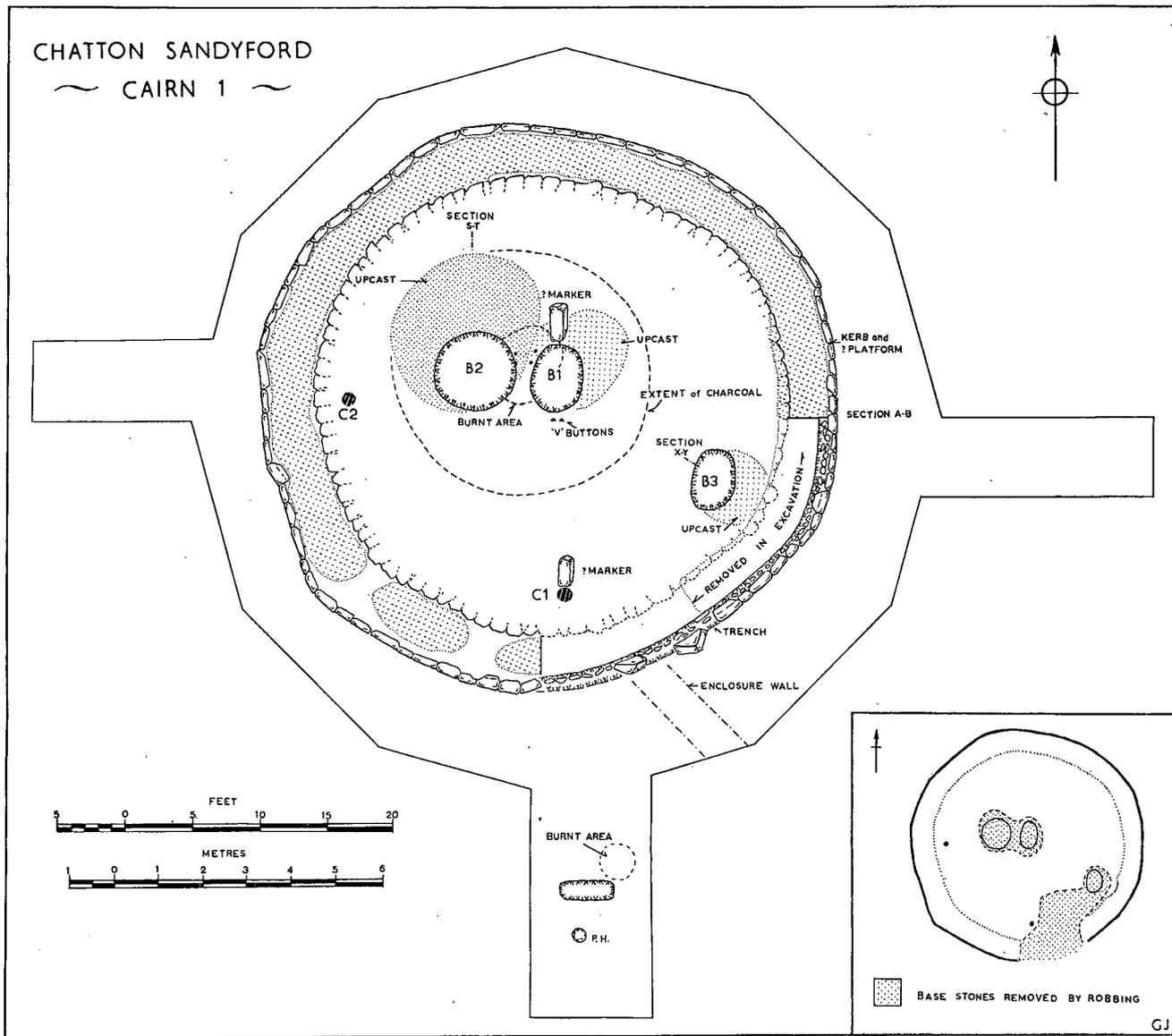


FIG. 2



whole area, and further enclosures were revealed on the west side. Consequently, as a greater amount of robbed stone was involved than originally envisaged, the concept of the monument as an enclosed cremation cemetery had to be abandoned in favour of it having been a large round cairn, now extensively robbed of its stone.

The excavation was done in quadrants, with the main baulks aligned N—S and E—W, additional intermediate baulks being retained where the situation warranted.

(b) *The Stone Structure in Excavation* (figs. 2 & 3; plates II-V)

This consisted of two main features. In the first place, where robbing had not progressed down to the old surface, there remained the basal stones of the cairn, composed mainly of large landstones of Fell Sandstone but including some material seemingly quarried or split from larger blocks, many of them larger than an individual man-load. Invariably they were found to be leaning inwards, one against another, consistent with the base having been constructed from the centre outwards. The heels of these stones were slightly embedded in the old surface, no doubt owing to the pressure from the overlying material, so that the impressions of missing stones could still be recorded where later robbing had taken place. An almost circular area, thirty four feet (10.4 m.) in diameter was covered by this prepared base. Smaller stones overlay the large base stones in varying amount but it was apparent that the bulk of the original cairn above the base had been robbed away. Included amongst the remaining material were occasional blocks of limestone which need have come from no great distance, since there is surface limestone to be had within half a mile of the site to the south and just beyond the Brownridge Burn to the north.

A finely constructed stone kerb, at distances of between 2 and 3 feet beyond the periphery of the base stones, formed the second structural feature. A trench, up to eighteen inches

wide and from twelve to sixteen inches deep, had been excavated into subsoil and fine brash in order to support close fitting vertical slabs of sandstone, positioned against the outer face of the trench and retained at the rear by packing stones. The size of individual kerbstones varied, but many were over 3 feet in height, up to 3 feet wide, and from 9 to twelve inches thick. Some at least could have been quarried, others were perhaps dressed landstones. All had been rough dressed on the vertical edges so as to give oblique inward bevels which, combined with additional peck dressing of high order, would have ensured a snug fit between adjacent stones. Although some stones were now leaning slightly out of position, most of them retained their original contact so well as to deny the passage of a trowel blade between them at any point. A short section of this kerb had been removed by later robbing on the southern arc but here the bedding trench and packing stones remained to mark its original position. Many of the inside faces of the kerbstones had the fresh look of unweathered stone, whereas the outer faces had almost certainly been exposed to the elements at some time.

Despite such excellence in workmanship and even when allowance is made for missing kerbstones or others slightly displaced, it will be evident from the plan that the kerb had not formed a perfect circle but, in certain sections, tended to run in short straight lengths. Unfortunately, the validity of this could not be checked for the whole perimeter. Although the top of the kerb was everywhere exposed, it was not found possible to undertake the additional labour involved in removing material so as to take precise measurements to the base of the feature. The maximum and minimum overall diameters from centre to centre of the top of the kerbstones were forty three and a half and forty two feet respectively (13.3 m. and 12.8 m.). The dressing of the stones had been carried out on the spot or at least in the vicinity of the cairn, since the large angular chips from the first rough shaping, together with other weathered stones, had been used to fill the space between the back of the kerb and the large base

CHATTON SANDYFORD : CAIRN 1

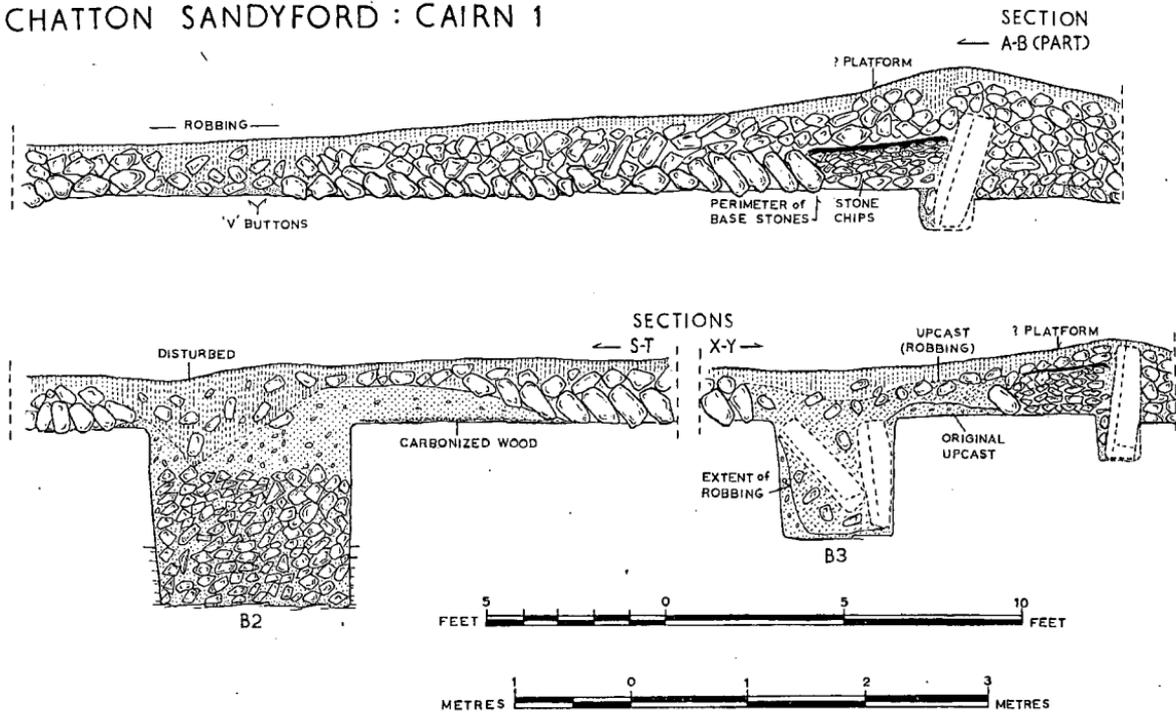


FIG. 3

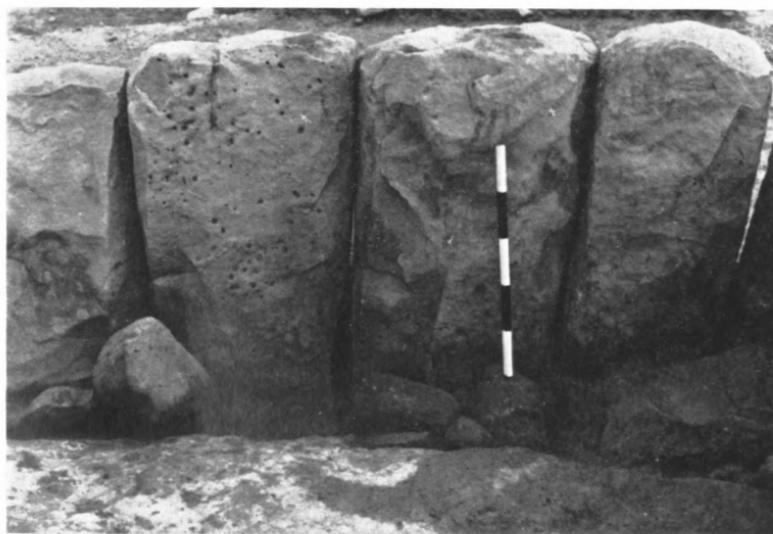
stones of the cairn (figs. 2 and 3). Overlying this rather loose infilling, some 8 to 10 inches below the tops of the kerbstones, was a thin yet compact band of light sandy brash, continuous around the whole perimeter and forming, as it were, a "platform" up to 3 feet wide, except where it had been removed by later robbing. It was difficult to account for the origin of this feature other than as a deliberate spread of the material from the final dressing of the kerbstones, perhaps with the addition of residual upcast from the bedding trench, both being specifically retained for this purpose. Taken as a whole, it was too regular a phenomenon to have been the result of a simple desire to clean up the area after the construction of the kerb was completed. Certainly there were no remains of smaller stone chippings, or residual upcast from the bedding trench, in the whole of the south eastern quadrant where the kerb and trench were disengaged.

The chronological relationship between the kerb with "platform" and the large base stones of the cairn proved difficult to resolve with any precision. The base stones were appreciably larger near to the periphery and in themselves could have served as a suitable kerb to a comparatively low cairn before an enlargement was made. On the other hand, there was no pronounced change between the level of the old surface beneath these stones and that lying immediately beyond their perimeter, such as might have arisen from differential weathering had the kerb with "platform" not been added until some time afterwards. This question is given further consideration in the discussion of burial B3 (p. 17 below).

The final form of the monument also posed problems of interpretation. As we have seen, no great amount of cairn material now remained above the base stones or the top of the kerb (fig. 3). The upper level of the spread of stone beyond the kerb was loosely packed, giving the impression of being discarded material from robbing. This was confirmed by the discovery of two sherds of Roman British flagon amongst these stones at a depth of over twelve inches from



1. Kerb, external face (scale 0.5m.)



2. Internal face and support trench

the top of the kerb. Fragments of the same vessel were recovered from the disturbed area within the kerb in the south-east quadrant and have been taken as evidence for the former presence of an inserted burial of the Roman period (p. 19 below). On the other hand, the lower stones in the spread beyond the kerb were more tightly packed. Compact soil filled the interstices but did not appear to be recent infiltration from above. The two most likely alternative explanations would seem to be that here were the vestiges of original tumble from a cairn confined within the limits of the kerb itself or the remains of a cairn so constructed as to envelope the kerb completely. On balance, the first possibility is preferred for a number of reasons. In the first place, as has been noted, the outer faces of the kerbstones had been subject to exposure before being covered. Secondly, wherever the kerb was completely disengaged, there existed a fairly uniform drop in level of some 2 to 3 inches between the ground level outside the kerb and the old surface level within it. Slight as this difference may be, it could not be accounted for on the basis of natural contours and must have arisen from a period of differential weathering when the monument had stood with an exposed facade of kerbstones. By the same token, the visible outward lean on a number of kerbstones could be expected to have developed in time, brought about by thrust from the internal material.

THE BURIALS AND RITUAL

(a) *Inhumation B1* (fig. 2, plate V)

The first burial to be encountered in excavation, and the earliest in chronological sequence, lay slightly off centre beneath the remains of the cairn, in the apex of the north-east quadrant. The shallow, oval shaped grave measured 5 ft. by 4 ft. 3 in. and was only 10 in. deep from the old surface. A major part of its interior had already suffered from robbing

directed at the central area of the cairn, but a crushed Beaker (fig. 4, B1) remained *in situ* hard up against an undisturbed lining of small weathered sandstones. Amongst the robbed material on the southern outside edge of the grave were two V-bored jet buttons which, by inference, must be associated with this burial. No traces of skeletal material remained, but a crouched inhumation may be assumed. On the north side of the burial, beyond the area of disturbance, were slight remains of residual upcast from the original digging of the grave. This contained flecks of charcoal and covered a thicker spread of charcoal on original ground level. The upcast, no more than 2 in. thick, was in turn covered by small weathered stones unlike the heavy base stones encountered elsewhere. The latter were not found *in situ* nearer than four feet from the edge of the grave, though originally they could well have surmounted the smaller stones before being removed by later robbing. Only one large stone of Fell Sandstone, columnar in form and quite unlike the normal base stones, overlay the upcast from this grave. It had been dislodged by robbing but a nearby socket hole suggested that it could have stood upright at one time; consequently, it has been shown on the plan (fig. 2) as a possible grave-marker, though this attribution cannot be certain. The source of charcoal was defined on the west side of the grave where the old surface was burnt to a brilliant red colour. In the eye of the burning were the remains of four driven stake-holes, little more than 3 in. in diameter and 6 in. deep, terminating in pointed ends and filled with burnt wood. The spread of charcoal from this central area, reducing in density to mere flecks towards the perimeter, was spread over a roughly circular area nineteen feet (5.8 m.) in diameter. It was evident that the burning had preceded not only burial B1 but also B2 (below) and had presumably been connected with the ritual preceding the digging of the shallow grave for B1. It is possible that additional stake-holes had been removed in the process of digging the graves, but unlikely that we are dealing here with any form of mortuary structure.



1. Peck dressing



2. "Platform"

Samples for radiocarbon assay were taken from the interiors of three of the stake-holes and yielded a date of 1670 ± 50 B.C. (below).

(b) *Inhumation B2* (figs. 2 & 3, plate V)

This burial was adjacent to B1 on its west side and, though still lying within the area of later disturbance, had suffered only minor penetration. It could be that the attention of the robbers had been drawn to the spot by the covering mound of surplus upcast material which, in this instance, was quite prominent. The grave itself was a circular pit 6 ft. in diameter, with near vertical sides which had been cut through the fine upper brash and then bed-rock to a depth of 5 ft. There were no finds in the fill but, once again, a complete though cracked Beaker (fig. 4, B2) lay at the very bottom of the pit close to the north face. Vertical and sometimes slightly oblique striations on the sides of the pit had the appearance of tool marks, although the somewhat friable rock hereabouts would have presented no great difficulties in extraction. In the process of digging the grave, part of one of the earlier stake-holes had been removed. Upcast from the pit had been thrown mainly on to the north side and, after the interment had taken place, this material had been pulled back in the reverse order from extraction, presumably directly on to the body, since there were no indications of any covering structure or strut-holes in the sides of the pit. The residual material had been used to cover the pit with a low mound, slightly higher and more extensive on the north side where it remained at a maximum height of almost twelve inches. To the north-east of the grave, this upcast not only covered the thin spread of charcoal from the early fire but also an additional narrow band of charcoal flecked, sandy material, in all probability the remains of upcast from B1.

The whole of the fill of this pit-grave was fresh, native material, the only notable exceptions consisting of a few

rounded sandstones and two fragments of limestone. These stones could only have been introduced as the back filling of the pit-grave had proceeded and again hint at the possibility of the former existence of a covering of small stones over burial B1. If this had been so, then it would have been necessary to remove this mound, at least on the west side, when the pit was excavated for B2. There were no small stones overlying the covering mound of B2 and, away from the area of later disturbance, the typical base stones of the large cairn lay directly on top of this mound with no intervening turf line (fig. 3). Therefore, the sequence would seem to have consisted of ritual burning before the interment B1, which was probably covered by a low pimple of upcast and stones, followed by the pit-burial B2 and, perhaps with little interval in time, the laying of the large base stones of the cairn over both burials.

(c) *Inhumation B3* (figs. 2 & 3, plate V)

Later disturbance had taken place over an extensive area in the south-east quadrant and, once again, had penetrated into a pit-grave to such an extent as to leave little of it undisturbed. The pit itself was oval in shape, 4 ft. 6 in. in length and 3 ft. 4 in. deep from the old surface. Despite the complications caused by later robbing, it was possible to distinguish the remains of the original residual upcast from the grave on its east side. On the other hand, no such traces were found on the west side, where the heavy base stones of the large cairn remained *in situ* just beyond the edge of the grave. It must be assumed that the upcast material had been raked back into the pit after the interment had taken place, as with B2, but that any residual mound in this instance had not extended beyond the western perimeter of the grave. It could be that yet again the attention of later robbers had been drawn to the position of the grave by the presence of this mound. Be that as it may, the mixed upcast from robbing



1. Graves, B1 and B2



2. Grave B3 and Kerbstones

was clearly distinguishable and contained a number of shattered fragments of Beaker B3. Odd sherds of the same vessel were also found in the disturbed material within the pit itself. Some difficulty was experienced in defining the limits of the later robbing because of the presence of two large stones thrown back into the grave; even so, a small section of the original fill was detected on the north-west side and confirmed as such by the discovery of a cracked but substantial rim fragment of the beaker in the edge of this material at the bottom of the pit. The two large stone slabs were not difficult to identify on removal; their side bevels and peck dressing proclaimed them as two of the missing kerbstones from the southern perimeter of the cairn and, thereby, also established the probable contemporaneity of the robbing of both kerb and burial in this area.

More difficult to establish, because of the later disturbance, was the precise relationship which had existed between this burial, the basal stones of the cairn, and the "platform" and kerb. Some large base stones remained in position on the east side of the residual upcast from the burial pit and it seemed reasonable to assume that these stones had once extended over the grave (fig. 3). This in itself, however, cannot be taken to demonstrate that the burial B3 preceded the laying of the base stones over the whole area. Indeed, the location of B3 near to the periphery of these stones, with the upcast from the pit thrown mainly to the east side, could be taken to argue for it having been a later insertion. The manner in which the remaining base stones on the east side of the burial obtruded from the normal curve of the perimeter could also be attributed to replacement after such an insertion had been made. Moreover, as we have already seen, there was no reason to envisage the laying of the base stones as other than a single process, possibly occurring after the completion of the interment B2. If B3 is to be seen as an intrusive burial, however, it would seem that the requirements of working space alone would deny the presence of the final kerb and "platform" at this stage. It can only be noted that

there was no indication of any alteration to the kerb or what remained of the "platform" in the area of B3. Therefore, it seems probable that the interment B3 took place sometime before or was contemporary with the erection of the kerb, and that a cairn, of which the large basal stones formed part, had existed as a monument in its own right before this addition was made.

(d) *Cremation C1* (fig. 2)

This cremation overlay two base stones which were still *in situ* and was located almost due south of the centre of the cairn some 2 ft. 6 in. within the assumed inner edge of the "platform", here removed by later robbing. It had been contained within an inverted Enlarged Food Vessel, shattered by the subsequent disturbance. This vessel and its contents had been inserted into the cairn after the laying of the base stones but its relationship to the "platform" and kerb could not be established. In this instance, however, the presence of the kerb and "platform" need not have hindered a later insertion of this order. Adjacent to the cremation, but displaced by robbing, was a large columnar block of limestone, the surfaces of which were pitted by many natural "cups". It has been shown on the plan as a possible "grave-marker" (fig. 2) merely on the basis of its form and the fact that this was one of the few foreign stones to be found amongst the cairn material. Cremated bone, mixed with charcoal, still adhered to the inside surfaces of the pottery, but no radio-carbon assay was attempted because of the risk of contamination. Only 9 inches of disturbed material overlay the remaining pottery fragments.

(e) *Cremation C2* (fig. 2)

A second cremation was found due west of the centre of

the cairn but otherwise in a similar position to C1. Bone with charcoal formed a small globular pocket between the upper edges of two base stones as if the deposit could have been contained originally within a bag of some perishable material. There were no associated finds.

(f) *Additional Burials*

So much of the upper cairn material had been removed by robbing that the possibility of additional burials having been dispersed in the process must be considered. A number of sherds from a Roman British flagon, one sliver of glass (probably Roman) and two or three abraded sherds, not capable of close parallel but bearing some resemblance to native pottery of the same period, were recovered from disturbed areas in the south-east quadrant and from the upper reaches of the stone spill beyond the kerb. The combination of glass vessel and flagon would be appropriate to a burial of the Roman period, perhaps inserted into the original cairn at a higher level.

(g) *External features* (fig. 2)

There were no features of note in the cuttings made beyond the perimeter of the cairn on the east and west. However, in view of the discovery of cremations within the cairn, an additional cutting was made to the south with the express purpose of looking for evidence of associated ritual or the site of a cremation pyre. Twelve feet to the south of the kerb, beneath the overlying heather-peat and stone spill from the cairn, the intense orange red "eye" of a conflagration was found on the light coloured sub-soil. This discolouration was roughly circular in form, covering an area of about 9 square feet and extending down into subsoil for a depth of 6 inches. Intermittent flecks of charcoal extended over a

much wider area of the subsoil but nowhere appeared in great quantity, and no calcined bone was recovered. Any association between this feature and one or other of the cremations can, therefore, only be argued on the unsatisfactory basis of proximity and the possibility that in such circumstances cremation would take place at no great distance from the chosen or prescribed resting place.

Additional features in this cutting consisted of a shallow trench containing the fibrous remains of a sheep burial and one driven post-hole, possibly recent.

FINDS

(a) POTTERY

(1) *Beakers 1 and 2* (fig. 4; B1, B2)

Beaker B1 is a fine walled vessel with light brown surfaces and dark core. The surfaces are rather pitted and friable, but this has probably been caused by seepage into the grave after robbing. The impressed comb decoration on the body consists of panels or metopes of simple herringbone between zones of multiple horizontal lines, below which are filled triangles. Three of the encircling grooves above the shoulder bear comb impressions, but the remainder are plain, as are those grooves on the inside of the rim.

Beaker B2 is red/buff in colour with a grey core. The design is finely executed in a manner and a pattern resembling that of B1. The grooves above the shoulder in this instance are more pronounced and all are plain. There is no internal rim decoration.

The similarity of the two vessels would imply some degree of contemporaneity and their form would place them generally within the Bell Beaker series. The somewhat ovoid shape, possibly with incipient neck in the case of B2, the broad zone decorative motifs and the grooved necks would indicate lateness in the series, though the internal rim decoration on B1 is possibly of earlier tradition. Grooved decoration above the shoulder or on the neck is found on vessels of similar form in Northumberland, Yorkshire and E. Scotland, as well as on Short Necked Beakers and some Long Necked Beakers elsewhere. Grooved necks and the use of the metope in decoration sometimes appear on Dutch Beakers of the Veluwe group where at first the metope as well as the triangle is

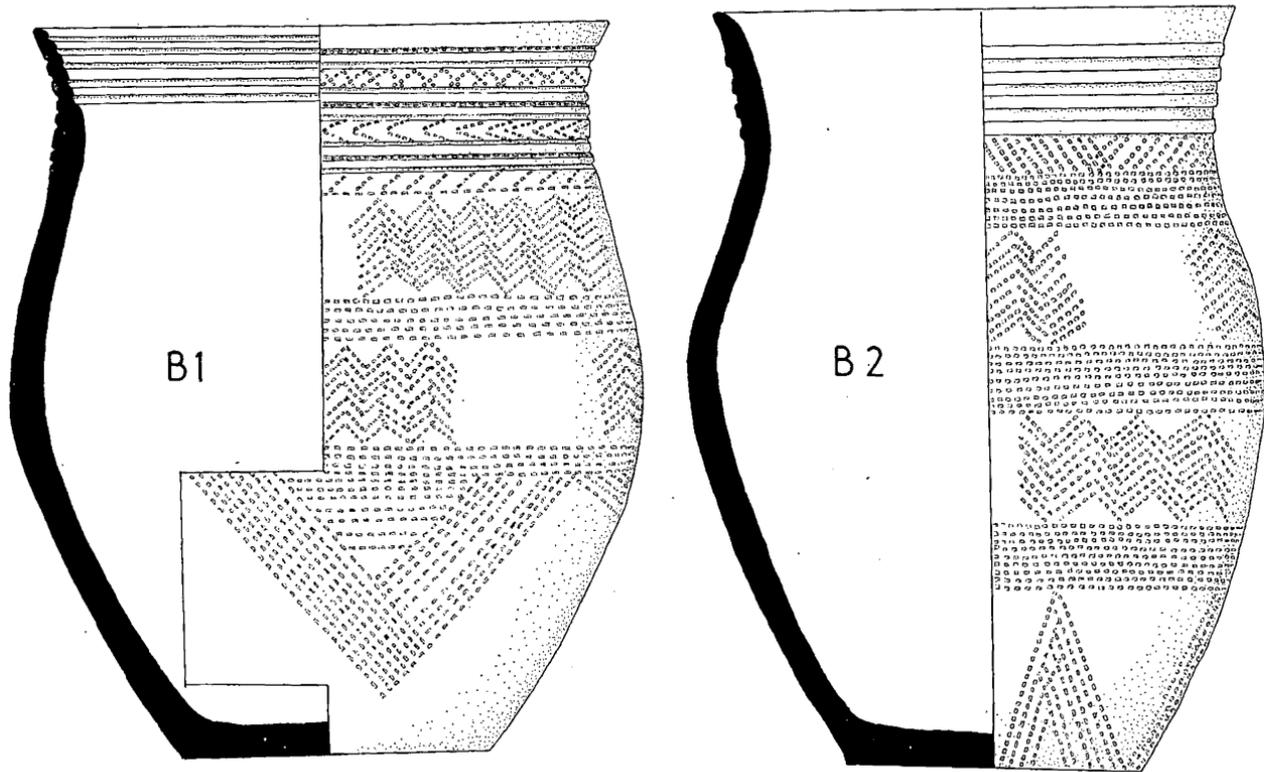


FIG. 4. BEAKERS FROM GRAVES B1 AND B2 ($\frac{1}{2}$)

used to fill the gap between the zones of decoration. Metopes as part of the decorated zones themselves are also present on some Rhenish Beakers.⁷

I am grateful to Dr. D. L. Clarke for confirmation (*in lit.*), in advance of the publication of a new corpus of British Beakers, that in his tentative re-classification of British Beaker pottery⁸ these vessels would fall within the insular development of his proposed Northern British/North Rhine Beaker Group, which he sees as arriving from north of the old Rhine delta c. 1700 B.C. or slightly later.

The radiocarbon date of 1670 ± 50 B.C. (3620 ± 50 B.P. Libby half life of 5568 years: GaK-800), obtained from charcoal from the stake-holes which are taken to precede immediately the interment B1, would agree tolerably well with this estimate.

(2) *Beaker 3* (fig. 5; B3)

Many fragments of this vessel had been scattered in the robbing of burial B3 and not all the sherds have been recovered. However, enough remains to give a complete section. The Beaker is red/buff in surface colouring and the fabric coarser than that of B1 and B2. Its form is as loose as its incised decoration and the ceramic is perhaps not too far removed from what has been classed on occasions as Beaker/Food Vessel. There are a number of similar vessels locally and in southern Scotland where they have been found in cists associated for example at Ashgrove, Fife, with a Class III riveted dagger, at Cairn Greg, Angus, with a Class II dagger.⁹ Such vessels probably belong to the tail end of the Beaker tradition in Britain and at least run concurrently with Wessex I, Early Bronze Age, 1600-1500 B.C. However, the survival of some EBA 1 metal types into EBA 2 has been proposed for the Highland Zone and the north.¹⁰ A date as late as at least c. 1500 B.C. is possible.

In Clarke's reclassification (*Atlantic Symposium; summary*) this vessel would belong to the latest phase of his Southern British

⁷ e.g. J. Tait, *Beakers from Northumberland* (1965), nos. 40, 42, 46, 49, 53, 55, 59, 69, 73; Abercromby, *Bronze Age Pottery*, nos. 140, 144, 203; Mortimer, *Burial Mounds East Yorks.*, figs. 131, 134, 246, 350. W. E. Griffiths, *P.P.S.*, XXIII (1957), figs. 4 & 5. Van Der Waals & Glasbergen, *Palaeohistoria*, IV (1955), 2 ff. E. Sangmeister, *Die Jungsteinzeit in nordmainischen Hessen: Die Glockenbecherkultur und die Becherkulturen* (1951), Taf I, II, IV.

⁸ All that is available at the time of writing is Clarke's summary as circulated at the *Second Atlantic Symposium, Groningen, March 1964*.

⁹ Some Scottish examples are listed by A. S. Henshall, *P.S.A.S.*, XCVII (1963-4) 166-174.

¹⁰ C. B. Burgess, *Arch. Ael.*⁴, XLVII (1965), 75.

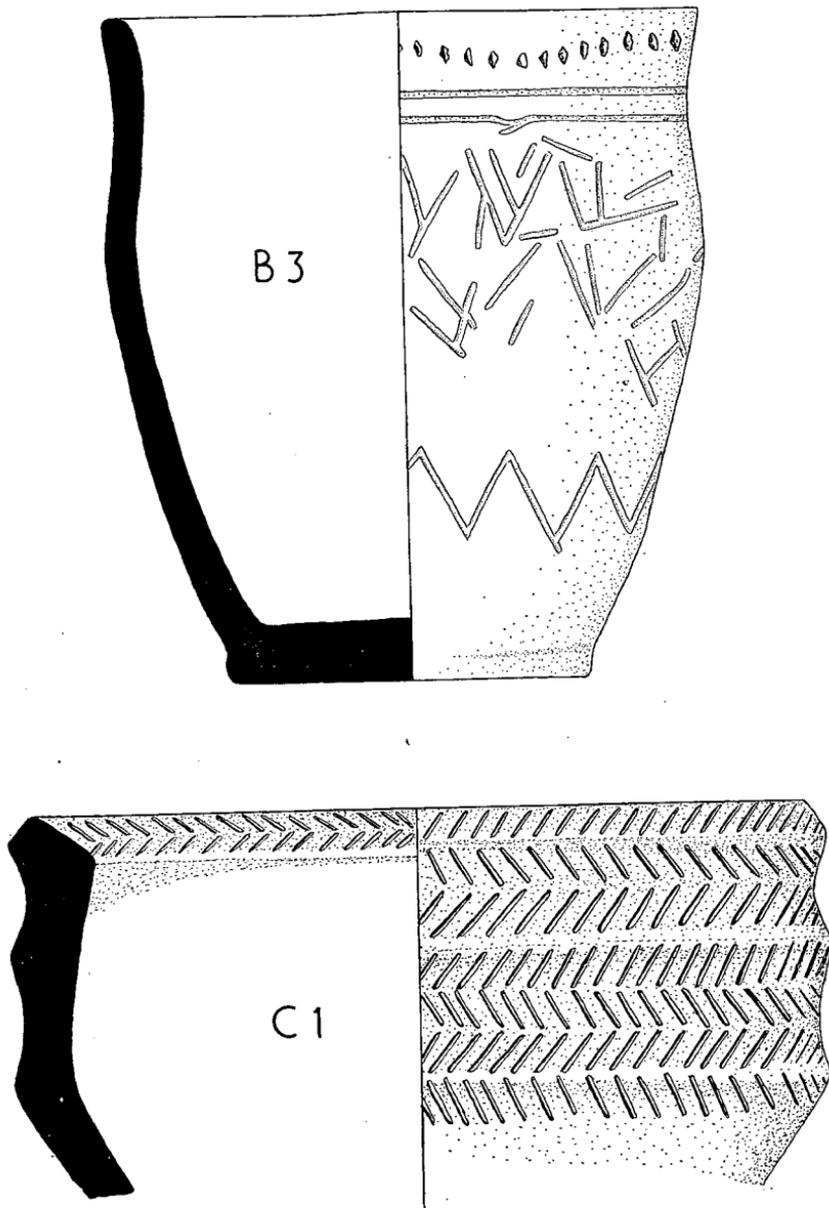


FIG. 5. BEAKER FROM GRAVE B3. ENLARGED FOOD VESSEL ($\frac{1}{2}$)

Beaker tradition, i.e. S.4, composed of "slack biconical Beakers carelessly decorated with blade incised lines". The distribution of late S3 and S4 vessels is said to be complimentary to Wessex I centres with an expansion northwards. A settlement of this group at Wattisfield, Suffolk, has a radiocarbon date of 1560 ± 150 B.C. (Libby half life; information D. L. Clarke).

(3) *Enlarged Food Vessel* (fig. 5)

The upper part of this vessel has been reconstructed from half a dozen conjoining fragments. The remainder of the sherds, found mainly in a small compass within the disturbed area in the S.E. quadrant, could not be joined together and most of the lower portion of the vessel is missing. The vessel is an enlarged version of the tripartite form of Yorkshire vase (*Abercromby type 2, Manby type 2 (ii)*).¹¹ The height of the vessel is not known but similar local vessels with the same rim diameter, from Ovingham and Buston, are not more than $9\frac{1}{2}$ ins. in height.¹² The clay is coarsely levigated and contains many small fragments of sandstone. From the surviving fragments decoration would appear to be confined to the area above the shoulder and consists of incised horizontal herringbone.

Influence from the Collard Urn series on the Yorkshire Food Vase tradition has been seen to be reflected in the enlargement of such vessels.¹³ In Food Vessels of this form the tripartite nature may have resulted from a widening of the narrow shoulder groove, with or without stops, as found on Yorkshire Vases of Type 1. Though not enlarged, Food Vessels of both types have been found associated in graves and a radiocarbon date of 1490 ± 150 B.C. (Libby half life) exists for just such a combination of vessels in a cremation grave at Harland Edge, Derbyshire.¹⁴

(4) *Roman British Flagon* (fig. 6)

Only seven fragments of this vessel were recovered, including one rim and one handle sherd, all of them from the disturbed area within or outside of the kerb in the S.E. quadrant. A tentative restoration is offered of a colour coated, one handled flagon, with bands of rouletted decoration. The type is not a common one in the north and the nearest parallels would appear to lie amongst the Water Newton pottery (unpublished—I am grateful to Mr. J. P. Gillam and Mr. J. Tait for making the search amongst

¹¹ T. G. Manby, *D.A.J.*, LXXVII (1957), 1-29.

¹² Greenwell, *B.B.*, 438. G. Jobey, *Arch. Ael.*⁴, XXXV (1957), 271.

¹³ I. H. Longworth P.P.S. XXVII (1961), 284.

¹⁴ D. N. Riley, *D.A.J.*, LXXXVI (1966), 44.

this material). If the vessel has in fact come from the Water Newton kilns then a date in the mid-third century A.D. would be appropriate.

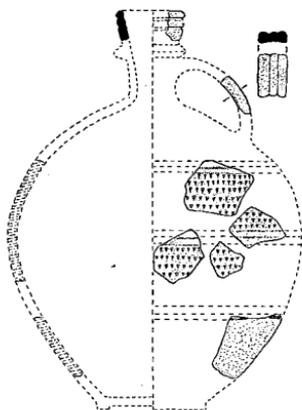


FIG. 6. FLAGON (4)

(5) "*Native*" Ware

There are only four small sherds, none of them rim sections, but all from the same vessel. As these were recovered from the disturbed areas in the S.E. quadrant or from the upper spill beyond the kerb, it is possible that the vessel could have been deposited with a secondary burial subsequently robbed away. The sherds are grey/black in colour throughout and contain small quartz grits. The fabric is not Bronze Age in character nor would it seem to belong to any regional variety of the so-called Flat Rimmed Ware. Rather it has similarities with some of the thinner walled native pottery from Romano-British native settlements in the area.

(b) JET

V-Bored Buttons (fig. 8)

These two buttons, as argued above, have most probably been associated with burial B1. They measure 1.1 in. (2.8 cm.) and 0.9 in. (2.2 cm.) in diameter, the smaller bearing slight incisions on the underneath surface. V-bored buttons of various materials are widespread in Britain but, as has been indicated on a number of occasions, do not appear to be associated with the earliest Beaker

types in this country.¹⁵ The usual associations, where they exist, are with Necked Beakers, flat riveted daggers, shaft-hole stone battle axes and Food Vessels. However, earlier Beaker associations are known for the type and Clarke sees the V-bored button as probably introduced with his Wessex/Middle Rhine Beaker group, arriving in Britain from c. 1800/1750 B.C. (*Atlantic Symposium*). In any event there would seem to be no reason to doubt the proposed association of these specimens of jet on chronological grounds.

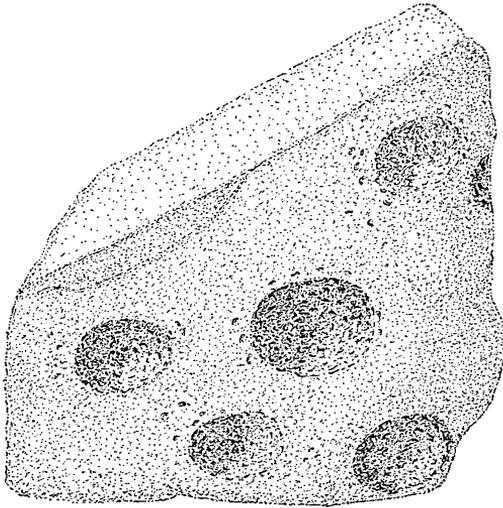


FIG. 7. CUP-MARKED STONE (c. $\frac{1}{2}$)

(c) STONE (fig. 7)

A fragment of local sandstone 5 in. (12.7 cm.) \times 5 in. \times 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (6.4 cm.) thick, on one face of which five small cups have been pecked, c. 1 in. in diameter and up to $\frac{1}{2}$ in. deep. Four cups have been started on the second face but not completed. As part of one of these cups lies on the very edge of one face it is likely that the stone has been broken from a larger slab. The stone was found in the disturbed area in the south-east quadrant and could have been associated with cremation C1 in the same area.

¹⁵ S. Piggott in *Culture and Environment* (ed. Foster and Alcock 1963), 78 and 86.

Inscribed or cup-marked stones found with burials and in barrows or cairns are fairly common. Locally they occur as follows; on cist slabs at Beanley Moor, Ingoe, Doddington and Harbottle Peels;¹⁶ on individual stones placed with burials or cremations as at Lilburn Hill Farm and Ravensheugh;¹⁷ sometimes supporting the inverted cremation vessel, as at the Fawns, or on stones covering simple cremations in a "cemetery" at Ford;¹⁸ on the kerbstone of a cairn at Debdon Whitefield;¹⁹ and, more frequently, with no specific location given or generally within the mound or cairn, as at Pitland Hills, Pike Hill, Lowstead Farm and Cheviot.²⁰ As elsewhere, simple cup-marks predominate but there are also the ring marked stone from the multiple, double-banked cremation deposit at Lilburn Hill Farm and the better known foot-marked stone from Harbottle Peels. An inspection of the available local stones suggests that, where these are small, they could be mere fragments from larger decorated slabs and it is also conceivable that the stone for some decorated cist slabs may have been selected at some stage after the actual inscribing was done.

Small, apparently broken slabs, similar to that from Chatton have also been found elsewhere as for example at Simondston Cairn, Glam.,²¹ Tregulland, Cornwall,²² and Cairnpapple, West Lothian.²³

FLINT (fig. 8)

No. 3. Scraper/awl?; thick grey patina; from disturbed area S.E. quadrant.

No. 4. Scraper; grey mottled flint, from between the base stones of the cairn close to cremation C2 and possibly, though not certainly, associated.

No. 5. Scraper; grey patina; from old surface beneath the stone on the outside of the kerb, S.E. quadrant.

No. 6. Broken scraper; grey patina; found as No. 5 above.

¹⁶ *History of Northumberland*, XII, XIV, XV. Greenwell, *BB.*, CCII.

¹⁷ *Arch. Ael.*², X (1884), 220. *Ibid.*, XV (1891-2), 23 ff.

¹⁸ *Arch. Ael.*⁴, X (1933), 208. Greenwell, *B.B.*, CCX. *Arch. J.*, XXII, 259.

¹⁹ *P.S.A.N.*, VI (1934), 329. *History of Northumberland*, XV, 61.

²⁰ *Arch. Ael.*², VII (1886-7), 248. *Antiquity*, II (1928), 470, N.C.H. IV, 238.

²¹ *Arch.*, 87 (1938), 132.

²² *Ant. J.*, XXXVIII (1958), 174.

²³ *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXII (1947-8), 108.

No. 7. Scraper; mottled grey coloured flint; found in disturbed material with V-bored buttons and probably to be associated with Burial B1.

No. 8. Broken scraper; mottled grey flint; found in disturbed area S.E. quadrant.

REPORT ON BURNT WOOD FROM STAKE HOLES

by

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(Dept. of Plant Science, University of Newcastle upon Tyne)

All of the pieces are Oak (*Quercus* sp.) and are quite unmistakable. They show clearly the diagnostic features—the ring porous structure of the annual rings and multiseriate medullary rays. I judge that these were branches of a few inches in diameter.

SKELETAL MATERIAL

The bone from both cremations was in small quantity and only minute fragments remained. I am grateful to Professor C. H. Tonge, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, for examination of the material but no reliable information could be given as to age or sex.

CONCLUSIONS

Some of the deductions must necessarily remain tentative, chiefly in this instance because of severe robbing of the cairn in the past.

The first inhumation had been placed in a shallow grave accompanied by a form of Bell Beaker and, most probably, two V-bored buttons of jet and a flint scraper. The Beaker falls typologically into a regional development of D. L. Clarke's proposed Northern British/North Rhine beaker group for which he has suggested a date of arrival in Britain

at c. 1700 B.C. or slightly later (p. 22 above). The burial had been preceded by a ritual burning involving some small driven stakes of oak which, if representative of a structure in any sense, could hardly have formed part of a mortuary enclosure or platform, as has been found occasionally elsewhere,²⁴ or of a pre-cairn occupation site.²⁵ They were perhaps no more than central supports for stacking the material for a purificatory fire. Instances of similar firing beneath barrows or cairns are frequent and widely recorded.²⁶ Although the burning of natural brushwood could account for this phenomenon in some cases, it is clearly not so in others and cannot be applied here. The radiocarbon reading from the burnt wood in the stake-holes gives a date of 1670 ± 50 B.C. (GaK 800; half life 5568 years), which on current reckoning would not be out of keeping with the estimated date for the burial arrived at from ceramic typology. In all probability this first Beaker grave was covered by a low mound of residual upcast and small stones, but was soon followed by a second inhumation, again accompanied by a Beaker and on this occasion placed in an adjacent deep pit-grave. From a consideration of the form and decoration of the two vessels they could well be contemporary if not, indeed, by the same or a related hand, and the proposed sequence was determined in excavation. Residual upcast from the pit-grave had again been used to cover this interment with a low mound before the two burials were incorporated within a large cairn, the base stones of which rested directly upon the mound of the second burial. The stones of this cairn were laid from the centre outwards after a fashion noted elsewhere by Greenwell²⁷ and covered an area thirty-four feet in diameter. With the exception of larger base stones on the perimeter, there was no specially construc-

²⁴ e.g. C. M. Piggott, *P.P.S.* IX (1943), 1-27. C. Fox, *Life and Death in the Bronze Age* (1959), 177 ff.

²⁵ e.g. Swarkeston, Barrow 4, E. Greenfield, *D.A. & N.S. Soc.*, LXXX (1960), 16.

²⁶ v. P. Ashbee, *Bronze Age Barrow* (1960), 58.

²⁷ e.g. *British Barrows*, CCIII.

ted kerb at this stage yet the evidence would seem to favour a supulchral monument in its own right.

The disparity in depth between these two Beaker graves is of some interest but, if it arose from a social distinction or the influence of some other cultural trait, this is not immediately apparent in the grave goods and no skeletal material remained. Although the stone cist is preponderant with Beaker burials in the north, a shallow earth or rock-cut grave does sometimes occur as, for example, at Cairnpapple, West Lothian²⁸ or Alnham, Northumberland, and could be more frequent.²⁹ In the case of the Alnham burial, the shallow grave was covered by a very small cairn such as has been envisaged for the first burial at Chatton Sandyford. On present evidence, the deeper pit-grave is a feature of Yorkshire and the south and has not been recorded hitherto in Northumberland. In like manner, as Piggott has indicated,³⁰ north of his approximate *isotaph* on the Tees, burials with Beakers of all types are *normally* either not under a barrow or cairn or may have had a very low mound easily destroyed, whereas south of this the large barrow or cairn prevails. However, little enough is known about some of the other large cairns that do exist in the Border area and the deep pit-grave in particular could well have escaped the attention of early excavators, especially where the cairn has been examined through a funnel shaped cavity driven in from the top.

The third inhumation, again with a Beaker, would appear on the balance of the evidence to have been inserted into the existing cairn in a pit-grave of less substantial proportions. The Beaker itself is of Clarke's Southern Four group which, from associations elsewhere, could be as late as at least 1500 B.C. and certainly coming towards the tail end of the Beaker ceramic form (p. 22 above). Although the evidence is susceptible to other interpretations it seems probable that at this stage or shortly afterwards the cairn was enlarged by the

²⁸ S. Piggott, *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXII (1947-8), 114-115.

²⁹ G. Jobey, *Arch. Ael.*³, XLIV (1966), 33 ff.

³⁰ *Culture and Environment*, 76.

addition of a kerb and an inner "platform". The latter was conceivably a deliberate formation with some ritual practice in mind before the final covering of stone was added. Exceptional care and skill had been expended on the dressing and positioning of the kerbstones, even when comparison is made with the best examples of kerbing elsewhere, including the well known Welsh series.³¹ In this instance, however, it is as well to add that it was not a matter of replacing a temporary structure by a more permanent feature on the same perimeter, as may have been the case at Tregulland³² or Pant-y-Dulath,³³ since an examination of the support trench for this kerb yielded no evidence for earlier stake-holes. The poor ceramic of this third Beaker need not lead us to doubt such an allied structural competence of high order and comparable Beakers elsewhere are sometimes accompanied by fairly rich metal associations of the Early Bronze Age (p. 22 above).

Additional burials, which could have been inserted after the construction of the kerb, were represented by a cremation in an Enlarged Food Vessel, itself not necessarily far removed in time from the third Beaker burial, and one unaccompanied cremation of unknown context, but possibly within the same general period.

Although there could be other interpretations, it seems that the cairn in its final stage would have had the general appearance of an inverted saucer or basin with a pronounced rim formed by the *exposed* kerb, somewhat similar for example to the form proposed for South Hill Barrow, Talbenny, Pembs.,³⁴ or the cairn at Cairnpapple Hill, West Lothian.³⁵ On the other hand, the perimeter itself was not strictly circular and the façade of kerbstones tended to run in straight lengths, a feature which has parallels in some other barrows and cairns, as at Breach Farm, Glamorgan³⁶ or

³¹ Conveniently illustrated by Fox in *Life and Death in the Bronze Age*.

³² *op. cit.*

³³ P. Hayes, *ref. Bronze Age Barrow* (1960), p. 65.

³⁴ C. Fox, *Arch. J.*, XCIX (1943), 1-32.

³⁵ *op. cit.*

³⁶ W. F. Grimes, *P.P.S. IV* (1938), 107-121.

Chelmorton Low, Derbyshire.³⁷ From the data obtainable at Chatton Sandyford it is difficult to find any conclusive support for constructional methods based upon a megalithic yard, as advanced recently by Thom,³⁸ in order to explain this phenomenon. Other factors could have operated here which would account for the comparatively straight lengths of kerbing, not least the difficulty of obtaining flush joints between the stones if a continuous curve were to be followed.

It is probable that a final burial had been inserted into the cairn at a higher level during the third century A.D., only to be removed by subsequent robbing. Similar intrusive burials of the Roman period have been recorded occasionally elsewhere, but in Northumberland, away from the mural zone and the military roads and stations, Romano-British burials in any form are scarcely known at the moment.³⁹ And, as it so happens, at Chatton Sandyford we are in an area some distance removed from known settlements of the Roman period if not actually in countryside considered undesirable by the native population.

Robbing of the cairn may have taken place on more than one occasion and at some stage a definite attempt had been made to locate the graves, unfortunately with some success. Even so, the objective had been to find something more precious than "ween rubbishy bits of pots". The final interference was brought about by the construction of low walled enclosures from the remaining cairn material, similar to lambing pens or the like which can be seen to be attached to many a ruined monument in the uplands. In this instance however, the enclosures had misled earlier surveyors into listing the site of the cairn as a "Camp".

³⁷ J. Forde-Johnston, *D.A.J.*, LXXXII (1962), 88.

³⁸ *Antiquity*, XL (1966), 121-128 (since this was written v. A. Thom, *Megalithic Sites in Britain* (1967)).

³⁹ There are the Roman finds from the so-called Anglian cemetery at Howick (*Arch Ael.*⁴, XVI (1939), 120 ff.) and a possible insertion may have existed in the barrow on Turpins Hill (Mackenzie, *View of Northumberland* (1825), II, 377). A few sherds of Roman British rustic ware were dug out from a "mound" on Corbys Craggs, by the gamekeeper from Leamington Hall a few years ago. The pottery is genuine but the precise provenance has not been established (unpublished).

SMALL CAIRNS

The original intention was to examine at least twenty of the small cairns in chosen groups at intervals along the length of the cairnfield, the selection to be based on variety in size and topographical situation. Unfortunately, the scheme had to be abandoned after the investigation of only five mounds because of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the county. These five mounds lay in a central group on either side of the large cairn already excavated and, with one exception (Cairn E), all appeared to have been subject to earlier interference.

Cairn A (fig. 9)

This cairn was situated slightly below the top of the ridge some sixty-six yards to the north-east of Cairn I. Before excavation it appeared as a heather and peat covered mound with odd stones showing through the surface. Its diameter was some sixteen feet and height at the centre 1 ft. 6 in. above the ground level on its assumed perimeter.

In excavation it was seen to consist of a compact collection of stones not laid in any particular form and now lacking a well defined edge, although there were some larger stones on the periphery which could have formed part of a retaining kerb at some time. The lower stones everywhere lay on or slightly in a band of iron-pan of varying thickness and only when this was removed were any features revealed in the underlying grey surface, similar to that found beneath Cairn 1. To the west of the centre of the mound this surface was flecked with carbon and burnt to a brilliant red over an area some 2 ft. 6 in. in diameter. Within the same area was a deep pocket of charcoal but this proved to be part of a system of small animal "runs" and was seemingly a "nest" perhaps formed from material brought down from recent heather

CAIRN 'A' ~ CHATTON SANDYFORD

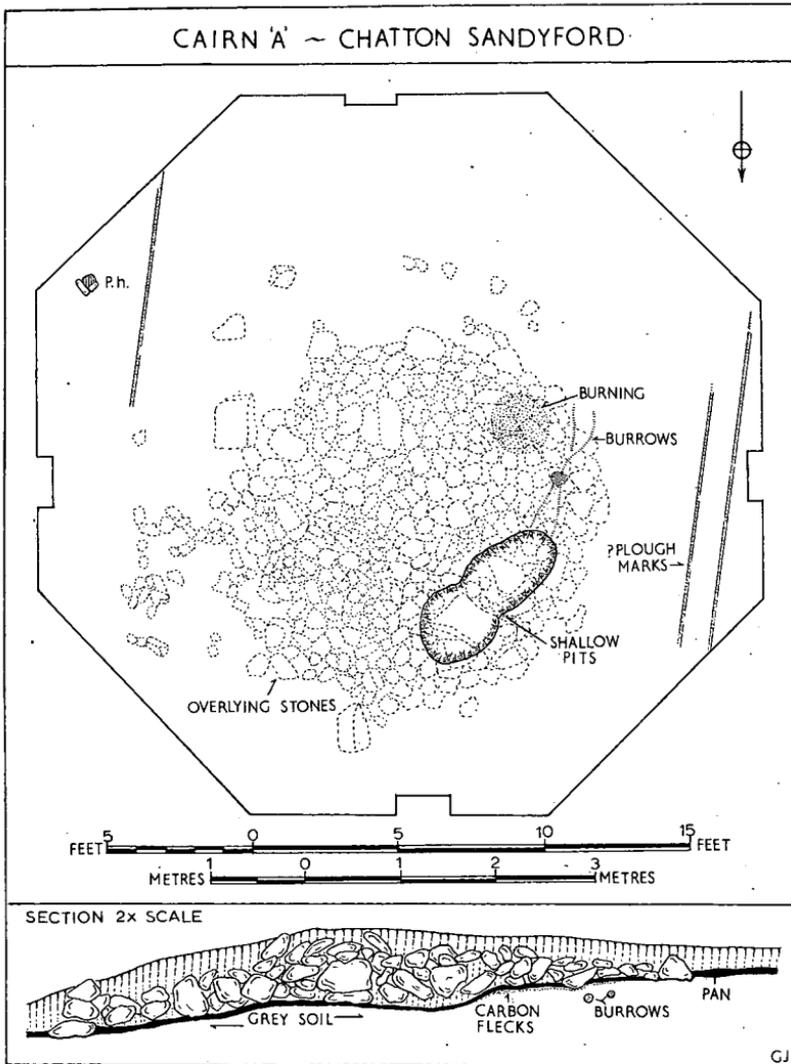


FIG. 9

burning. One of the "runs" could be traced for some distance amongst the overlying stones of the cairn. To the north of the area of burning were two shallow intersecting pits, no more than 9 in. in depth, aligned NE-SW. The iron pan layer followed the lines of these depressions which were filled with tumbled stone similar to the cairn material which had overlain them. No upcast from the pits could be discerned and it proved impossible to decide whether these features were genuine graves, subsequently robbed out, or pits left by later delving into the cairn. One of the stones lying uppermost in the northern pit bore two or three surface score marks, possibly caused by a ploughshare. Some support for this interpretation was found in the presence of three extremely shallow, parallel grooves on the subsoil at this level on the east and west sides of the cairn. The only other feature of note was a deep post-hole, 9 in. in diameter and containing two packing stones, lying near to the outer edge of the SE quadrant. Extensions to the excavation in this area failed to reveal additional post-holes but at least demonstrated that no outer stake circle existed. There were no signs of a grave beneath the centre of the mound as now constituted and very acidic conditions hampered the application of chemical tests.

The small finds were solely of flint. Three thumb-scrapers, part of an end scraper and four small spalls of flint came from in or on the iron-pan level beneath the cairn. From areas beyond this, in various quadrants, were found a fourth thumb-scraper, part of one worked flake and eight spalls. Two small spalls were also recovered from amongst the cairn material.

In the absence of conclusive evidence for a burial it is difficult to argue for any direct relationship between the deposit of the flints and the burning, or, for that matter, the precise association of both with the cairn, although they clearly preceded its formation. If ploughing had taken place at some stage then, on balance, this would seem to have been after the depositing of some of the stones. It is worth noting at this stage that no plough marks were found in the vicinity

of the other cairns as excavated and on no occasion were the stones grouped around an earthfast boulder or rock outcrop in a fashion likely to give clear support to a case for field clearance.

Cairn B

This cairn was situated on the slight east facing slope eighty-five yards to the east of Cairn I. Its surface diameter was little more than 9 ft. and there had seemingly been some later interference on the west side. The sections were similar to those of Cairn A except for the presence of twin layers of panning and the shallowest of depressions beneath the centre of the tump. This measured 2 ft. wide by 3 ft. long but was at most only 6 in. deep.

There were flecks of carbon on the subsoil beneath the cairn but no clear indications of burning. From amongst the cairn material came two spalls of flint and an abraded sherd of pottery 1.25 in. in length. The sherd has only one surface remaining, dark brown in colour and undecorated, and contains large as well as small grits in the dark grey core. It is not Beaker ceramic and its most likely context locally would be Food Vessel or Urn. Unfortunately it again proved impossible to determine how this sherd had arrived amongst the cairn material and the shallow central depression was not convincing as a grave.

Cairn C

Situated seventy-seven yards ESE of Cairn I were two mounds, the larger twelve feet and the smaller, immediately adjacent, only 6 ft. in diameter. As it was evident from surface observation that there had been some previous delving into the larger cairn it was assumed from the outset that the smaller mound was possibly no more than the discarded material from this activity.

In excavation both mounds of stone lacked any discernible kerb. The piled stone at the centre of the larger mound was only 2 ft. in height above the pan and grey subsoil, and only a scatter of stones accounted for the smaller mound. Once again flecks of carbon were present in the pan level and the top of the grey soil but no other features were encountered. There was a scatter of flint spalls and small struck flakes, thirty in all, over the whole area at this level, the main concentration being beyond the larger cairn in the south west quadrant.

Cairn D

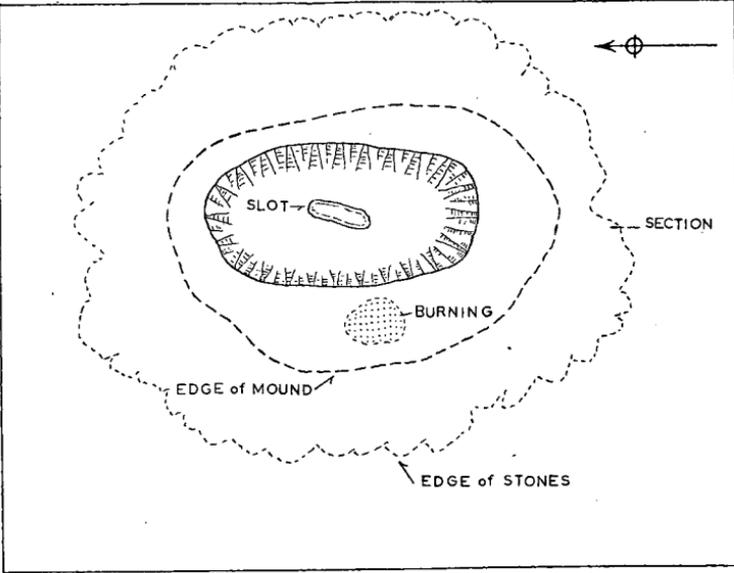
This was situated towards the bottom of a sharp but short incline, forty-three yards to the WSW of Cairn I. The overgrown mound was entirely on the uphill side of a large boulder and it was suspected at the outset that it had been formed by stones washed or rolled down from above and lodging behind an earthfast rock. In excavation this proved to be the most logical conclusion and there were no finds.

Cairn E (fig. 10)

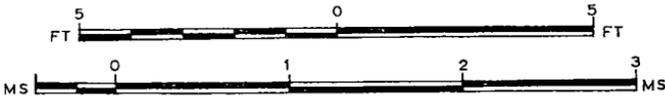
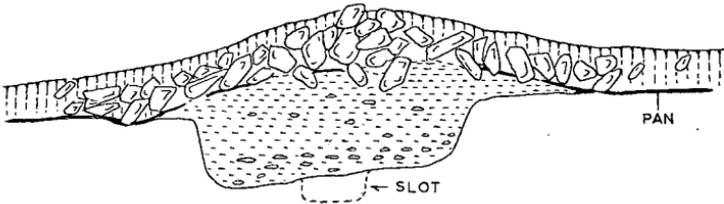
This cairn lay closest to Cairn I, at a distance of seventeen yards to the SSW, on the beginning of the incline leading down into the slack on the west side of the ridge. From surface observation it was some twelve feet in diameter and 2 ft. in height at the centre.

On removal of the peat and underlying stones from the two downhill quadrants it was apparent that there existed a low tump of upcast material similar to those already encountered in Cairn I, where they had marked the position of graves. Thereafter, the excavation was carried out with frequent control sections on a north to south axis, that illustrated (fig. 10) being the west face of the central section.

CAIRN 'E' ~ CHATTON SANDYFORD



SECTION



GJ

FIG. 10

Both the small tump and fill of an underlying pit consisted of sandy yellow material, containing a certain amount of brash together with small fragments of shattered rock. Consequently, the edge of the pit showed clearly against the surrounding grey subsoil. The pit itself was sub-rectangular in shape and partly rock-cut. It was aligned north to south and had maximum measurements of 5 ft. by 3 ft. The sides shelved steeply being slightly deeper on the eastern, uphill side, so as to give a comparatively level bottom to the feature, the maximum depth being 1 ft. 9 in. In the centre there was a well formed slot not quite aligned with the long axis of the pit. This measured 1 ft. 3 in. by 7 in. and was an additional 8 in. in depth. The filling of the slot did not appear to differ from that of the pit and no "shadow" of an upright could be traced in the material above.

As with the grave in Cairn I, it appeared that the original upcast from the pit had been back filled whilst still in a comparatively fresh state. The similarity was further enhanced by a red patch from burning just beyond the western edge of the pit. Since this firing was covered by the residual tump it was taken as a possible explanation of the flecks of carbon which appeared not only on the grey subsoil but also within the material forming the tump and fill of the pit. Although individual fragments of charcoal were small, the larger pieces were removable and a sample was collected for radiocarbon assay from within the pit itself. There were no finds from beneath the cairn but two spalls of flint were recovered from beyond the perimeter. The charcoal sample yielded a radiocarbon date of 2890 ± 90 B.C. (GaK-1507, half life 5570 years).

Conclusion

At the moment this interrupted examination of the small cairns in the cairnfield has raised more problems than it has solved.

The lack of form in four of the cairns, together with the absence of any satisfactory evidence for burials and the possibility of ploughing at some stage, would tend to support the idea of field clearance piles in these instances. The local situation in this respect is discussed further in the Appendix, section C. In such circumstances, the evidence for burning could be related to a similar activity even if it clearly preceded the stone piles in some cases.

On the other hand, it is not without interest that worked flint has turned up in these excavations at intervals over some ten thousand square yards of the ridge top. Unless this material, possibly together with the one sherd of pottery, is merely to be related to temporary and intermittent activity concerned with the two genuine but large sepulchral monuments, it would be unwise not to think in terms of the possible presence of further burials amongst the one hundred and fifty smaller cairns.

The fifth cairn and the radiocarbon date of 2890 ± 90 B.C. raise problems of another kind. It is not easy to account for the pit as other than a grave and it would indeed be possible to quote instances of individual inhumations of the Neolithic period, already conveniently listed by Piggott⁴⁰ and, more recently, by Ashbee,⁴¹ some of which give evidence for standing posts. But most of these have the merit of a context verified by stratification or appropriate grave goods. Here, at Chatton Sandyford, there is not even the convenient argument of the presence of any nearby Neolithic monuments or finds. The nearest barrow is at Ford⁴² and although there is pottery of Neolithic types from Ford, Kyloe,⁴³ Old Bewick,⁴⁴ and Rothbury⁴⁵ on the Fell Sandstone series, these are all sites some miles distant. Nor is the form of the pit in this instance easy to parallel in the locality, except perhaps

⁴⁰ *Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles* (1954), 48 ff.

⁴¹ *Arch. C.* (1966), 38 ff.; v. also G. C. Dunning, *Ant. J.*, XLVI (1966), 9.

⁴² N. Newbigin, *Arch. Ael.*⁴, XII (1935), 148-157.

⁴³ Unpublished, Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne.

⁴⁴ S. Piggott, *Arch. J.*, LXXXVIII (1931), 67-158.

⁴⁵ Unpublished, Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne.

on nearby Rayheugh, where Greenwell's large round cairn CXCIV covered a rectangular shaped grave with an oval hole sunk into the SE corner. This also, however, was barren of finds and presumably then regarded as the resting place of one of his "more humble" folk.

In the consideration of mere possibilities another factor must be taken into account. Quite simply it is that although the firing preceded the digging of the pit the two may not be directly associated and the former may represent some much earlier activity on the same site. Clearly there can be no adequate solution to the problem until more investigation has been done, but in the meantime the writer makes no apologies for a reluctance to dismiss such assemblages of small cairns as arising solely from field clearance.

APPENDIX

The purpose of these notes is to draw attention to the presence of certain field remains in Northumberland which have received little or no consideration hitherto and merit only a passing reference in the body of this excavation report. They are not intended as an exhaustive survey since limitations in space alone would prevent such a venture.

A. *Enclosed Cremation Cemeteries*

The nature and general context of encircled cremation cemeteries in North Britain, embodying the traditions of the Late Neolithic practice of cremation, the structure of the henge monument and, probably, the Wessex pond barrow, were discussed some years ago by Professor Piggott.⁴⁶ Since then, additional survey and excavation in the Highland Zone have added to the knowledge of their nature, distribution, and context. The setting of many may be seen to lie in the Early to Middle Bronze Age with some datable links with the Wessex Culture, especially its second phase of the fifteenth century B.C., though radiocarbon dates will allow a wider span.⁴⁷ A common

⁴⁶ *Prehistoric Peoples of Scotland* (1962), 94-96.

⁴⁷ J. Scott-Elliot, *Trans. D. & G.N.H. & A. Soc.*, XLII (1965), 51 ff. J. D. Bu'Lock, *Trans. Lancs. & Cheshire A. Soc.*, 71 (1961), 1 ff. W. E. Griffiths, *P.P.S.*, XXVIII (1962), 387. R.C.A.M. *Peebleshire*, I, 15-16. J. Radley, *Arch. J.*, CXXIII (1966), 1-26.

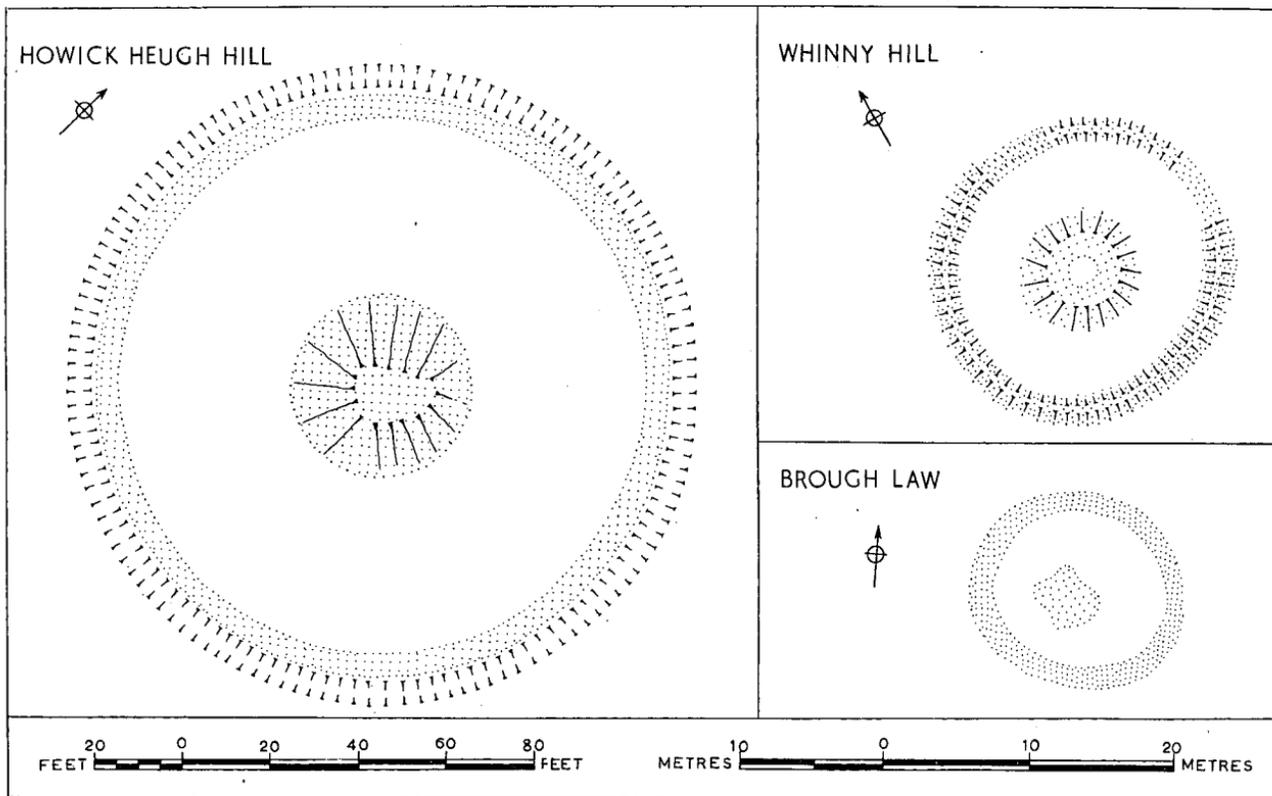


FIG. 11

form is that of a ring bank of earth or stone often enclosing a low central tump or cairn. Such monuments have been noted in the north in Derbyshire and the Pennines, the Lake District, Cleveland, Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Peebleshire and Perthshire—sufficient at least to indicate the likelihood of their presence in Northumberland, though none have been recorded hitherto. A number are given here as examples from a dozen or so possibilities that have been noted over the last few years (fig. 11). Most of them have suffered from previous delving but there are no records of any finds.

The low enclosing rings of stone, or earth and stone, range in diameter from forty feet at Brough Law (1 of 2; NT:999161) to one hundred and twenty-five feet at Howick (NU:238168). Although there is a gap in the otherwise well preserved encircling stone mound at Whinny Hill, Brownridge (NU:096281), it is probable that this has been caused by later robbing. The site at Howick is the only one with the semblance of a ditch but this can only have been narrow and shallow, sufficient to obtain material for the low mound. Both at Brownridge and Brough Law the monuments are on ridges where small cairns are also present. At Howick the site of the so-called Pagan Anglian cemetery⁴⁸ lay only a short distance to the east and there are other possible burial mounds in the immediate neighbourhood. There is a large, incomplete and much robbed circle of stone by the large cairns at Rayheugh (NU:116268) which may have been a comparable monument, but this is not certain.

It should be stressed that none of the known possibilities in Northumberland have been tested by recent excavation and the limitations of unsupported field survey are self evident. The "aad stells" amongst the genuine sepulchral cairns at Ravensheugh⁴⁹ (NZ:0199) may serve as a warning in one respect and, in another, the large cairns such as are found on Tick Law (NU:084214) or Coldsmouth Hill (NT:857283) where robbing has been carried out in such a manner as to leave the impression of a central tump within a ring of stone.

B. *Ring Enclosures*

This descriptive term has been used for a class of circular banked earthworks noted in some number in the recent Inventory for Peebleshire⁵⁰ and, since in form there could be confusion with the

⁴⁸ G. S. Keeney, *Arch. Ael.*, XVI (1939), 120-128.

⁴⁹ D. D. Dixon, *Upper Coquetdale* (1903), 139.

⁵⁰ *op. cit.*, 16-17. I am indebted to Mr. A. MacLaren for allowing me to visit such earthworks in process of excavation.

foregoing sepulchral monuments, a brief note relating to Northumberland may be apposite. It has been said that, whereas superficially such enclosures are difficult to distinguish from turf-built sheep stells, it is suspected that a prehistoric date may eventually be assigned to some of them, although only one out of six examples excavated in Peebleshire yielded any relics, namely a small stone axe-head and chert implements. They are described as consisting of "a bank normally about 10 ft. thick and 18 ins. in height enclosing a circular area measuring 15 to 65 ft. in diameter. Exceptionally a double bank may be present or, in some cases, a narrow groove up to 2 ft. in width may be visible on the top of the bank. In a few instances only, the bank is interrupted by a narrow gap". They have been discounted as sheep stells on the grounds that they sometimes occur in groups, often lack entrances, and may occur on marshy or low-lying ground. On the other hand, several lie in close proximity to barrows. In addition to Peebleshire, they have been noted in Roxburghshire, Lanarkshire and Midlothian.

The number of instances in which comparable enclosures, either singly or in groups, have been noted so far in Northumberland are limited to a dozen. It is possible to eliminate some of these as the remains of turf sheep stells or other comparatively recent phenomena. For the remainder one would prefer to reserve judgment as to their antiquity, even though they may occur in close proximity to ancient monuments such as the standing stone circle at Threestone Burn (NT:971205), or by small cairns as on Tathey Crag (NT:963212).

When representative of sheep stells, these circles sometimes lie next to more recent stone-built stells, as at the Shank, Alnham (NT:963134), and, as here, the entrance is not always noticeable perhaps because of the collapse of the turf walls. Sometimes, even when isolated, they may betray their comparatively recent origin by evident signs of the removal of a wide band of turf or peat from around the perimeters, presumably for building material. The type having a groove on the top of the low bank has not been noted in the county, but appears further to the west in Ewesdale where, for example, at Boykenhopehead (NY:275881) the remains have the aforementioned characteristics of a sheep stell built from turf or peat. Nor should the fact that these circles occur in pairs or larger numbers necessarily preclude more recent agricultural origins. In the early nineteenth century, sheep farmers in the Cheviots were evidently using circular enclosures, perhaps less substantial than stone-built stells, for the purpose of sorting "ewes and gimmers".⁵¹

⁵¹ Lawson, *Farmers Practical Instructor* (1827). It is worth noting that some modern sheep stells built from old railway sleepers will leave a bank with groove when finally abandoned.

In addition, some of the smaller embanked circles in Northumberland, generally some 15-20 ft. in diameter, can be shown conclusively to be the remains of "sow kilns", primitive constructions resembling charcoal burners' piles and used to produce lime for agricultural purposes.⁵² Nowhere is this better illustrated than at Wards Hill (NZ:080968) where, as it happens, the remains of a small group of these kilns are located in a sepulchral cairnfield which has produced Beaker, Pygmy Cup and flint barbed and tanged arrowhead,⁵³ and may also contain the remnants of an enclosed cremation cemetery. Such kilns are also found singly, as near Scald Law (NY:954884), often on the smallest of limestone outcrops. Additional diagnostic features may be the presence of shallow, surface quarrying and a change in flora due to the presence of limestone.

In such circumstances, the necessity for reserving judgment on the antiquity of the remainder of the known "ring enclosures" in Northumberland may be appreciated.

C. Cairnfields (fig. 12)

The excavations at Chatton Sandyford raise a problem, frequently ventilated over the years, concerning the nature and context of the so-called cairnfields or assemblages of *small* stone mounds such as occur in many upland areas.⁵⁴ When found near to larger cairns or barrows, they were sometimes regarded by older antiquaries as being the sepulchral monuments of more "humble" people; an explanation which had the merit of accounting for a frequent lack of grave goods, whereas the absence of skeletal remains and graves could be attributed to acid soils and surface inhumation. More recently, increasing numbers have been ascribed to stone clearance during the process of cultivation, sometimes perhaps of a primitive form by hoe or mattock. In some cases where field clearance has been argued on a totality of evidence the attribution is convincing, though the final proof may be lacking. However, as the recognition of such assemblages of cairns as an agricultural phenomenon gathers momentum,⁵⁵ there is a danger that genuine sepulchral monuments may be overlooked or the burden of final proof not applied.

Although the more imposing burial cairns or barrows, which themselves on occasion occur in small groups, have received some

⁵² G. Jobey, *Journ. University Newcastle upon Tyne Agric. Soc.*, 20 (1966), 2 ff.

⁵³ *P.S.A.N.*, VI (1935-6), 307.

⁵⁴ e.g. A. Graham, *P.S.A.S.*, XC (1956-7), 7-23. P. Ashbee, *Y.A.J.*, XXXIX (1957), 179-192.

⁵⁵ *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (1966), 50.

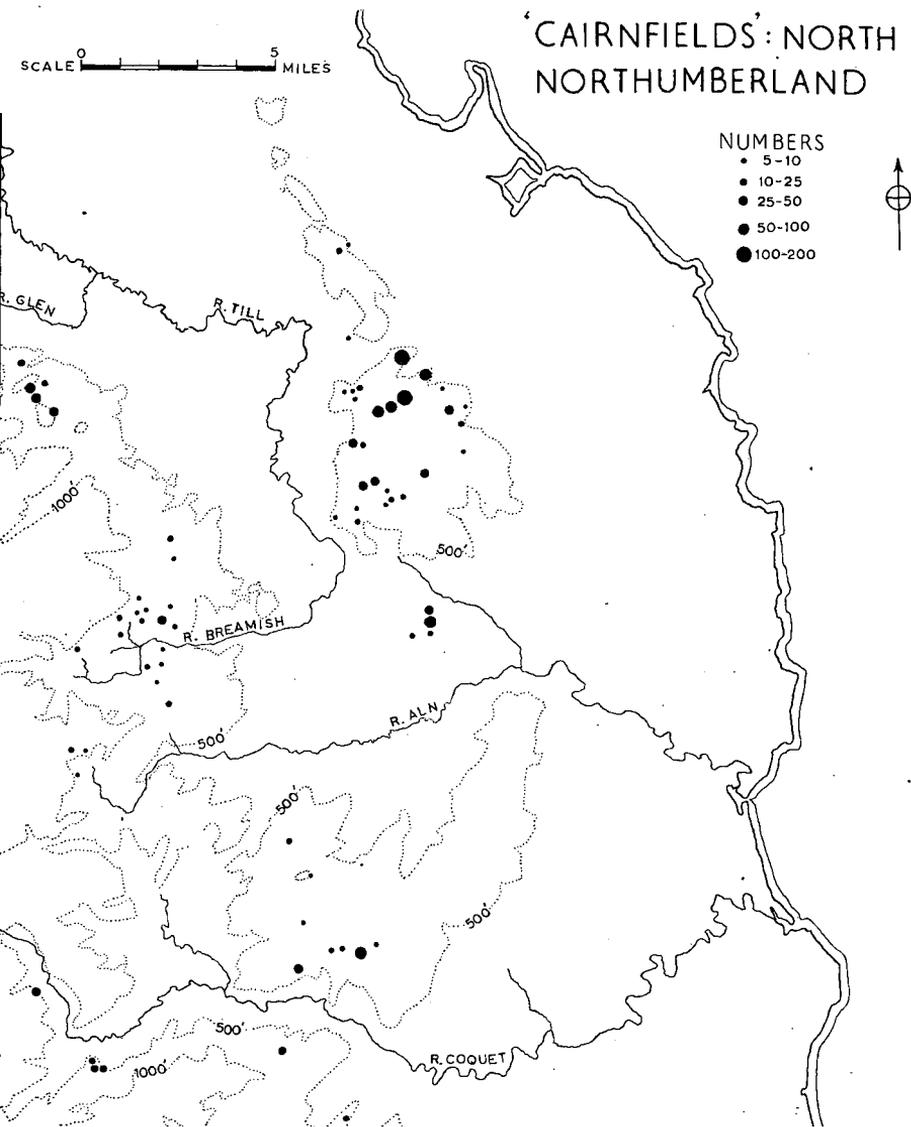


FIG. 12

record in the county, there have been few references to the considerable assemblages of small cairns of some 8-15 ft. in diameter since Greenwell's limited observations.⁵⁶ Yet, whatever their true nature may be, they are clearly present in numbers, perhaps not so large or extensive as in parts of Yorkshire but comparable with other areas to the west and north. At this stage it is not possible to claim an exhaustive or detailed survey and some groups have been noted almost incidentally during the course of other enquiries, but, within these limitations, some examples are offered for consideration.

At the outset there are many small cairns that can be dismissed promptly from consideration in a sepulchral context. Amongst these are the shepherds "curricks", the stone piles left after the building of drystone walls or, as at Chillingham, more imposing park walls, and field clearance cairns where they occur near to the heads of broad rig cultivation, as at Quarry House (NY:966805) and the deserted village of Evestones (NT:831967 v. place name "Carn-heads").⁵⁷ All of these have the distinctive feature of forming rough alignments rather than assemblages. There are others too where there is almost certain association with enclosed plots defined by low rickles of stone, as on Darney Crag (NY:910876), or with ruined steadings and adjacent flat areas where appearance and change in fauna would suggest an agricultural origin.

On the other hand, there are groups which from surface observation are sometimes difficult to distinguish from the above in form, size, or spacing, and yet are sepulchral in nature. The recently excavated cairnfield at High Knowes,⁵⁸ the small cairns already mentioned on Wards Hill, or the now destroyed cairns at Ravensheugh would seem to be cases in point. That other groups are probably similar in function is also suggested, for example, by the exposed cist in one of the fifteen or so small cairns at Lordenshaw (NZ:05994), a situation repeated amongst the cairns on Tick Law (NU:084214) and on Kings Crag (NY:795708) by the Hadrianic frontier. On less certain evidence, similar groupings may have existed as, say, in the case of the now destroyed cairnfield at Linkey Law (NU:0929), from whence one Food Vessel is recorded,⁵⁹ or by the Stanegate south of Greatchesters Roman fort.⁶⁰ In cultivated areas where groups of scattered burials have been turned up over the years it is clearly impossible to know if small covering mounds ever existed, but there is at least one instance, at Lilburn Hill Farm

⁵⁶ *British Barrows* (1877), 402-439.

⁵⁷ Hodgson, *Northumberland*, II, I, 135.

⁵⁸ G. Jobey, *Arch. Ael.*⁴, XLIV (1966), 23-48.

⁵⁹ Alnwick Castle Museum accessions (not published).

⁶⁰ E. Birley, *Research on Hadrian's Wall* (1961), 191.

(NU:013256), where there has been a series of burials from a field known at one time as "Cairn Faulds Field".⁶¹

However, the chief difficulty with respect to the majority of the assemblages, and these may include groups of upwards of two hundred small cairns or mounds, lies in the impossibility on present evidence of making a certain attribution to either of the categories, sepulchral or agricultural, or to distinguish those situations where both may be present. Certainly in many instances there are one or more *large* cairns, established as sepulchral monuments by form or earlier excavations, which lie adjacent to or are situated within cairn-fields; but it is clearly unwise, on this evidence alone, to extend the same function to all the smaller cairns. From the many examples of such that exist in the county, the following may suffice by way of illustration. On Rosebrough and Rayheugh (fig. 1) the large cairns mentioned by Greenwell are accompanied by scattered groups of small cairns extending over a considerable area. At Blawearie (NU:083224) sizeable groups of small cairns are to be found in addition to the large cairn excavated by Greenwell and the same applies in the case of his Five Barrows in Coquetdale⁶² (NT:950020), where there are an additional thirty-five less significant mounds. Again, on Knock Hill in the Breamish Valley (NT:994174), there are remains of five large sepulchral cairns accompanied by twenty-two less significant cairns. Although there have been no recorded excavations on Brownridge (NU:100285) there are a total of one hundred and eighty small cairns in addition to the proposed, enclosed cremation cemetery (Whinny Hill) and remains of a robbed, kerbed, burial mound. On the other hand, there are many groups shown on the provisional distribution map for north Northumberland (fig. 12), where not even these circumstances apply.

Such are the uncertainties at the moment that any considerations based upon distribution are largely nullified. By analogy with the results accumulating elsewhere in the Highland Zone it is possible that many assemblages of this order may eventually be shown to be the result of field clearance. If this proves to be the case then the problem of chronological context will still remain. Although cairn-fields may be located sometimes in close proximity to known settlement sites of presumed Iron Age and Roman British context, as at Witchy Neuk (NY:980994) or on Brough Law (NT:999164), this cannot be shown to be a regular occurrence. Indeed, on the distribution as at present known, the major concentration and certainly the largest groups are to be found on the poorer soils of the Fell Sandstone series to the east of the Till, where, as compared with the

⁶¹ J. Hardy, *Arch. Ael.*², XIII (1889), 351.

⁶² *op. cit.* pp. 418, 426.

Cheviot foothills, Roman British settlements are thin on the ground and known Iron Age sites are confined to scarps suitable for defence.⁶³ It may be noted that these are areas where surface land stones are probably more prolific on the first instance and there are numbers of modern clearance mounds of considerable size. The practice of dumping stone in scattered piles to clear the land for the plough, sometimes using large earthfast boulders of rock outcrop as the nucleus, has continued until recent times in parts of the Scottish Highlands.⁶⁴ If field clearance be the nature of many of the North-umberland cairnfields then the memory of such has altogether passed, and this for some considerable time, since most have been "robbed" presumably in the belief that they were sepulchral mounds.

⁶³ G. Jobey, *Arch. Ael.*⁴, XLII (1964), 41-64 and XLIII (1965), 21-64.

⁶⁴ e.g. A. Graham, *P.S.A.S.*, XC (1956-7), 22-23.