

## 9. REUSE (OR RENEWED ACTIVITY) DURING THE CHALCOLITHIC PERIOD

Evidence for the later reuse of (or, at least, activity at) the passage tomb is attested by the discovery of parts of a Low-Carinated All Over Comb-decorated Beaker (see Appendix 4) in the passage. These were recovered from within the collapse infill of stone and silt (015) which had built up in the passage and around the collapsed passage orthostat. Three conjoining (and now refitted) sherds from the lower part of the pot, including its rounded carination, were found first, then around 40cm further along the passage a large part of the same Beaker was discovered resting on a lump of rubble. This latter piece, around 110mm across, also includes the carination and lower belly, along with part of the body above the carination. An irregular 'crater' area where the surface is missing, extending roughly from the carination, must relate to where the sherd was hit by something (eg a falling stone) in the past, causing the surface to spall off. The rim and base of the pot are missing, as is an indeterminate amount of the upper body, discussed in Appendix 4.

The vessel is immediately identifiable as belonging to the earliest kinds of Beaker found in Britain and Ireland – ones that are closest in style and in their technique and quality of manufacture to their immediate Continental precursors and congeners. According to the most up-to-date typochronology for British Beakers, this vessel should date to between *c* 2450 cal BC and *c* 2200/2150 cal BC (Parker Pearson et al 2019: 173).

Questions remain about how and why these Beaker sherds came to be deposited in this much older monument. Are we dealing with a pot that had been buried intact (perhaps as a grave good accompanying human remains) in the monument and had then been disturbed and broken, its parts scattered among the silty infill of the passage after the side wall had collapsed? Or had this been deliberately broken, and parts of it placed among the fill, during an act of deliberate decommissioning of the monument during the Chalcolithic? Decommissioning does not appear to be likely, however, since the rubble in the passage is believed to have accumulated during the monument's collapse during the Late Neolithic. The degree of abrasion on the non-recent fracture

surfaces is not particularly heavy; the sherds found 40cm from the main piece are slightly more abraded, both on their edges and their exterior, than the main piece.

There are no human remains that are definitely associated with the remains of the Beaker. The deposit of calcined bone (017) found in the passage, in silty fill closely resembling (015) but which was actually trampled natural, has produced a Late Neolithic radiocarbon date of 3020–2890 cal BC (95.4% probability; 4324±28 BP, SUERC-122895), which is far too early for the bones to have been associated with the Beaker. Moreover, this deposit appears to have pre-dated the collapse of the passage side wall. If the Beaker had been deposited with unburnt human remains, then the latter would have decomposed in the acidic peaty environment of the monument's fill. However, as Neil Wilkin's (2016) thoughtful review of the practice of Beaker deposition in Neolithic monuments has pointed out, it should not be assumed that all Beakers in such contexts must have accompanied the deposition of deceased people as a secondary funerary use of the monument – even though in some cases, as in the simple passage tomb at Achnacreebeag and in the multiple Neolithic cist monument at Glecknabae, both Argyll and Bute, it is clear that they had indeed been used in this way (Ritchie 1970; Sheridan 2007; 2012). Wilkin has pointed out the predominance of AOC (All Over Cord-impressed) and other probably Chalcolithic Beakers in Neolithic monuments, especially in the west of Scotland (Wilkin 2016: 271–3) and has emphasised the possibility that non-funerary Beaker deposition in Neolithic monuments could have been a way for local communities to engage with the novel Continental pottery and integrate it into their ideology and traditions. That may be so; but given the post-2016 realisation, thanks to aDNA analysis, that we are indeed dealing with an influx of Beaker-users from the Continent, we do have to bring back into play the possibility that at least some of these pots were deposited by incomers. If that was the case at Carmahome, then the deposition of the Beaker could have been a symbolic gesture of appropriation of the monument, or of respect towards its original builders.