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EARLY BRONZE AGE BEAKERS.

BY R. F. JESSUP.

THE small butt-shaped beaker illustrated opposite this page was found in a sand pit on Ightham Common three miles south-east of Sevenoaks, and was purchased recently for the British Museum.¹ The circumstances of its discovery are not known, but the poor quality of the potting suggests that the beaker was intended for grave furniture rather than domestic use, and its undamaged condition might be cited justifiably as evidence of careful deposition in a grave. No trace of a grave, however, is now visible in the pit. With its globular shape and slight outbent lip, this beaker must be placed in the B group which is already well represented in Kent; it is 3.5 inches in height, made of light drab clay irregularly burnished, and decorated from lip to base with characteristic cord impressions. It might be worth while to mention that several mounds containing cists of sandstone were dug through and destroyed when the Common was being prepared for cultivation about 1857,² but as ashes are said to have been found in the cists, the possibility that they might have been of Early Bronze Age date seems remote. In Maidstone Museum there is an interesting group of beaker pottery which was presented many years ago by Major Luard Selby, and which by the Museum records came from Ightham Mote, but it is not at all clear whether this name describes the actual find spot or whether it merely indicates that the pottery came from the collection of Major Selby which was housed at Ightham Mote.

The larger butt-shaped beaker in the same plate was purchased from the Brent Collection by the authorities of Canterbury Museum. Its history is unknown, and until

¹ See also *Ant. Journ.*, XII, 169. The illustration here is by permission of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

² Harrison, *Harrison of Ightham* (1928), p. 65.



EARLY BRONZE AGE BEAKERS.

Ightham
(Height 3·5 ins.)

Barham
(Height 6·25 ins.)

Bromley
(Height 5·2 ins.)

Dover
(Height 4·8 ins.)

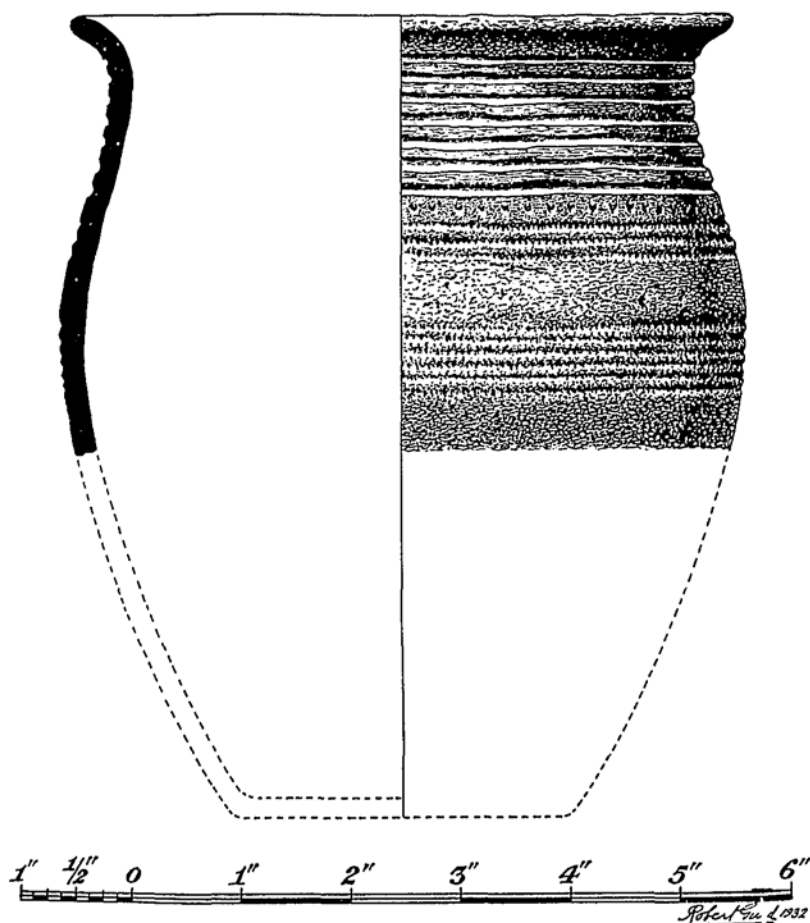
recently its exact provenance was uncertain ; this is now made clear, however, by a wash drawing on folio 83 of the MS. Catalogue of the Brent Collection in the British Museum, where it is described as a " British Urn from Bromley, Kent." This beaker is 5·2 inches in height and 4 inches in diameter at the mouth, the paste is good and fired to a light red colour, the surface being burnished. There are indications that the decoration was once inlaid with white colouring matter. Both the shape of the vessel and its prominent zonal decoration of straight line and chevron pattern make plain its relationship with beakers from the Rhine mouth, the immediate homeland of beaker culture.

Another beaker of which the find spot is not known was found within late years at Barham, and presented to Canterbury Museum by the finder, Mr. J. Todd. It has been restored from many fragments and is now 6·25 inches in height ; the fabric is a coarse brick red paste tempered profusely with grit, and the surface is unusually rough, probably owing to burial in a chalky soil unfavourable to preservation. The body of the pot is decorated in a common fashion with horizontal lines impressed with a thin thong tightly twisted.

The fourth beaker was found in Maison Dieu Fields, Connaught Park, Dover, as long ago as 1883, and has since been in Dover Museum. It has a prominent foot and an outbent rim, the decoration consisting of two bands of toothed-wheel lines separated by a plain zone, and below this a series of four irregular lines to the base. There are also one or two haphazard finger nail markings where the pot had been handled carelessly before firing. The beaker is 4·8 inches high, and is made of a poor badly fired red paste.

Our member Dr. A. Godfrey Ince has kindly given me two sherds of a beaker which were found lately in a gravel pit east of Sturry Vicarage and north of Island Road. No details of the discovery are forthcoming. The beaker, which is well made of good quality paste smoothed on the inside and slightly burnished on the surface, measured about 6 inches across the mouth and was decorated with thong markings, a row of stabbed incisions probably produced by a bone of

a bird, and twisted cord impressions alternating with plain zones, all arranged horizontally in a manner common to beakers of group B. A reconstruction is given on this page.



BEAKER FROM STURRY.

From the same pit in 1922, Mr. Henry Dewey obtained a bowman's wristguard which had been found in association with beaker pottery by one of the workmen; although the man had destroyed the pottery, he was able to give Mr. Dewey, who visited the pit immediately after the discovery,

a convincing description of it. Mr. Dewey kindly allows me to describe the find here.

The wristguard is a large specimen fully 6 inches in length, of polished greyish white schist flecked with spots of iron pyrites and stained by carbonate of copper, possibly by contact with a bronze buckle which secured the ends of the leather attachment thong round the bowman's wrist. The shorter edges are bevelled, the longer smoothly rounded. There are two perforations for attachment; between one of them and the shorter edge, the thong has worn a marked channel, and while one perforation is made vertically, the other is at an angle.

Stone wrist guards are regularly associated with beakers of group B; the only other known example from Kent was found in a grave at Sittingbourne with a small tanged dagger of bronze, a weapon that is also characteristic of the B complex.

A detailed list of beakers found in Kent has already been published,¹ and attention called to the significance of their distribution round the Thames estuary, in the Medway valley, and in the Stour basin. The Dover beaker indicates a similar early penetration along the banks of the River Dour, a region that was to find favour later in the Bronze Age among the people who were concerned with the distribution of gold ornaments. A most important contribution to our knowledge of the beaker period is a recent paper by Mr. J. G. D. Clark² demonstrating that the invasion was in reality an invasion of two distinct culture complexes, one of which, the B group, represents a penetration along the entries of the south-eastern seaboard, while the other, the A-C group, represents a separate invasion by way of the Wash and the north-east coast. With one exception the beaker period antiquities in Kent are all elements of the B complex. The outstanding member is a single beaker of type A from Brendley near Faversham, a stray object which should belong to the northern group.

¹ Cyril Fox, *Arch. Camb.*, LXXX, 1; R. F. Jessup, *The Archaeology of Kent* (1930), pp. 89-94.

² *Antiquity*, V, 415; VI, 90.

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