

XIII Notes

1 A LATE NEOLITHIC CREMATION BURIAL AT LOOKOUT PLANTATION, NORTHUMBERLAND

THE truncated remains of a pit containing fragments of pottery were found near Lookout Plantation, one kilometre north of Crookham Eastfield, Northumberland, in 1980 during the construction of a gas pipeline.

The pottery formed part of a single vessel, which when intact had lain on its side at the bottom of the pit. This was 0.35m in diameter and no more than 0.06m deep. The feature contained a fill of ashen white sand interspersed with numerous flecks of charcoal. The sand subsoil in contact with and immediately surrounding the pit was much more compact and discoloured than the underlying uniform, mid-red brown sand, and was suggestive of intense heat or burning prior to the insertion of the vessel. Some fragments of charcoal still adhered to its interior. Though no identifiable human remains were found, these pottery fragments were presumed to be the remnants of a cremation burial.

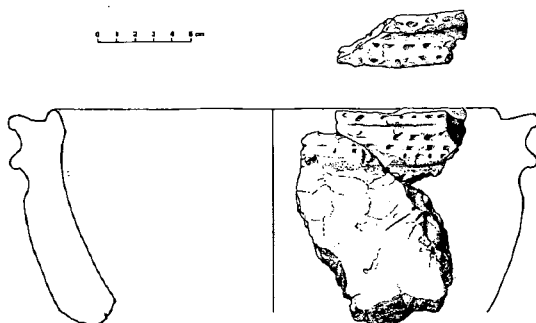
A cursory reconstruction suggested that the vessel was originally 275mm in diameter and probably stood no more than 210mm high. It has a heavy raised rim, approximately 35mm square, which is bevelled internally on the top and along the outer face. The body of the vessel flares inward from a slight carination or shoulder, 15mm below the rim. It has a dark grey core with numerous coarse, angular granite inclusions up to 22mm in length, some of which erupt on the inner surface of the vessel. The exterior has a plain sandy fabric with a yellow to mid-brown mottled hue.

Decoration is confined to the rim and con-

sists of a regular row of unevenly incised impressions, probably executed obliquely with a pointed stick or bird bone, along the beading around the rim edges. Within each of the bevelled surfaces of the rim are two rows of more positively executed square shaped impressions. These are 3mm in length and appear to have been made by an awl-like instrument.

The heavy moulded rim with internal beveling is similar to that found on late Neolithic pottery in Northern Britain and Rudstone, East Yorkshire (Manby 1975); Brackmont Mill, Fife (Longworth 1967); Glenluce, Wigtownshire (McInnes 1963) and Meldon Bridge, Peeblesshire (Burgess 1976). Late Neolithic rim sherds recovered locally at Ford by Canon Greenwell in the last century are presumed to have come from a flat cremation cemetery site near Crookham Dean, c.3 kilometres southwest of Lookout Plantation (Longworth 1969; Miket 1976).

There is a considerable variety of rim and



decoration forms in similar pottery from Scottish and Northumbrian sites. There is one externally bevelled rim in the Ford Collection. The remaining four in that collection are T-shaped and decoration is characterized by twisted cord and herringbone impressions.

The stick and bird bone impressions on the rim of the Lookout Plantation vessel seem to be more comparable to the Late Neolithic pottery of Brackmont Mill, Fife, where non-corded motives and heavy bevelled rims are predominant (Longworth 1967, 72). Similar rim forms are also found at two of the Rudston Wold sites in East Yorkshire—Rudston Corner field, Site 2 and Carnaby Top Site II (Manby 1975, 54).

The Lookout Plantation vessel resembles an enlarged food vessel in profile and probably represents an incipient form of this funerary ware. The earliest date yet for a food vessel urn—1800±80bc comes from a cremation burial at the centre of a Class II henge, further south in the Till valley at Milfield North (Harding 1981, 115). Longworth has noted the similarity of two of the sherds in the Ford collection to food vessel urns (1969, 260). Some of the late Neolithic cremation urns recovered from the pit series at Meldon Bridge have also been recognized as probable late third millennium bc ancestral forms of food vessel (Burgess 1976).

An abraded rim sherd found 34 metres from the site of the pit at Lookout Plantation, in the fill of the outer slot of a mid-second millennium bc roundhouse (above, pp. 29–41), suggests there may have been more pronounced Late Neolithic activity at this location, than suggested by a single cremation burial. It is similar in form to examples on Class I wares at Luce Sands (McInnes 1963). The sherd was probably removed from its original context in the construction of the house.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The illustration of the pottery was done by Anne Crone, and Trevor Cowie of the National

Museum of Antiquities of Scotland assisted in its identification.

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2 ON THE TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PINE-CONE

At the sale of the contents of Peter Crosthwaite's Museum in Keswick in 1870, John Clayton of Chesters bought a stone pine-cone found at Old Carlisle for 120/-.¹ A search of the catalogue of the Museum at Chesters² reveals no sign of a pine-cone from Old Carlisle and, at first sight, no obvious candidate for the missing pine-cone. However, comparison of the Chesters stones with the contents of

Bruce's *Lapidarium Septentrionale*³ suggests a probable candidate for the missing stone and reveals a series of mistaken attributions which have obscured the history of this stone.

Budge's catalogue lists six pine-cones at Chesters of which five can be eliminated at once. These are:

No. 12 (*CSIR* I, 6, No. 410; CH382)⁴ was found at Chesters in or just before 1886 and in any case has a plain rather than a ridged surface.

No. 218 (*CSIR* I, 6, No. 467) was much broken, and now missing, is recorded by *CSIR* as from an unknown source but presumed to be Hadrian's Wall. The catalogue entry for No. 220 (p. 342) implies that No. 218 was actually from Housesteads. In any case the broken condition disqualifies this stone which seems unlikely to warrant the description "a fine old carved pineapple".⁵

Nos 132 (*CSIR* I, 6, No. 438; CH238) and 134 (*CSIR* I, 6, No. 437; CH236) are given to Housesteads and there is no reason to doubt this, especially since they are both of grey sandstone characteristic of the central sector of the Wall.

No. 252 (*CSIR* I, 6, No. 454; CH252) was found in 1831 at Chesterholm and is classed by *CSIR* as a flame.

Which leaves No. 233 (CH237) in red sandstone, on a square base, with a height of 2ft 2in. which Budge attributed to Kirkby Thore. This large and distinctive pine-cone, with its integral base, can be identified with *Lap. Sept.* No. 910. Bruce gives this pine-cone a height of 2ft 3in. and recorded its presence at Chesters. The description given by Bruce and Budge tally and the identification has been confirmed by examination of the stone at Chesters. However, on p. 457 Bruce attributes this pine-cone to Papcastle though this is amended to Old Carlisle in a corrigendum on p. 475. In the light of this correction *Lap. Sept.* 910 can be accepted as the pine-cone that Clayton bought at the Crosthwaite sale and took to Chesters where it was subsequently catalogued as No. 233.

Two further references establish slightly more of the history of this stone and confirm the link to Crosthwaite's Museum. Its discov-

ery is first noted in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1748.⁶ The pine-cone is described and illustrated with tolerable accuracy along with a relief of a Triton (*Lap. Sept.* 844) which passed with it to Crosthwaite's Museum. An edited version of G. Smith's letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* appears in Hutchinson's, *History of the County of Cumberland*⁷ though its accompanying illustration does little justice to the stone. Rather more important is a footnote stating that both Triton and pine-cone were then in Crosthwaite's museum.

The main link has been established but two further points need consideration. The first question is why did Budge⁸ assign the pine-cone to Kirkby Thore? The answer can probably never be established but a suggestion can be offered. Budge quotes an extensive passage by Bruce on the finds from Kirkby Thore.⁹ This passage mentions a pine-cone (identifiable as *Lap. Sept.* 757). Budge makes no direct connection between the pine-cone at Chesters and Bruce's text but one can wonder if he was influenced by this quotation. It may have been an assumption based on the presence of other finds (mainly metal) from Kirkby Thore at Chesters. The Kirkby Thore pine-cone, however, was at Lowther Castle in 1875, where it remained until bought by the British Museum in 1970 and there can be no question of it being the same as No. 233.

The second point is even more curious. At some stage stone No. 233 at Chesters has born a label assigning it to Housesteads. This was discovered in 1992 when the Kirkby Thore label was removed revealing another label giving the find-spot as Housesteads.¹⁰ At some stage, therefore, the problem with the Kirkby Thore attribution may have been realized. Was the Housesteads label the result of an erroneous equation with the missing No. 218? Or was it inspired by the heading *Antiquities from Borcovicus* under which it is listed by Budge? Again we will probably never know.

The movements of the pine-cone are easily traced. It was found at Cuningarth (Old Carlisle) shortly before 1748; before 1794 it was given to Peter Crosthwaite in Keswick and then passed in 1870 to Chesters, where it

remains. Less easy is the documentary trail. The eighteenth-century documentation is clear but later becomes obscure with attributions to Papcastle in *Lapidarium Septentrionale* (corrected to Old Carlisle, but perhaps not noticed), to Kirkby Thore in Budge's Catalogue, and to Housesteads in the Museum. Thanks to Bruce's fine drawing in *Lapidarium Septentrionale* the link between Budge's No. 233 and Cumbria can be confirmed and the evidence of John Clayton's purchase at Keswick finally clears up the confusing mis-attributions at Chesters Museum.

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- ¹ Carlisle Journal, 23 Sept. 1870; Cumberland Packet, 27 Sept. 1870, p. 5.
² Budge, E. A. W. (1902). *An Account of the*

Roman Antiquities Preserved in the Museum at Chesters, Northumberland.

³ Bruce, J. C. (1875). *Lapidarium Septentrionale.*

⁴ CSIR I, 6 = *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani: Corpus of Sculpture of the Roman World, Great Britain Volume 1, Fascicule 6, Hadrian's Wall West of the North Tyne and Carlisle.* By J. C. Coulston and E. J. Phillips (Oxford 1987). Numbers prefaced by CH refer to a new listing of the contents of Chesters Museum.

⁵ Carlisle Patriot, 9 Sept. 1870, p. 5.

⁶ p. 179: *Lap. Sept.* erroneously has 1784.

⁷ Vol. II, 406-7; the figure appears opposite p. 410.

⁸ Although the assignment to Kirkby Thore is attributed to Budge, it is possible that the mistake was made by H. R. Hall in the earlier handlist to the collection (Budge op. cit., vi). No copies of this handlist appear to survive (L. Allason-Jones and B. McKay (1985), *Coventina's Well*, p. 1).

⁹ Budge op. cit. 404 quoting AA, ser. 1, v. 140.

¹⁰ Information from Georgina Plowright to whom I am very grateful for much helpful discussion about the problems surrounding this pine-cone.