

## A Beaker Burial near Corston, Bath.

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In May, 1940, a quarryman, Mr. E. Parfitt, drew our attention to some human bones which had been exposed the previous day in the face of a quarry near Corston—not far from the spot where a cist-burial had been discovered in 1931, associated with a Type A beaker.<sup>1</sup>

The quarry was visited the same afternoon, and the bones were visible at a depth of 2 ft. 2 in. below the surface at the quarry face. The stone and overlying soil from the previous day's working had been removed and disposed of by the men, but a few fragments of bone and skull had been collected and placed nearby for us.

The surface of the ground above, which had been under the plough, was examined for any trace of a mound or ditch, but without result; nor could any trace of a ditch be detected in the quarry face itself.

The disturbed area was excavated back into the quarry face, and was found to extend for a distance of 5 ft. laterally, and about 2 ft. in width—though the latter measurement had little significance, since the quarrying operations had encroached on and destroyed the front part of the burial area, especially at the Western end.

No covering slabs were found, and at only one point could anything resembling a lateral wall be demonstrated; here a few slabs appeared to have been deliberately set on edge. The remainder of the infilling of the disturbed area consisted of earth and lias-slabs packed together indiscriminately, and was quite barren.

The base of the disturbed area—on which the remains lay at a depth of 2 ft. 2 in. from the surface—was level and appeared to have a very thin covering of blackish earth, containing traces of ash and charcoal. (See *Fig. 10*.)

Three individuals were represented in the burial. Two of them were adolescents and lay on their left sides in a contracted position, with heads towards the West. All the bones were extremely fragile and decayed, and roots of plants had grown round and through them, whilst others had been broken by stones. These conditions, together with the haste necessary to complete the investigation before work

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#### REFERENCE

<sup>1</sup> University of Bristol Spelæological Society, *Proceedings*, Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 128.

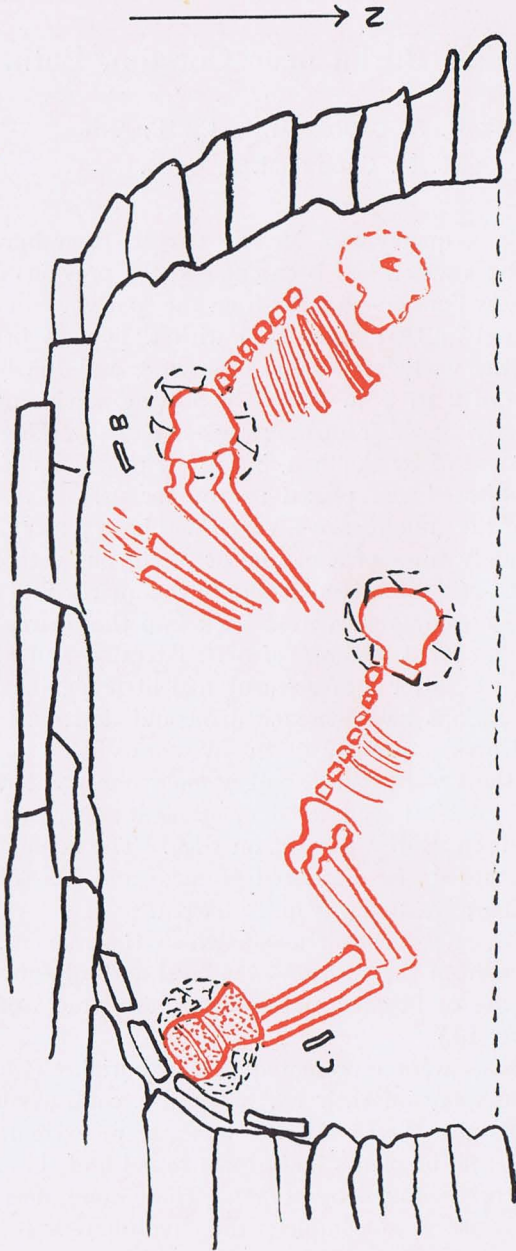
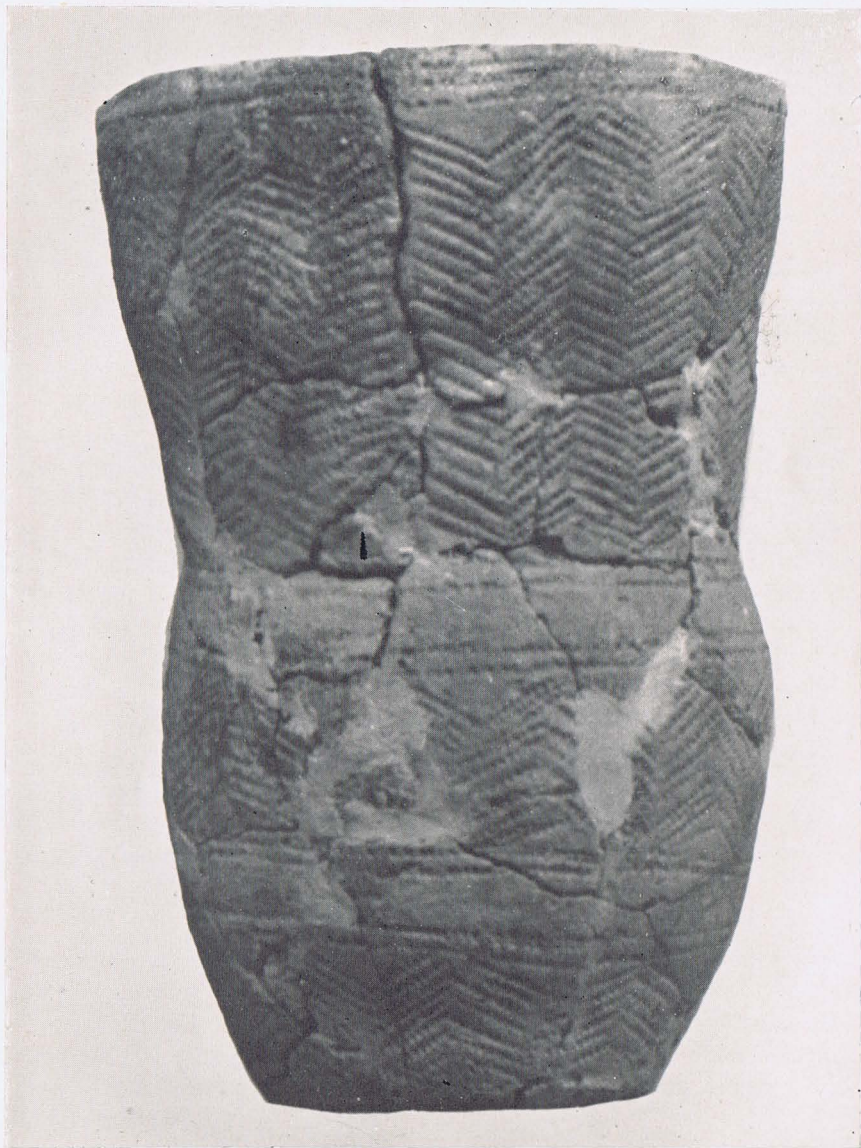


FIG. 10.—Plan of the Beaker Burial near Corston, Bath. A, Position of destroyed skull. B, Tranchet. C, Oval knife. Scale 1 in. = 1 ft.

PLATE 17.



Beaker: found in a burial site near Corston, Bath.

was resumed at the spot next day, made the removal of the skeletal remains very difficult.

The skull of the more Westerly skeleton had been almost completely destroyed and removed, though part of the lower jaw remained. The pelvis rested on a little platform of small flat slabs. The legs were acutely flexed at the knees, so that the feet were drawn up close to the pelvis.

The Eastern skeleton lay with its back to the one just described, its skull being close to the knees of it. The skull was in fragments, some more or less *in situ*, and some dislodged and set aside for us by the quarryman. A great deal of the base of the skull was missing. The hips and knees were not flexed to nearly such an extent as those of the Western skeleton. The skull and feet rested on little platforms of small flat slabs. The beaker lay on the feet of this skeleton.

The third individual was an infant, and was represented by a few bones only, which were mingled with those previously described. Two flint knives were found, one in association with each of the skeletons.

Unfortunately, all the bones, the flints, and the reconstructed beaker were subjected to the fire which destroyed our museum. The writers had been awaiting a report on the human remains before attempting to write this account; very few measurements, etc., of the artefacts had been made.

### THE HUMAN REMAINS

We are indebted to the late Professor Fawcett for a report on the bones. The two skeletons were those of adolescents. The reconstructed skull was brachycephalic, having a breadth index of 88.9. A few bones of an infant also occurred. All this material was destroyed before Professor Fawcett had been able to complete his examination.

### THE FLINTS

Near the feet and pelvis of the Western skeleton was found a knife of tranchet type, about 2 in. long. Just in front of the shins of the Eastern skeleton was an oval knife, also about 2 in. long. Both implements had a dense white patina, and were of excellent workmanship. No drawings or photographs had been taken of these before their destruction.

### THE BEAKER

This was found crushed into fragments lying on the feet of the Eastern skeleton, with its mouth facing West. It was possible to reconstruct it with great accuracy, as only a very few fragments were

missing; they had probably disintegrated due to the presence of plant roots, etc. The paste was fine and reddish, except where it had been blackened, perhaps by the presence of decaying organic material.

The beaker was 16.3 cms. high, and the width at the rim varied between 11.5 cms. and 12 cms. It belonged to Type A—having a body and neck of approximately the same length, with a well-marked division between the two. (*See Plate 17.*)

The design had been applied with the cogged-wheel technique and consisted of three lines round the rim and a chevron pattern over the rest of the neck and body, with the exception of two plain zones. One of these was situated at the extreme upper limit of the body and the other half-way between this and the base.

The few edgewise slabs of stone marking the lateral limit of the disturbed area occurred close to the site of the beaker—perhaps as a rough protection for it.

The accompanying photograph shows the beaker as it was when first reconstructed. Since the fire, the majority of the sherds have been recovered and a second very fair reconstruction made.

Our grateful thanks are due to Mr. E. Parfitt, of Farmborough, who drew our attention to the site, and to Mr. James Coombs, of Corston, the owner of the quarry, for his kindness in allowing our investigation.

