IX

MUSEUM NOTES, 1984*

By Lindsay Allason-Jones, Julian Bennett, George Jobey and Derek Welsby

1. A FIRST-CENTURY BRONZE TORC FROM CAW GAP (fig. 1)

ONE OF the most interesting acquisitions by the Museum of Antiquities in 1983[1] was a fragment of a bronze torc found by Mrs. Elizabeth Holden in a sheep scrape at break of slope 20 m north of Hadrian's Wall near Turret 41A (NY 72436693).[2] It consists of a curved bronze rod fashioned to look like a string of fifteen globular beads, each with side-panels decorated with bands of incised triangular marks giving the appearance of rouletting. The "beads" at each end have mortice holes into which the tenons of the missing shank would have fitted. The fragment measures 140 mm from end to end and the largest bead is 13 mm thick. The average measurement from the centre of one bead to the centre of the next is 10 mm and the internal diameter is 124 mm. There is no trace of gilding.

A close parallel is known from New Mains, Whitekirk, East Lothian,[3] which has only ten simulated beads but is in every other respect a close enough parallel to suggest that the back section of the Caw Gap torc may also have been of flattened diamond section with decorative lines of milling. Similar torcs are known from Carlisle,[4] Embsay (N. Yorkshire),[5] Lamberton Moor (Berwickshire),[6] Skerne (N. Humberside),[7] and Rickerby Park (Cumbria),[8] but these are more elaborately decorated.

MacGregor[9] has divided the torcs found in Britain into five types: penannular twisted, penannular rod, tubular, beaded, and collar-like. Beaded torcs consist of a simple semicircular bar of bronze with a projecting tenon at both ends to engage in the mortice holes of the front section which completes the circle. The front section

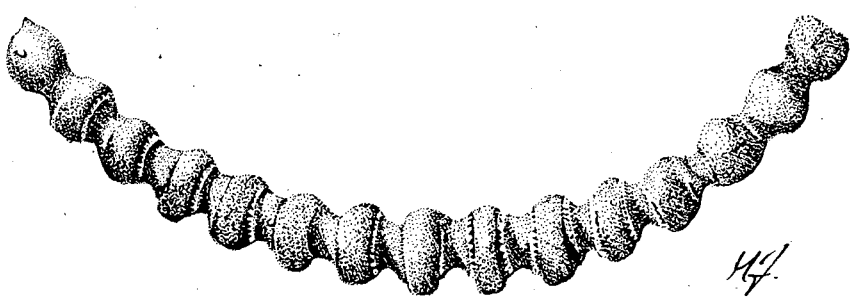

Fig. 1. The Caw Gap Torc (1:1). See Note 1.
Drawn by Margaret Finch.

has ten to thirty beads which are either threaded on to a bronze or iron rod or cast in a single unit as in the case of the Caw Gap torc. The torcs made with separate beads are on the whole of finer construction and decoration than the solid cast type and are earlier in date.

The notion of having the beading confined to the front became part of torc design from the earliest La Tène period and can be seen on examples from Germany, Switzerland, and France.[10] Only the beaded torcs have twin joints which fasten beneath each ear: on the other forms the single fastening or open terminal lies in the front.

The distribution of beaded torcs in Britain is largely in the area north of the Humber–Mersey line and south of the rivers Forth and Clyde.[11] They can be dated to the first century A.D. and MacGregor has suggested that they were made by the Brigantian craftsmen who were also responsible for the manufacture of the scabbards in her Group IV.[12]

There has been much discussion as to whether torcs were native neck-ornaments or military decorations awarded to Roman soldiers.[13] There is literary evidence that torcs were worn by the Romans as military insignia,[14] but most of the sculptural evidence shows the torcs worn by soldiers to be the penannular twisted or tubular types rather than the beaded, e.g. the tombstone of M. Caelius at Bonn, where the deceased wears two torcs hung from the shoulders rather than round his neck.[15] Torcs were also presented to whole units. Eleven units are known to have had the appellation *torquata*. Two of these, the *ala Petriana* and the *ala Gallorum et Thracum Classiana*, were stationed in Britain.[16] In these cases the torcs were probably of gold or silver and carried on the unit's standard. However, the native manufacture of beaded torcs stems from solid Celtic tradition, and despite its findspot it is unlikely that the Caw Gap example is a military decoration. The parallels to the Caw Gap torc are all from non-military sites and would appear to suggest a northern, native centre of manufacture.

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2. THE FINDS FROM MILECASTLE 54, RANDYLANDS (figs. 2, 3)

In 1933 and again in 1934 the milecastle at Randylands, no. 54, was excavated by the Cumberland Excavation Committee, the work being directed in the first season by Messrs. Simpson, Richmond, and McIntyre, and in the second season by the first two excavators only. The underlying turf-and-timber milecastle associated with the Hadrianic turf wall was found, although no artefacts belonging to that phase were recovered. A reasonably large amount of pottery was, however, recovered from levels associated with the stone milecastle, mainly from within the stone building lying on the western side of the interior, which apparently overlay the west rampart of the turf milecastle. The similarity of the pottery from the lowest level of the stone building to that from milecastle 50TW led the excavators to suggest that the turf milecastle was replaced in stone in Hadrian's reign rather than later. The present authors considered it worthwhile to re-examine this material, most of which is stored in the

Museum of Antiquities at Newcastle University (Acc. No. 1956.225.A), while some of the pottery is in Tullie House Museum, Carlisle (Acc. No. 57.1933.15). A diligent search both at Carlisle and Newcastle has failed to locate any further finds from the milecastle, and it may be assumed that all the finds surviving from the excavations in the 1930's have been studied.

The Spearheads

Three iron spearheads were recovered from milecastle 54 and are stored with the pottery at Newcastle. All three are in a very corroded condition but enough can be seen to suggest that they compare closely with the fourth-century spearheads from Sewingshields milecastle discussed in the article by Haigh and Savage in this volume.

1. L.140 mm. Angular iron spearhead with a long split socket. The edges are straight and the angle of the edge of the blade is low and obtuse. The socket is pierced by a single hole. A comparable spearhead from Sewingshields came from a fourth-century context. A second spearhead of the same type, from an unknown provenance and in the Society's collection, has been published by W. H. Manning in his *Catalogue of Romano-British Ironwork in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne* (1976, 19, no. 11: Acc. No. 1956.259.A).
2. L.140 mm. Iron spearhead with a narrow blade which expands at the base (*ibid.*, Type 3). Too little of the socket survives to suggest its form. Several spearheads of this type have been found in the area of Hadrian's Wall, e.g. at Sewingshields, Chesters, Vindolanda, and Halton Chesters (see Haigh and Savage, this volume, for references).
3. L.115 mm. Tip of an iron spearhead with a wide, short blade. Manning has suggested that this type (Type 2) was used on throwing spears rather than in hand-to-hand fighting (*ibid.*, 19, Nos. 8–15).

   The only other milecastles to have produced spearheads in excavation are Milecastle 79 (three examples: Tullie House Museum, 71/1949.1) and Poltross Burn (one example: Tullie House Museum, 7/1911). None of these has been published.

The Pottery

(The numbers in square brackets refer to the numbers marked on the actual sherds.)

MATERIAL FROM THE LOWEST LEVEL OF THE STONE BUILDING, GROUP A

1. [1 and 2] Cornice-rimmed beaker with clay particle roughcasting, hard red fabric with yellowy-buff surface, moderate amount of small transparent quartz and sparse black grit, wheel-made, Flavian-Hadrianic.
2. [3] Base probably of a vessel similar to no. 1, hard red fabric with orange surface, very sparse small transparent quartz.
3. [4] Cooking pot, BB1, Hadrianic.

Other vessels represented by fragments include twelve sherds, some with acute lattice decoration, from at least two BB1 cooking pots; nine wall-sherds from a grey jar or cooking pot; fragments from (?) three other grey jars; one wall-sherd from a

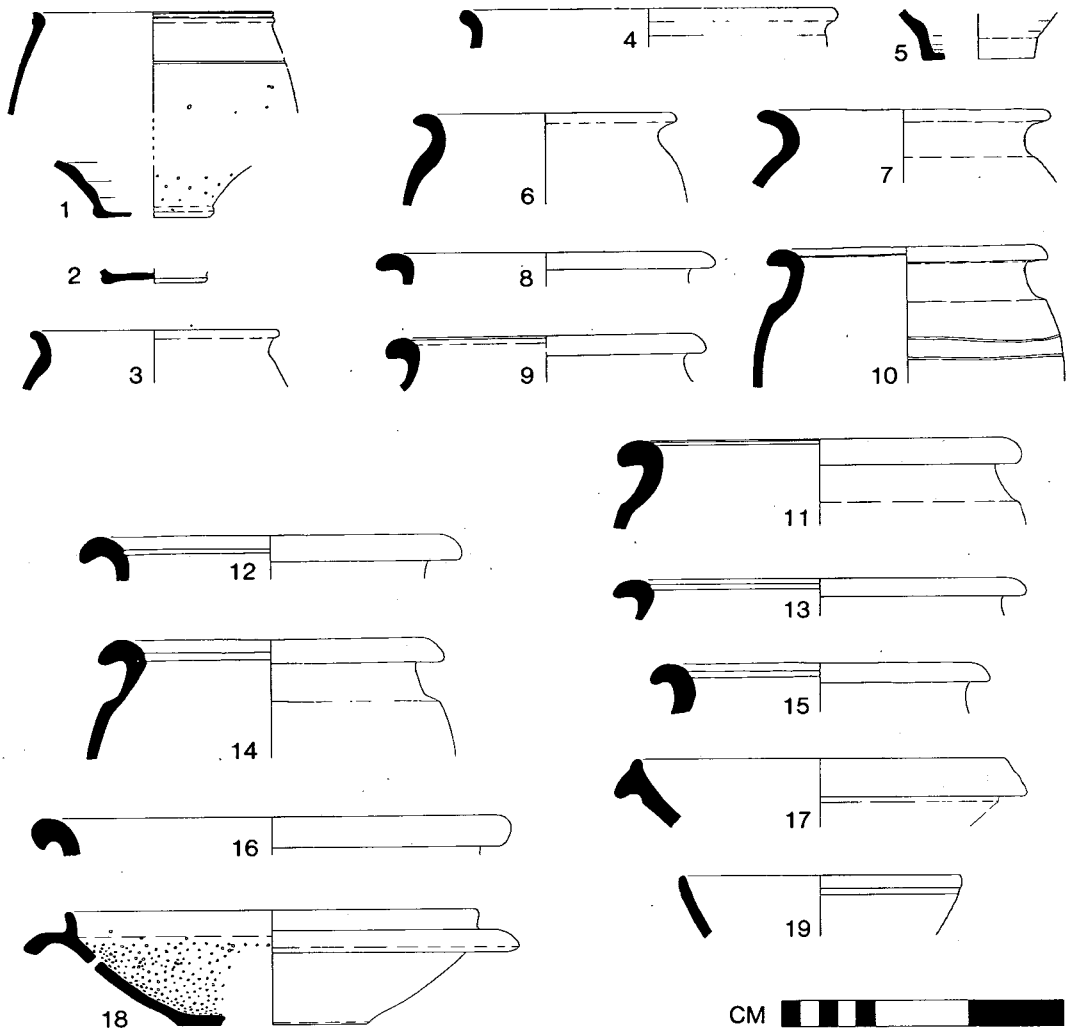

Fig. 2. Pottery from Milecastle 54, Groups A, B (1:4). See Note 2.
Drawn by Derek Welsby.

(?) flagon in a white fabric with an orange inner surface; and a few fragments probably from an amphora.

NORTH ROOM OF WEST BUILDING, LATEST MATERIAL FOUND, GROUP B

4. [5] Jar, hard pale grey fabric with buff, abraded surface, moderate amount of fine pale grey grit.
5. [20] Jar base, very hard pale to mid-grey fabric, pale grey exterior surface, moderate amount of fine transparent quartz, wheel-made.

6–15. [7–16] Jars, calcite-gritted fabric.

16. [6] Wide-mouthed jar or bowl, hard black fabric with thin buff layer beneath black surface, abundant fine transparent quartz and sparse calcareous inclusions.
17. [17] Bowl, hard dark-grey fabric with a thin buff layer beneath largely abraded mid-grey surface, abundant medium-sized transparent quartz, dark-grey grit and sparse calcareous inclusions.
18. [18] Mortarium, hard cream fabric, moderate amount of fine ironstone and sparse transparent quartz; trituration grit abundant, rounded brown grit and a little white quartz, average size 2 mm across. This vessel has been rivetted. Oxfordshire ware, Young 1977, 72, type M18, A.D. 240–300.
19. [19] Bead-rimmed dish, fine, hard, very pale fabric burnt to black on the exterior, Crambeck ware, mid- to late fourth century.

Other vessels represented by fragments include seven sherds of grey ware from at least four vessels, one with an orange exterior surface, and one sherd of BB1.

SOUTH ROOM OF WEST BUILDING, LATEST MATERIAL FOUND, GROUP C

20. [22] Cooking pot, hard dark grey fabric with thin buff layer beneath the abraded black surface, moderate amount of angular black grit and transparent quartz, very gritty surface with an appreciable amount of white mica, Dales type, mid-third to mid-fourth century.
21. [21] Cooking pot, hard dark grey fabric with pale grey abraded surface, abundant small transparent quartz grit, Hadrianic.
22. [23] Jar base, coarse pale grey fabric, abundant large calcareous and transparent quartz inclusions, large pieces of golden mica on the surface, wheel-made.
23. [24] Jar base, hard black fabric with an orangy-buff layer below the black exterior surface, interior orange to buff, abundant transparent quartz grit, wheel-made.
24. [25] Flat-rimmed bowl, hard light grey fabric probably with a mid-grey burnished surface now largely removed, abundant fine transparent quartz grit, mid- to late second century.
25. [27] Mortarium, very hard cream fabric with a blue grey core in places and a pinkish-cream slip, sparse small transparent quartz and ironstone inclusions, later second-early third century.
26. [26] Mortarium, moderately hard orange fabric with a pale grey core in the flange, abundant very fine transparent quartz; trituration grit abundant, very large (up to 8 mm), black, third to mid-fourth century.

Other vessels represented by fragments include 15 small sherds of calcite-gritted ware; four abraded grey ware sherds from four different vessels, possibly jars; and two sherds in a hard laminated grey and orange fabric with abundant transparent quartz and ironstone inclusions with abundant white mica on the surface. Two sherds of identical fabric were found among the latest material in the north room of the building.

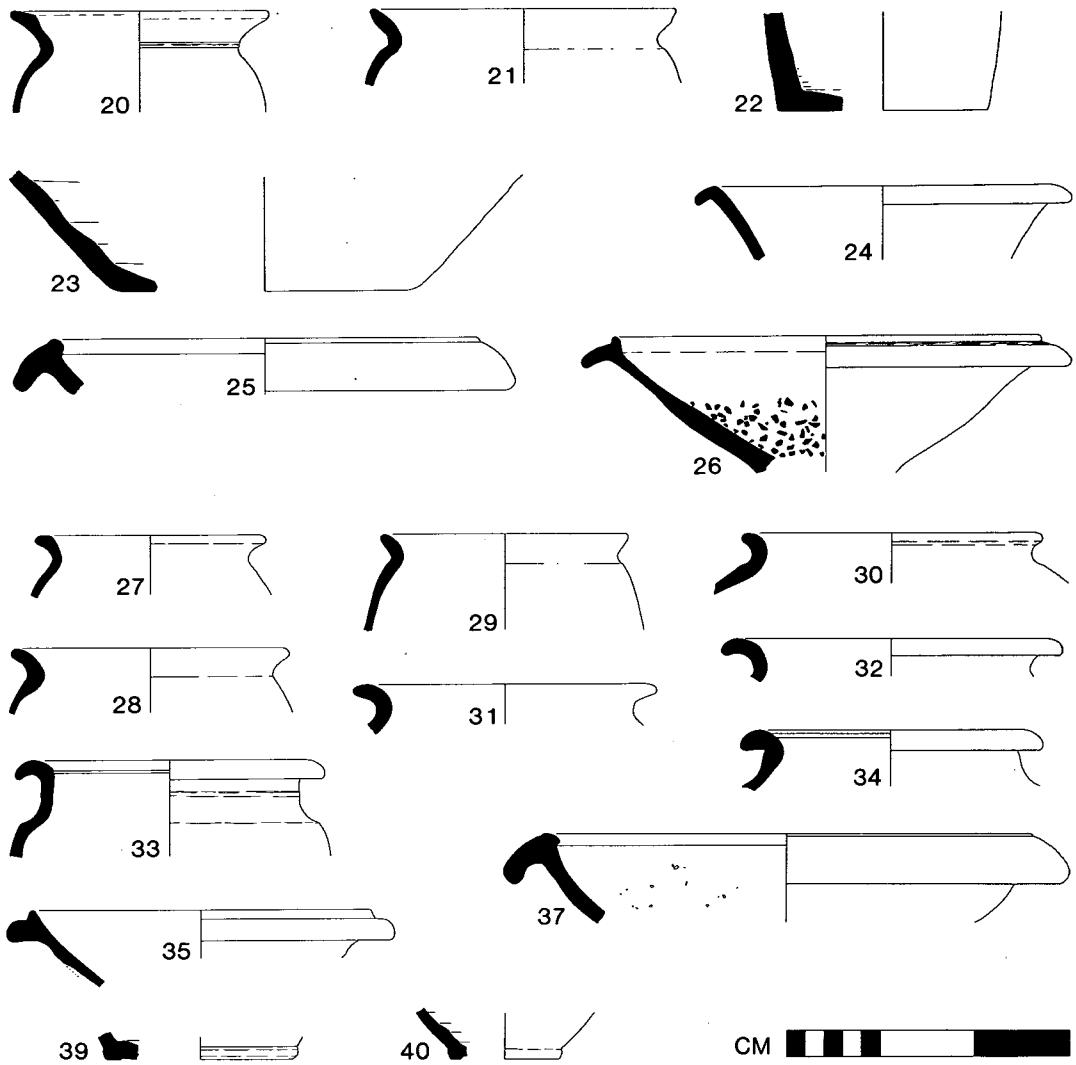

Fig. 3. Pottery from Milecastle 54, Groups C, D (1:4). See Note 2.
Drawn by Derek Welsby.

POTTERY STORED IN TULLIE HOUSE, NO STRATIGRAPHICAL DATA, GROUP D

27. Jar, hard red fabric with orange surface, sparse dark grey grit and some calcareous inclusions, one 2·5 mm across.
28. Jar, hard mid-grey fabric, pale grey sandy surface with white mica, moderate amount of fine transparent quartz and calcareous flecks, Hadrianic-early Antonine.
29. Cooking pot, BB1, mid-second century.

30–34. Jars, hard, black calcite-gritted fabric. Nos. 33 and 34 are of the Huntcliff type.
35. Flanged bowl, fine, hard pale grey fabric, mid- to dark grey surface with abundant white mica flecks. Crambeck ware, mid- to late fourth century.
36. Base and wall (not illustrated) of a bowl, fabric as no. 35. This may be part of the same vessel.
37. Mortarium, hard cream fabric, moderate amount of ironstone inclusions, trituration grit sparse reddy-brown ironstone, later second-early third century.
38. Plain base (not illustrated) of a jar or cooking pot, hard laminated grey, orange and brown fabric, pale grey surface with white mica, moderate amount of fine transparent quartz.
39. Base, hard orangy-red fabric with burnished orange exterior, moderate amount of small calcareous black ironstone and transparent quartz grit, wheel-made.
40. Base, very hard (overfired) black fabric with the surface and part of the core orange, moderate amount of small and medium-sized transparent quartz, wheel-made.

Other vessels represented by fragments include one plain and one decorated sherd of samian, the decorated piece extremely abraded; four wall-sherds from two or three grey jars, two orange sherds, three BB1 wall sherds; and 26 wall- and base-sherds from calcite-gritted jars.

None of the pottery present in group A need date later than the reign of Hadrian, though the small sample recovered makes it hazardous to draw firm conclusions regarding the date of the deposit. The ceramic evidence in no way invalidates the claim that Milecastle 54 was rebuilt in stone under Hadrian, the main evidence for this being the two periods of pivot-stones at the south gate, which are of second-century date, implying that the milecastle had been abandoned under Antoninus Pius when the army moved north to build the Antonine Wall. The removal of the gates having necessitated the smashing of the lower pivot-stones, these were replaced when the site was reoccupied *c.* A.D. 163. In addition, the wall from Milecastle 49 westwards to Burtholme Beck, just west of 54, is of narrow gauge, while from the Beck westwards it is of intermediate gauge. This intermediate wall post-dates the second-phase Turf Wall at Turret 54a, Garthside, and extends as far as Bowness-on-Solway. Milecastle 79, considered to have been rebuilt in stone in the Antonine period, is associated with the intermediate wall.

No floor levels later than the early second century were found in the internal building before a stone-flagged floor associated with later fourth-century pottery was laid. The earliest stone-period occupation level had been sealed by a dump of clean clay. Although much of the pottery from the latest levels, groups B and C, and the unstratified material, group D, is of later fourth-century date, a number of pieces date to the later second, third and earlier fourth century, suggesting that occupation had continued on the site for some at least of the intervening period. The excavators suggested that the fourth-century builders had removed the earlier floors (Simpson and Richmond 1935, 238). The only coin recorded from the site is of Claudius Gothicus, A.D. 268–70.

The bulk of the pottery groups in B, C and D dates to the mid- to late fourth century and clearly indicates intensive or squalid occupation at this time. The calcite-gritted wares represented in these assemblages were probably made in east Yorkshire and are not thought to have enjoyed a widespread market until well into the fourth century. The calcite-gritted jar with the groove within the rim, which is known as the Huntcliff type, is thought to have come into the market a little before the "Picts War" and has generally been assigned a date-range *c.* A.D. 360–400+. Clearly by the late fourth century the Huntcliff type was the dominant jar/cooking pot form in northern Britain. At the Yorkshire signal stations, usually dated to *c.* A.D. 370 but possibly built by Magnus Maximus (Casey 1979, 75), jars of this type were extremely common and had, at least close to the area of their production, ousted most other types of jar/cooking pot, including the earlier calcite-gritted jars which are of similar form but lack the internal groove (Hull 1932, 243). Hull dated the appearance of the Huntcliff type (his type 26) to *c.* A.D. 370. The presence of a few examples of the Huntcliff type from the outpost forts of Bewcastle and Risingham, which are thought to have been abandoned in A.D. 367, suggested that production had begun a little earlier. Jars of identical fabric but without the internal groove were found in some numbers on the bath-house site excavated at Bewcastle in 1954–5 (*pers. comm.* J. P. Gillam). It must, however, be borne in mind that the date of the final abandonment of the outpost forts is by no means certain, although coin evidence would suggest that they had not been continuously occupied throughout the first half of the fourth century (Casey and Savage 1980, 80).

At Malton, an important military site lying in the heart of east Yorkshire, the "finer" calcite-gritted jars with wheel-turned rims do not appear until period 6 (Corder 1930, 71), dated by the excavators to A.D. 370–95. This date, however, is based on the presence of "signal station types" of pottery in the deposit. A *terminus post quem* for period 6 is provided by a coin of Constantine II. The date of this coin, sealed by the roadway of the preceding period, is not given, but, in the report, coins of that emperor are dated to between A.D. 320 and 337 (*ibid.*, 104–6). Although scarce in the period 6 deposits the developed Huntcliff type was present (*ibid.*, fig. 14).

In the *vicus* the Huntcliff type was not found in deposits dating to before A.D. 353 at the earliest (Mitchelson 1966, 237), though the scarcity of later fourth-century material in the area may make this of little significance.

At Birdoswald no vessels of this type were found in period III deposits, though a number of calcite-gritted vessels, most of which were of the Huntcliff type, were present in a mixed period III/IV deposit (Richmond and Birley 1930, 191).

In his excavations at Ravenglass Potter found a very large quantity of later fourth-century pottery, including several hundred rim-sherds of calcite-gritted vessels, both with and without the internal groove (Potter 1979, 116). These were all found either in the phase 4 level or were unstratified. Only one sherd of a calcite-gritted vessel came from the phase 3 deposits on the site. A *terminus post quem* for the end of this phase was provided by a coin of Magnentius in a fairly unworn condition, dating to A.D. 340–51 (*ibid.*, 41).

It would seem from this brief résumé of the evidence that the date generally assigned to the Huntcliff type is not far off the mark. Other calcite-gritted vessels of the same quality but lacking the internal groove of the Huntcliff type may have been dated too early (*cf.* Gillam 1970, type 161, A.D. 300–70). The deposits on the latest floors in the internal building at Milecastle 54, containing the "finer" calcite-gritted jars without the internal groove together with examples of the Huntcliff type, suggest that there was occupation spanning the middle years of the fourth century and perhaps extending towards the end of the Roman period.

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3. THE CARTINGTON COFFIN: A RADIOCARBON DATE

The tree-trunk coffin from the Bronze Age burial at Cartington, Northumberland, was given to the Society in 1913 by the second Lord Armstrong; both the nature of the coffin and the circumstances of its discovery were adequately described at the time in our Proceedings.[17] It was undoubtedly an unusual accession to our collections, even in the year of the Society's centennial anniversary; and, so far as records exist or the future of telecommunications can be foreseen, will have the additional distinction of remaining the only donation to be both offered and accepted by a brisk exchange of telegrams.

As the coffin is now to be transferred on long loan to Bamburgh Castle Museum, at the request of the present Lord Amstrong, it was decided to submit a sample of the timber for radiocarbon assay before a preservative was applied. The sample was taken from the *outer growth rings* of the massive oak trunk, excluding any remaining bark, in a cut some 190 mm long and 10 mm deep along the underside of the coffin;

the source is clearly marked should any future correlation with the tree-ring patterns be sought. The radiocarbon date obtained from the sample is 184 ± 65 b.c. (GU–1648:3790 ± 65 b.p.) which, at the 68% confidence limits, would indicate a calendar date in the range *c.* 2400 to 2200 B.C. This date as such does little more than confirm the Beaker context that has been generally assumed for the Cartington coffin, though the exact form of the associated but fragmentary and now long lost "Drinking Cup", or Beaker, remains a matter for conjecture. In his original description of the burial David Dippie Dixon described the vessel as being of graceful shape, six to seven inches high, and "neatly ornamented from top to bottom with plain horizontal lines, indented with a thong." Elsewhere, in his earlier writings,[18] Dixon used the term "notched" when describing comb-impressed Beakers and "thong" or "twisted thong" when describing cord-decorated vessels of whatever type. It is just possible, therefore, that his description could refer to an All Over Corded Bell Beaker; but clearly there could also be other explanations such as, e.g., a vessel similar to the short-necked, Step 4 Beaker from Dilston Park, Northumberland, which has impressed horizontal lines or grooved decoration on neck and body alike.[19] Although at the time the fragments were also sent to Canon Greenwell for comment, his failure either to venture a reconstruction or to devote more than a laconic if not perfunctory "unusual" to the decoration is of little assistance in resolving the problem.

Similar monoxylous burials, dated to the Bronze Age generally, are attested elsewhere and were undoubtedly far more frequent than the few surviving examples suggest.[20] Even so, the Cartington Coffin is a particularly fine example and is now unique in the Society's collections. There was one other tree-trunk coffin in the Society's possession when the Cartington donation was made, this being one of several found in 1825 at Wydon Eals, near Haltwhistle.[21] But this example has long since disappeared and, in any event, the burials at Wydon Eals lacked any associations capable of providing even a general context. Moreover, the number of coffins actually unearthed at Wydon Eals, together with the observation that "a bore rod put down in ten places touched coffins nine times",[22] would suggest that these burials were probably not of the same high antiquity as the Cartington burial. The four coffins from Wydon which were formerly recorded as being housed at Featherstone Castle, probably two of which were later said to be at the nearby farmhouse at Bridge End,[23] are now equally elusive, so that there is no immediate chance of obtaining radiocarbon dates. Furthermore, despite the perceptive and assiduous efforts of some members of the Society during the more recent sinking of a gas pipe-line across the site at Wydon Eals, no further tree-trunk coffins were revealed.[24]

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NOTES

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[1] Accession Number 1983.2.

[2] I am most grateful to Mrs. Holden and to Mr. William Oliver, the landowner, for donating the torc and allowing me to publish it. Thanks are also

due to Mrs. M. Snape and Mr. J. Crow for drawing my attention to the discovery and to Mrs. P. Birley and Dr. M. Henig for their comments.

[3] MacGregor, M., *Early Celtic Art in North Britain* (1976), No. 206.

[4] *ibid.*, No. 199.

[5] *ibid.*, No. 200.

[6] *ibid.*, No. 203.

[7] *ibid.*, No. 207.

[8] *ibid.*, No. 208.

[9] *ibid.*, 93ff.

[10] Déchelette, J., *Manuel D'Archéologie Préhistorique, Celtique et Gallo-Romaine* II, part 3 (1914), fig. 440, fig. 516, No. 2, IV (1927), 221; Jacobsthal, P., *Early Celtic Art* (1944), Nos. 226–36.

[11] MacGregor, *op. cit.*, map 15; Stevenson, R. B. K., "Metalwork and some other objects in Scotland and their cultural affinities" in *The Iron Age in Northern Britain* (ed. A. L. F. Rivet, 1966), 17ff.

[12] MacGregor, *op. cit.*, 99.

[13] Burns, J. E., "Two beaded torcs in Tullie House, Carlisle" *TCWAAS* LXXI (1971), 45ff.; Maxfield, V. A., "The Benwell Torc—Roman or Native?", *AA*[5] II (1974), 41ff.

[14] Seneca, *De Beneficarius*, ch. 5.

[15] *Germania Romana: ein Bilder Atlas*, 2nd ed. (1924), Taf. I, 2; see also Taf. V, 3.

[16] Maxfield, *loc. cit.*, 43–4.

[17] *PSAN*[3] VI, 1913–14 (1915), 35, 79–84.

[18] e.g. *Upper Coquetdale* (1903).

[19] *AA*[3] II (1906), 141.

[20] e.g. P. Ashbee, *The Bronze Age Round Barrow in Britain* (1960), 86–91; *PPS* 42 (1976), 215–19.

[21] *AA*[1] II (1831), 177–8.

[22] J. Hodgson, *History of Northumberland* (1840), part II, vol. III, 350.

[23] e.g. W. W. Tomlinson, *A Comprehensive Guide to Northumberland* (11th ed., 1888; repr. 1968), 177.

[24] Information from Mrs. B. Charlton.