

XIV

NEOLITHIC POTTERY FROM HASTING HILL, CO. DURHAM

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A round barrow on the summit of Hasting Hill, Offerton (Nat. Grid ref. NZ 352/544) was excavated in November 1911 by C. T. Trechmann and provided a prolific series of burials.¹ The mound had a diameter of 40 feet, the sides were steep and the top slightly dished in profile. The individual interments were mainly in stone slab-built cists, accompanied by a Food Vessel or a Collared Urn, in the body of the mound or at the old landsurface. Scattered about in the mound material were the bones of at least ten individuals, flint flakes and sherds of at least three vessels. The pottery and other material from Hasting Hill is preserved in the Museum and Art Gallery, Sunderland, two of the three vessels represented by the sherds found in the mound material are Neolithic and published here by kind permission of the Director, J. T. Shaw, A.L.A.

1. Three sherds from a shallow semi-globular bowl, $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches diameter rim. Dark-toned orange fabric with dark grey core, laminated structure, angular stone grits up to $\frac{3}{16}$ inch long and micaceous sand used as tempering. A series of shallow vertical incised lines around the exterior and shallow indentions on the rim bevel.
2. Rim sherd, T-shaped profile forming an internal bevel. Hard reddish fabric with dark-toned surfaces, much crushed stone grit (Whinsill?) erupting in places. Decorated with deeply scored lines on the rim bevel and neck, finger nail impressions on the exterior of the rim.

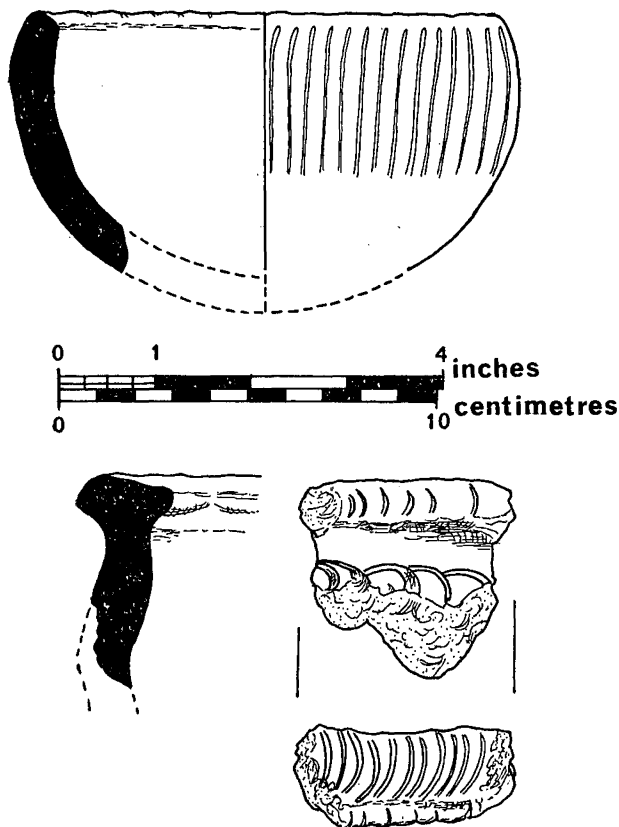
The semi-globular form of bowl is well represented in Neolithic pottery assemblages in many regions of Britain and used in several ceramic styles. The vertical incised line decoration is the most novel feature displayed by the Hasting Hill bowl as the earlier Neolithic pottery style current in Northern England, Grimston Ware, is essentially plain with only finger-nail impressions and thumb rippling over the rim employed to produce the rare decoration.² In terms of shape and fabric the bowl has parallels amongst the Towthorpe Ware pottery in Yorkshire represented at sites like Rudston Barrow LXI³

¹ Trechmann, C. T. "Prehistoric Burials in the County of Durham". *Arch. Ael.* 3rd ser. XI (1914), 135-156.

² Manby, T. G. "The Excavation of the

Willerby Wold Long Barrow, East Riding of Yorkshire". *P.P.S.* 29 (1963), 189.

³ Newbigin, N. "The Neolithic Pottery of Yorkshire," *P.P.S.* 3 (1937), 211-212 (No. 3).



Hasting Hill Barrow: Neolithic bowl and rim sherd of a Peterborough Ware Vessel

and LXII.⁴ As a class finger-nail impressions and some incised lines form the scarce decorative features of Towthorpe Ware. Better parallels are to be found in the decorative styles of Neolithic pottery in Southern England that form the Windmill Hill, Mildenhall, Whitehawk and Abingdon styles.⁵ Incised vertical lines are a major characteristic of these styles belonging to the Middle Neolithic period although an earlier date for this kind of decoration is indicated by the pottery associated with the Fussell's Lodge Long Barrow.⁶ A close parallel in size, shape and rim profile is provided by P.89 from the Windmill Hill Causwayed Camp, Wilts., but this is undecorated.⁷ However, such small bowls and cups form a significant proportion of the

⁴ Manby, T. G. in A. L. Pacitto "Rudston Barrow LXII; The 1968 Excavation". *Yorks. Arch. J.* 44 (1972), 12-21.

⁵ Clark, J. G. D. "The Invasion Hypothesis in British Archaeology", *Ant.* XL (1966), 176-177. Fig. 1.

⁶ Ashbee, P. "The Fussell's Lodge Long Barrow Excavations 1957". *Arch. C* (1966), 18-21 & 28.

⁷ Smith, L. F. *Windmill Hill & Avebury* (1965), Fig. 19, p. 89.

flint and sand gritted wares and vertical incised lines on the exterior are the most common decorative feature.⁸ Shallow vertical lines decoration also occurs in Neolithic pottery in western Scotland and features on a heavy rimmed vessel from the chambered cairn of Mid Gleniron, Wigtownshire.⁹

The second Hasting Hill vessel with its T-shaped rim and gritty fabric can be paralleled amongst Peterborough Ware assemblages in East Yorkshire at Rudston Wold Corner Field Site 2 and Boynton North Carnaby Temple Site 6.¹⁰ These sites have a distinctive T-rimmed and internally bevelled series of pottery vessels displaying a preference for incised and finger decoration. The incised arcs on the Hastings Hill bowl cannot be directly paralleled but cord impressed arcs and loops decorate Peterborough Ware bowls in Eastern Yorkshire at North Carnaby Temple Site 6 and at Ford in Northumberland.¹¹

The Neolithic pottery from Hasting Hill is an important addition to the evidence of Neolithic settlement from County Durham. It serves to fill a gap in distribution patterns between Eastern Yorkshire and Northumberland material recently reviewed by the late John Tait.¹² The pottery also serves to focus attention on the magnesian limestone hills of Eastern Durham as an area of Neolithic settlement. In other regions of the British Isles the calcareous soils produced by chalk and limestone formations attracted intensive Neolithic settlement. The southward continuation of the magnesian limestone down the western side of the Vale of York, forming the foothills of the Pennine Range, provides evidence of such occupation in spite of the destructive effects of later intensive agriculture.¹³ In Durham the situation is complicated by the effects of glaciation mantling the limestone with extensive tracts of boulder clay in place of the natural, well-drained, limestone soil. The small bowl may, as Trechmann suggested,¹⁴ originally have accompanied a burial or burial deposit scattered by the insertion of the numerous Bronze Age burials. Alternatively the bowl, with the flints and animal bones, could have been derived from an earlier occupation preserved by the erection of the barrow mound.

If Hasting Hill does represent a Neolithic burial site, it would not be an isolated instance of a Neolithic round barrow amongst the sites described by Trechmann. Copt Hill, Houghton-le-Spring,¹⁵ had a burnt "mesial deposit" that belongs to the series of burnt burial structures characteristic of long barrows and Neolithic round barrows in Northern England.¹⁶ A second site that could be Neolithic is the nearby barrow on the southern slope of Warden Law, between Houghton-le-Spring and Hetton.¹⁷ At the centre were two groups of

⁸ *Ibid.* 48-51, Fig. 13.

⁹ Corcoran, J. X. W. P. "Excavation of two chambered cairns at Mid Gleniron Farm, Glenluce, Wigtownshire". *Trans. Dumf. & Galloway Nat. Hist. & Ant Soc.* 46 (1969), 68 & 81, Fig. 11.h.

¹⁰ Material in the Grantham Collection, Driffeld. To be published.

¹¹ Longworth, I. M. "Five Sherds from Northumberland and their Relative Date". *Yorks. Arch. J.* 42 (1969), 258-261. Fig. 1 3-4.

¹² Tait, J. "Neolithic Pottery from Northumberland". *Arch. Ael.* 4th ser. XLVI (1968), 275-281.

¹³ Woods, E. S. "The Excavation of a Bronze Age Barrow; Green Howe, North Deighton, Yorkshire". *Yorks. Arch. J.* 43 (1971), 10-22.

¹⁴ Trechmann, *op. cit.* 155.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 123-130.

¹⁶ Manby, T. G. "Long Barrows of Northern England: structural and dating evidence". *Scottish Arch. Forum* 1970, 1-27.

¹⁷ Trechmann, *op. cit.* 162-167.

bones, "they had every appearance of having been disturbed ...", a puzzling circumstance to the excavator who stressed the undisturbed nature of the mound construction. Alternatively the bones represent disarticulated burials which are a regular feature of Neolithic burials practice; certainly of Neolithic date were a cache of flints, including leaf-shaped arrowheads, scrapers and flakes, found amongst the barrow material some three feet from the edge of the mound.