

LONGSTONE EDGE

POTTERY ASSESSMENT

1 Factual Data

1.1 Quantity of material

The assemblage comprises around 863 sherds and fragments chiefly of prehistoric pottery from 167 find spots, together with the remains of a Food Vessel.

1.2 Provenance of material

Most of the finds are from the central area of Barrow 1 from a variety of contexts. Only the Food Vessel was found in situ in a burial context. The rest are from soil layers relating to the construction and use of the site and most are relatively small and abraded and represent only small portions of individual vessels.

Provisionally there appear to be about four Neolithic vessels represented, comprising two plain bowls of early date (4th or 3rd millennium BC), and impressed sherds of two probable Peterborough ware vessels (second half of 3rd millennium BC to about 2000 BC).

On the basis of apparent fabric differences, there are the remains of at least two Beakers present. All are comb decorated and one appears to be 'Bell Beaker' shaped and therefore possibly early (i.e. 2500-2000 BC or later). Some sherds of this vessel are unabraded and larger than most, suggesting that possibly this Beaker was protected for some time, perhaps in a burial context.

The Food Vessel from the burial is a simple bipartite vase, decorated with fingernail impressions in horizontal rows of herring-bone motifs. Food Vessels are characteristic grave ceramics of the Early Bronze Age (c. 2000-1650 BC), often found in contexts secondary to Beakers.

In addition simple rims from four vessels were recognised. All are in coarse fabrics and in form and finish are analogous to local material of later Bronze Age or even Iron Age date. However, it is also possible that some are from earlier coarse wares as yet poorly recognised and further research is needed.

Four abraded sherds of Romano-British date were also found, probably all from the same vessel.

No one pottery type is exclusive to any one context, apart from the Food Vessel, so contamination and residuality are inherent to the assemblage. However, there do appear to be biases of certain types occurring in particular groups of contexts and detailed analysis of fabrics and findspots should reveal significant patterns in the distribution of sherds from individual vessels.

1.3 Range and variety of material

The evidence for at least 12 to 13 vessels, ranging in date from the Neolithic to Roman times, has been reviewed briefly in section 1.2 above.

Apart from the Food vessel burial, 54 of the samples were collected by hand and 113 retrieved from soil samples using 4mm sieves. This strategy has resulted in saturation sampling and in a preponderance of small fragments of pottery, as opposed to sherds.

1.4 Condition of material

The reasons for the generally poor condition of the assemblage have been alluded to in sections 1.2 and 1.3 above; the small size and abraded condition of the majority of sherds being due to their depositional history and the dominance of small fragments being a direct result of the sampling strategy used. Certain identification of all pieces, therefore, will not be achievable because of the small size of much of the evidence. Nonetheless, during rapid scanning for this assessment, about 50% of sherds collected by hand were found to have diagnostic features as compared with between 20% and 50% of

those retrieved by sieving. In addition there were obvious fabric differences between individual vessels and detailed fabric analysis, although very difficult with small pieces, is likely to improve on these identification levels in both types of samples. Recording of sherd sizes and condition will also be useful in determining the likely degree of disturbance during the site's use, as for instance in the case of the Beaker mentioned in section 1.2 above.

Much of the one in situ find, the Food Vessel, is shattered into fragments and is not reconstructable. However, about 1/3 survives as sherds and a profile is retrievable, apart from the base. Also the sherds have not been cleaned and soil samples have been retained, so samples are available suitable for residue analysis.

1.5 Other primary sources

Thomas Bateman, the well known Derbyshire antiquary, excavated Barrow 2 in 1848 (Bateman 1861, 41-3) and the two Food Vessels found in the cist are in Sheffield City Museum (Howarth 1899, 105 - J.93.785; 109 - J.93.792), together with the rest of the Bateman Collection and Archive. Both vessels are complete but have been reconstructed and consolidated and are probably therefore unsuitable for residue analysis. They have not been adequately published and detailed comparison of their form and fabric with the newly found Food Vessel will enhance study of the site as a whole.

Means of collecting data:

In order to obtain the data outlined above, all the pottery sherds and fragments were rapidly scanned for diagnostic features of shape, decoration and obvious fabric characteristics. In addition the two Food Vessels found by Thomas Bateman in Barrow 2 were examined in Sheffield Museum.

2 **Statement of Potential**

2.1.1 Questions posed in the project design which the pottery has the potential to answer

- Chronology of activities on the site through identification of the pottery typologically.
- Location, number and possible nature of some of the activities on the site, through fabric analysis and analysis of the distribution of individual vessels.
- Cultural relationships of the monument builders and users, regionally and nationally, through typological comparisons and the sourcing of inclusions used as tempering in fabrics.

2.1.2 New research questions resulting from the pottery collection:

- ? What type of food or drink, if any, was placed in the Food Vessel at burial. Evidence was found in one in Perthshire for a cereal-based liquid flavoured with Meadowsweet, possibly a mead or ale (Barclay 1983, 180).
- ? Are there any other finds of later Bronze Age/Iron Age pottery from burial sites in the region which have been overlooked in the past.

2.1.3 The potential value of the pottery to local, regional and national research priorities:

Local importance

Romano-British pottery is common on local barrow sites but is rarely associated with burial and could indicate a primarily ritual interest in such sites (Howard Jones pers. com.). Clarification of the relationship at Barrow 1 by an excavation using modern scientific techniques is a significant addition to this evidence.

Regional importance

This is the first time that a complex funerary/ritual monument (Barrow 1) has been sampled to saturation level for ceramic evidence and the first time that long continuity of use may be demonstrable.

A number of recent excavations in the Peak District have produced evidence for some sort of Neolithic activity in the fourth and third millennia at what were later used as burial sites [e.g. at Wigber Low (Collis 1983, 53-7); at Hognaston (Collis 1996, 160-2); and at Lifis Low (Barnatt 1996, 113-5)] but none has been demonstrated to have had any connection with early Neolithic burial or ritual and where evidence survived it pointed more to domestic activities. Clearer understanding of the relationship of Neolithic activity to later burial sites is a priority for regional research and the sampling strategy used at Barrow 1 will throw new light on this problem.

Peterborough wares overlap with Beakers in the later Neolithic and sherds were also recognised recently at Wigber Low (Collis 1983, 57). Evidence for more than one Beaker is known from other burial sites regionally and comparisons of form, association, condition etc. could aid elucidation of the complex Beaker phase at Barrow 1.

The Food Vessel burial is the first to be excavated on the limestone of the Peak District using modern scientific techniques. Sampling for residues and for radiocarbon dating, as well as detailed analysis of the cremation and comparison with the Food Vessels from Barrow 2, will be of considerable value to further understanding of this strong regional tradition.

Evidence for later Bronze Age and possible Iron Age activity has not been recognised at any other Bronze Age burial site in the region and confirmation of this at Barrow 1 is a research priority.

National

All the pottery types recognised can be related to national as well as regional typological and chronological frameworks and analysis will aid further understanding of these relationships.

2.2.1 Site specific questions posed in the project design which the pottery and interrelated material has the potential to answer:

- ? The nature of activities on the site through time - e.g. ? are any 'domestic'
- ? How many burials were there and what pottery can be associated.

2.2.2 Potential new research topics resulting from the recovery of the pottery and interrelated material:

- ? Does the evidence imply early Neolithic burial or ritual on the site.
- ? Does the evidence imply later Bronze Age/Iron Age burial on the site and is there similar evidence from burial sites in the region which has been overlooked in the past.

2.2.3 The potential value of the site to local, regional and national research priorities:

Local and Regional

Saturation sampling of both artefacts and ecofacts from a burial and ritual site for the first time in the region has the potential to reveal a much more detailed and accurate picture of how and when such sites were used. Also there is potential for a greater understanding of the environment on the Peak limestone in prehistoric times, about which little is yet known.

National The contrast between the simple Bronze Age burial monument (Barrow 2) and the older, more complex, multi-phased ritual/burial monument (Barrow 1), where activity continued into the first millennium AD, will further national understanding of prehistoric communities interaction with their physical and spiritual world through time.

3 Storage and curation

All the pottery is suitably housed in plastic boxes with acid-free tissue and bagged and labelled, apart from about 10% of the >4mm samples. The latter are bagged but not boxed and this will require to be completed for their long term protection and storage.

The Food Vessel sherds are particularly friable and once samples have been selected for residue analysis it is recommended that larger pieces be cleaned and consolidated.

It is recommended that all the pottery be retained and in one place, on the grounds that in its entirety it forms a unique sample.

Pauline Beswick
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References

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