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A BEAKER BURIAL AT MAIDS OF BALNAGOMAN, ARDERSIER, INVERNESS DISTRICT

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THE SKELETAL REMAINS FROM MAINS OF BALNAGOWAN

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The remains are those of a single human and consist of an incomplete skull and mandible, lower limb bones and fragments of vertebrae (including the sacrum), ribs and upper limb bones.

Skull

The right facial and right and left frontal regions are missing. Muscle markings are moderately developed as are the mastoid processes. The sutures are open ectocranially but partially closed internally. The skull is markedly brachycephalic.

The mandible is represented by the region of the symphysis and the body to the level of the second left molar. It is robust with a well marked chin; the mental foramen is midway between the alveolar margin and the lower border.

Teeth

The maxillary dentition is complete except for the left central incisor while on the mandible all the incisors, canines and first premolars are present plus the left P₂-M₂ and a separated right first molar. All the incisors canines, premolars and molars show exposed dentine as, to a lesser extent, do the second molars with the third molars showing some flattening of the cusps but no exposed dentine. There is no evidence of pre-mortem tooth loss, of dental caries or of periodontal disease.

Vertebrae

The body of the fifth lumbar, a lumbar spine and part of a cervical body are present. These show no evidence of osteoarthritic change. The first sacral segment is almost complete and shows typically male proportions in the extent of its lumbo-sacral articular surface. Part of the second segment and part of the sacral hiatus are also present.

Limbs

Only a portion of the midshaft of the humerus and of the right clavicle remain of the upper limb.

The lower limb is represented by fragments of both hip bones, including both sacro-iliac articulations and the left acetabulum which is large. Unfortunately the sciatic notch is incomplete but it appears to be indeterminate in form. In addition the left femur can be reconstructed from four main pieces so that an estimation of stature is possible. The diameter of the femoral head suggests male sex. The angle of the neck is rather large, about 135-140°; there is a well defined third trochanter; the proximal shaft is platymeric; the linea aspera is well developed and there is very marked torsion of the distal third of the shaft where the popliteal surface faces distinctly posterolaterally. The parts of the right femur (head, greater and lesser trochanters) are not sufficient to permit reconstruction. The remainder of the limb is represented by fragments of tibiae, fibula, right calcaneus and some fragments of tarsus and phalanges.

Sex

The degree of muscle marking, the well developed chin, the breadth of the lumbo-sacral articulation and the size of the acetabulum and femoral head indicate that the remains are those of a male.

Age

The fully erupted dentition with its considerable molar wear, together with the endocranial suture closure indicate a mature adult individual.

Stature

Based on femoral length using the formulae of Trotter and Gleser (1958) stature is likely to have been in the region of 162cm (5' 4").

Disease/injury

There is no evidence of either present.

MAINS OF BALNAGOWAN: SKELETAL MEASUREMENTS

Note: Because of the erosion of bone surfaces or owing to reconstruction, these are estimated figures, except for those marked*.

Skull

Maximum length	168mm	Basibregmatic height	134mm
Maximum breadth	143mm		
. . . cranial index	=85		
*Orbital height	35mm		
*Orbital width	43mm		
. . . Orbital index	=81		

Femur

Maximum length	416mm
Diameter of head	45mm
*Ant-post diam shaft	24mm
*Transverse diam shaft	32mm
. . . Platymeric index	=75

Sacrum

a Breadth of lumbo-sacral articulation 52mm
b Breadth of base of sacrum 120mm is $a > 1/3 b$

Stature

$2.32 \times 41.6 + 65.53 = 162.04 \pm 3.94$ cm (Trotter & Gleser 1950)

THE BEAKER

Ian A G Shepherd

Description

A complete, well made and fairly highly finished beaker, 205 mm tall, 172mm diameter at the rim, 178 mm in diameter at the belly and 94 mm in diameter at the base. When found, two shards were lying detached from the rim: they have since been restored. Its fabric is well fired; a very few crushed granitic grits are visible on the brown outer surface, but many can be seen on the interior surface. The appearance of having been slipped, which comes from the almost creamy brown outer surface, is illusory: some parts of the surface bear slight mottling, from red to light brown, while a section of one crack shows the clay to have a very even firing progression throughout its thickness. The core is black. In form it is tall and elegant, with a high belly, a concave rather than an everted neck, and a pronounced foot. The interior of the base is slightly raised, in a small dome, but the exterior of the base is flat.

The pot is decorated in three zones of unequal size. On the exterior vertical surface of the rim is a band of diagonal impressions. On the concave neck are 10 broad and deep horizontal grooves, each c 2mm wide. They are not arranged spirally, but are remarkably regular and straight, although occasional joins can be seen within a circuit and their depth varies slightly. The grooves were made with a U-ended (?wooden) tool, although the lowermost looks as if it were almost ground out of the dry clay as a late addition. This impression is reinforced by the way this groove truncates one or two of the incised chevrons in the band which lies on the base of the neck immediately below the grooves. The single band of incised chevrons at the base of the neck varies somewhat in width. Immediately below the chevrons are two continuous lines of toothcomb impressions. On one part of the circuit in this band are three horizontal (but discontinuous) fingernail impressions. This zone of decoration, which occupies more than the upper third of the pot, is separated from the decorative zone on the belly by a blank zone, c13mm wide. At the widest

circumference of the belly is a zone of incised chevrons, separated by one horizontal line and bounded by single horizontal lines, all of continuous toothcomb impressions. This zone is rather irregular, both in overall width and in the spacing of the chevrons. Below this belly zone is a blank area, c12mm wide. The third decorative zone is located c 60mm up from the base and consists of one horizontal line of deep toothcomb impressions and a fringe of incised diagonal lines of a similar length to the diagonals forming part of the chevrons. From this lower belly zone to the foot the pot is undecorated. There is no decoration on the inside of the rim or on the base. The toothcomb used in the decoration appears to have been very long, with tapered ends: one section of the line beneath the lower belly zone was apparently 35mm long. Individual teeth seem to have been rectangular in plan, from 2 to 3 mm long and from 1mm to 1.5mm wide.

The overall impression of the pot, despite irregularities in some of the toothcomb details and the unequal zone widths, is one of size and confidence.

Affinities and discussion

In formal terms, the Mains of Balnagowan beaker would be placed in Clarke's Northern/North Rhine group (1970), or in step 4 of the scheme of Lanting and Van der Waals (1972). The pot is comparable in terms of the location of decoration and the use of the grooved motif with such pots as those from Ruthven, Aberdeenshire (Clarke 1970, fig 277) or Lassurdie, Banffshire (*ibid*, fig 270). These are qualified similarities: while both pots have feet, the former has a slacker profile and the latter has horizontal cord impressions at the neck and grooving on the belly. Further afield, the M/MR beaker from Garton Slack 81, Yorkshire (*ibid*, fig 288) is a good parallel, while the Slap, Turriff beaker, although undecorated should also be considered in view of its shape (*ibid*, fig 273). However, the beaker from Chealamy, Sutherland (Gourlay, this volume) provides by far the closest parallel.

The M/MR group was the least satisfactory of Clarke's classifications, a point emphasised by Lanting and Van der Waals (1972,31). Two groups of evidence demonstrate this observation: 1) the occurrence of grooved necks intermittently throughout the various British beaker styles and

2) parallels late in the beaker sequence in the lower Rhine basin.

1) Despite being characterized by Clarke as a Late Northern British motif (Motif Group 3), grooving had a wide currency, being found on such early (N/BR) pots as Little Rollright, Oxon (Clarke 1970, fig 164) or on one of the European beakers from Brantham Hall, Suffolk (*ibid*, fig 107) while also appearing on such mature beakers as the M/D Dunbar, East Lothian pot (*ibid*, fig 450). In Yorkshire grooved lines are frequently found encircling the necks of beakers which do not possess sharp neck bands: these are characteristic of step 4 in the scheme of Lanting and Van der Waals (1972, 39). Grooving is also found fairly widely on East Anglian and Barbed Wire beakers (eg *ibid*, figs 418, 420, 424, 386, 382, etc) and relatively commonly on Developed Northern beakers (eg *ibid*, figs 506-515). The end of its use can be seen on the almost cup-shaped neck of the M3 Crawford beaker (*ibid*, fig 674) and on the M4 bowl from Urquhart, Moray (*ibid*, fig 723).

2) None of the pots referred to above, barring Chealmy, has been an exact parallel in terms of decoration, motifs and shape. However, reference to the Lower Rhine assemblage produces similarities as striking as any in Britain. For example, the gently footed, tall pot from Emeloo, Gelderland (Clarke 1970, fig 268) has grooving in the whole concave neck zone, immediately above a zone of open diagonals and a blank lower belly. Instead of a fringe of diagonals at the neck there is a line of finger-pinches, but overall the pot is very similar to Maina of Balnagowan. Equally, the Uddalmeer, Gelderland beaker has three zones; grooving on the concave neck, grooving on the belly and finger-pinching just above the pronounced foot (*ibid*, fig 325). These pots belong to the NW beaker group of the Lower Rhine basin (Lanting 1973, 248, fig 16) which represents a late stage in continental beaker development (Van der Waals 1984, 7).

However, although some of the criteria used by Clarke to define the N/BR group can be criticised, certain other features, such as pronounced feet, internal basal bosses and a comb length of between 35 and 40mm, all seen on the Balnagowan pot, have a certain geographical coherence, particularly in north Britain. (see Clarke 1979, 119-20). Indeed, one of the geographically closest beakers to Balnagowan is the curious N/BR pot from Cardor itself (*ibid*, fig 311), which, although it has an almost biconical

profile, does demonstrate the separation of neck from body by means of the decoration, in this instance by broad toothcomb lines. Note also the blank lower belly and the slight foot (*ibid*, fig 312). None of the other beakers from the Cadbor area has grooving similar to Balnagowan (Walker 1966,100), although one (NMAS EG 99) does have a horizontal neck pattern which bears a superficial similarity to light grooving.

In terms of absolute chronology, the date of 1555 +/- 85bc from Balnagowan might seem at first sight to be rather late as it only just accords with the suggested chronology for step 4 (Lenting & Van der Waals 1972, 36), although the heterogeneity of beaker cist dates is well known. In this connection the three associated beakers from Dunnottar, Kincardine perhaps go some way towards an explanation. The example classed as a N/NR could be related to the Balnagowan pot through its grooving and foot, although it is smaller and has a slacker profile (Clarke 1970, fig 322). However, its two associated beakers are typologically later, being styled N3(L) or step 6 in the scheme of Lenting and Van der Waals (1972,36), but maintaining some emphasis on the separation of the neck decoration (Clarke 1970, figs 323-4). Furthermore, in view of the range of C14 dates for continental NW beakers from 1720 +/- 35bc (GrN 6367) to 1500 +/- 45bc (GrN 6753) (Van der Waals 1984,7), there would seem to be little need to invoke in this instance Clarke's suggestion of a long survival of N/NR beakers in the north (1970, 128).

However, the important conclusion to stress is that the pot from Mains of Balnagowan and its close parallel from Chealsey, Sutherland occupy a primary position in the beaker sequence in northern Scotland, representing as they do the first appearance of toothcomb decoration in these latitudes (Lenting & Van der Waals 1972,40). As such, they belong in Lenting and Van der Waals' Step 4 and in Case's proposed Middle Phase of beaker development in Britain (1984, 42, fig 3). Whether they belong to a sufficiently coherent group to be described as a 'Moray Firth colony' (p.99 Clarke 1970, 122-3, 126) must remain for the moment an open question, although the strong connections with the Lower Rhine basin certainly demonstrate a more than passing interest between the two areas.