

A BRONZE AGE BURIAL FROM ST. MARGARET'S- AT-CLIFFE

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Whilst digging foundations for a patio, a resident of Salisbury Road, St. Margaret's-at-Cliffe discovered a human skull in his garden. He alerted the police who removed the cranial fragments for examination and the coroner's officer for Dover, Mr Graham Perrin, called me in (Monday, 28th September, 1993) to ascertain the date of the remains. The appearance of the cranial fragments suggested that they were not *modern*. In an attempt to establish a more precise date we visited the find-spot. The bones had been buried in the natural chalk and from the section it could be seen that the grave had been cut through *c.* 60 cm. of solid chalk (Plate I). Previous discoveries from Salisbury Road include

PLATE I



Section, showing that the grave has been cut through *c.* 60 cm. of solid chalk (the emptied grave is in the foreground).



The cleaned remains of the skeleton *in situ* (the skull had been previously removed by the original finder).

a Bronze Age beaker and Iron Age activity (Stebbing, 1954) and a pagan Anglo-Saxon burial (Parfitt, *pers. comm.*).

Excavation revealed that we were dealing with an articulated body rather than an isolated skull. There were no grave-goods associated with the burial. The only clue to the date of the inhumation is the position of the skeleton. The body was lying on its left side with the legs flexed. The right arm was across the chest and the left was tightly flexed with the hand resting on the clavicle (Plate II). Such a disposition suggests a prehistoric date, possibly dating to the Bronze Age. Indeed, a Bronze Age beaker was discovered in 1954 when foundations were being laid for the present house (Appendix A). A similar burial at Deal, however, has been radiocarbon dated to the early Iron Age (Parfitt, 1990). A research grant provided by the Kent Archaeological Society permitted us to send a bone to Oxford for radiocarbon dating. The date 3620 ± 120 BP confirmed that the burial is early Bronze Age.

The skeleton is practically complete, although the bones are very fragile and the skull is badly fragmented. Based on pelvic morphology (width of greater sciatic notch) and femoral head diameter (40.4 mm.), the remains are clearly female. All the teeth except the maxillary left lateral incisor were recovered. The roots of the third molars are fully-formed (c. 20 years +). The lack of dental attrition, as well as the state of bone fusion (unfused medial end of the clavicle; rib head ends; vertebral end-plates) suggests age at death was under 25 years. Based on the formulae of Trotter and Gleser (1958), the left tibia (311 mm.), the only complete long bone, gives a stature estimation of 1.517 m. (5 ft.).

The only evidence of pathology is Schmorl's nodes in the lower spine. It is generally accepted that their formation is directly related to severe strain, especially compressional forces, which cause the intervertebral disc to rupture (Knowles, 1983). It is possible that repetitive tasks such as animal hide preparation and grinding corn may have predisposed to the early development of the nodes. There was no evidence for cause of death on the available bones.

The skeleton is on permanent display at The Bay Museum, St. Margaret's Bay.

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ST. MARGARET'S BAY BEAKER: A REAPPRAISAL
ALEX GIBSON

In 1954, a beaker was recovered from foundation work of a bungalow named 'Gavarnie' (now 'Sunrise') at Salisbury Road, St. Margaret's Bay, Dover (N.G.R. TR 36774482). This Beaker is listed by Clarke (1970, no. 397) as belonging to his Late North British (N³) Group. The Beaker is said (O.S. Record card TR34SE3) to have underlain an Early Iron Age level containing bones, burnt and chipped flints and pottery but otherwise has no stratigraphic details.

The finding of a burial from further foundation work at this site with its C¹⁴ date of 3620±120 BP (lab No OxA-4545 TA1) suggests at least the presence of further broadly contemporary burials. It would be stretching the evidence too far to suggest that this burial is the one with which the St. Margaret's Beaker was originally associated, but it may suggest the presence of a ring ditch and/or flat cemetery of Beaker affinity in the area.

The St. Margaret's Beaker, as drawn by Clarke, is 102 mm. wide at the mouth, 123 mm. high and 69 mm. wide at the base. It has a distinctly bipartite shape with slightly bowed upright to flaring neck, and bulbous body. It has a slight foot-ring round the base. The decoration on the neck comprises two narrow zones of toothed comb cross-hatching bordering panelled decoration with filled opposed chevron infilling (motif 35iii). This panel is bordered by vertical herring-bone metopes. The belly is decorated with two zones of combed ladder motif (motif 5) bordered above and below by circular 'reed' impressions. In the N³ of Clarke, the Beaker is also late (step 5) in Lanting and van der Waals's (1972) scheme. The chronological significance of these typologies has recently been questioned by a survey of radiocarbon dates and a programme of skeletal dating from secure Beaker associations (Kinnes, Gibson *et al.* 1991). This programme, whilst clearly limited in its sample size, suggests a broad contemporaneity of the different styles, between 2250 and 1750 Cal BC. This places the St. Margaret's inhumation exactly within the period of currency of Beaker pottery.

Stylistically late Beakers are rare in Kent. Only five have been recorded from probable sepulchral contexts: Brendley S (Clarke 1970, no. 387), Capel-le-Ferne N³ (no. 392), Capel-le-Ferne S (no. 391), Folkestone N³ (no. 401) and Manston S² (Perkins and Gibson 1990). Late Beakers have also been recovered from non-sepulchral contexts in Kent such as Holywell Coombe and from various find-spots in the Lydden Valley (Halliwell and Parfitt 1985). But by far the majority of

Beakers in Kent are stylistically early though this may be seen more as regional variation rather than chronologically significant (Case 1993).

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