

THE RAVENSTONE BEAKER

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DISCOVERY

The discovery of the Ravenstone Beaker (Plate Xa Fig. 1) was made by members of the Wolverton and District Archaeological Society engaged on a routine field survey, subsequent to the excavation of a nearby Iron Age Enclosure (Mynard 1970). Gravel extraction was in progress and a watch was being kept for further archaeological features that might be uncovered.

The find-spot was in the parish of Ravenstone, adjacent to the Iron Age Enclosure, on a spur of gravel running approximately east to west, about half a mile from the river Ouse at N.G.R. S.P.848 489. Part of the gravel spur was not removed by the extraction company and the section of a shallow grave was noticed where part of the quarry face had recently fallen away.

An immediate rescue of the grave contents was made, beaker sherds and part of a skeleton being recovered. The task was difficult as gravel had been dumped on top of the remaining part of the spur and excavation had to be made straight into the grave which was some three metres above the quarry floor; however most of the beaker sherds were recovered.

An aerial photograph (St. Joseph Pl. XI) not available to the excavator of the Iron Age Enclosure shows ring ditches; it is assumed that one of these was the quarry ditch of the barrow containing the grave. One ring ditch (Pl. Xb) was seen and recorded by Mr. Richard Griffiths (Mynard 1970, Appendix 2). Four pits within this ring were excavated but no grave was noticed.

THE BURIAL

The centre of the grave was about 60 cms. below the old land surface and the method of burial was crouched inhumation with the beaker placed near the knees, the body oriented S.S.E. No other grave goods were found.

THE BEAKER

The beaker was reconstructed by and is preserved in the Bucks County Museum (Acc. No. L.184). It is 14 cms. high, light biscuit-brown in colour with comb-impressed decoration. A well formed "Long Neck" type.

Dr. D. L. Clarke has been kind enough to study illustrations of the beaker and reports as follows:

"The Ravenstone beaker appears to be a characteristic Late Southern British beaker with the more cylindrical neck form common to the eastern counties (S3(E)). The basic horizontal lines draughting the design, clearly demonstrate the Late Southern beaker 'filled neck' over 'filled belly' style which so neatly emphasises the symmetry of the shape.

"The closest parallels are the slightly earlier beaker from Brighton (S2(W)) (Clarke

1970) and the East Kennet beaker from Wiltshire with three-rivet bronze dagger and axe hammer (S3(W)). (ibid).

A date guessed from the current C14 framework would put the Ravenstone beaker burial c. 1500 B.C., contemporary with full Wessex 1 in Wiltshire. In passing one might note that the 'flag' panel motif is widely shared from Bucks., Oxon., Wilts., South Wales, Yorkshire and beyond."

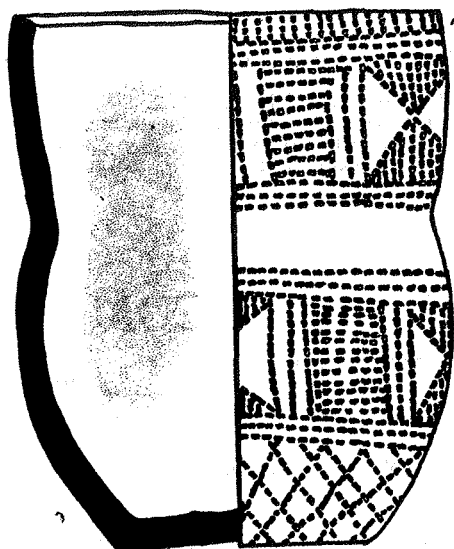


Fig. 1. Ravenstone Beaker.

LOCAL FINDS

The only ceramic finds from Bronze Age burial sites in the immediate vicinity of Ravenstone are cinerary urns from Tyringham and Lathbury, both presumably of a later period. The nearest beaker is from Turvey, Beds., classified S1, exact find-spot unknown. (Dunning 1938).

Beakers in Clarke's Southern classifications found in the upper to middle Ouse valley fall into the following groups:

	S1	S2	S3
Beds.	6	1	—
Hunts.	2	1	—
Bucks.			1

CONCLUSIONS

Scarcity of excavated material makes speculation about the movements of Beaker people, based on ceramic evidence, somewhat hazardous, but the appearance of this beaker of S3 type in the Ouse valley at the time of diffusion of these developed Southern types from Wessex could indicate an introduction of people down river from the Chiltern chalk escarpment.

Aerial photography is progressively revealing an impressive number of ring ditches in the Ouse valley; this method of investigation together with excavations in the Milton Keynes area and on gravel extraction sites will help to resolve some of the problems of this period.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Mr. Dennis Mynard for details of the beaker burial, the photograph of the ring ditch, Plate III, the drawing of the beaker, Fig. 1, and for reading and commenting on the typescript of this note. To Dr. D. L. Clarke of Peterhouse, Cambridge for his note on the beaker. To the owners of the beaker, The Merchant Venturers Company of Bristol, and the Buckinghamshire County Museum for permission to publish it. To Dr. J. K. S. St. Joseph for permission to publish Plate XI.

REFERENCES

- Clarke, Dr. D. L. (1970) "*Beaker pottery of Great Britain and Ireland*". C.U.P. Vol. II, p. 380, fig. 826; Vol II, p 398, fig. 948.
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Mynard, D. C. (1970) "*An Iron Age Enclosure at Ravenstone, Buckinghamshire*". "*Records of Buckinghamshire*". Vol. XVIII, Part 5, p. 393/313.
St. Joseph, Dr. J. K. S. *Camb. collection V.R.46.*

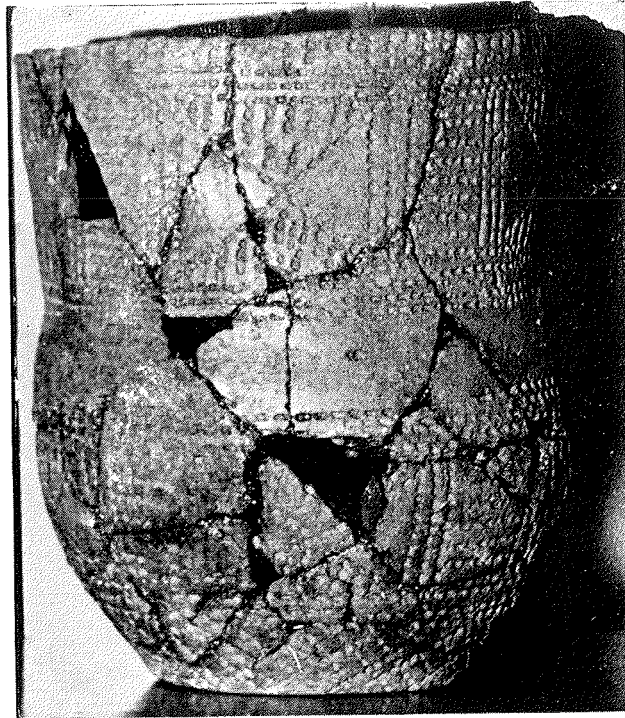


PLATE Xa. Ravenstone. The Reconstructed Beaker.

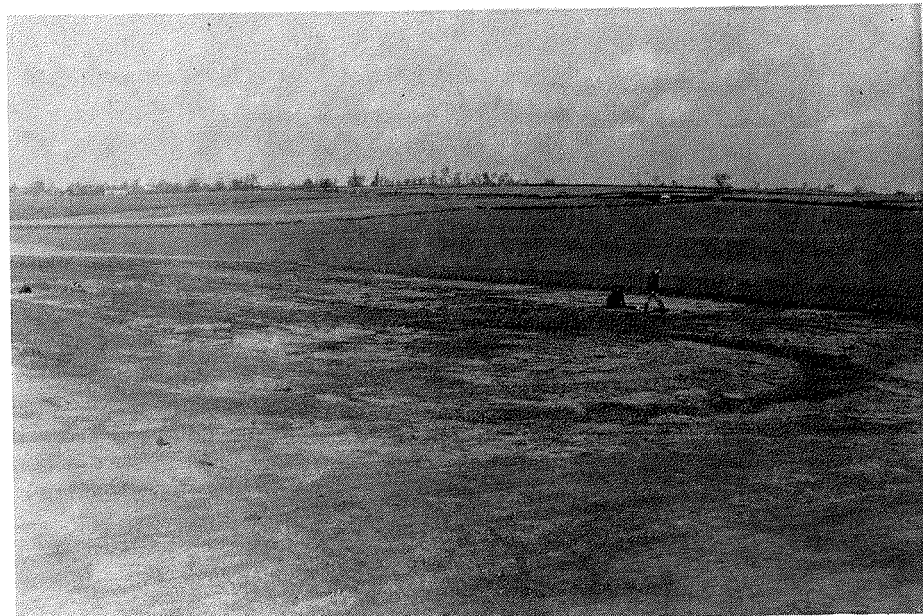


PLATE Xb. Ravenstone. Ring ditch revealed after removal of topsoil.



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PLATE XI. Ravenstone. Aerial photograph of Iron Age Enclosure and ring ditch from S.E.