

A LOST COLLARED URN FROM WOOLMER FOREST

On 2nd June 1830, while visiting Midhurst, the Reverend John Skinner, Rector of Camerton, called upon Mrs Barlow who had collected many Roman coins and antiquities found in the neighbourhood. During this visit John Skinner was shown 'a British urn dug from a tumulus in Woolmer Forest'.

In his journal, now preserved in the British Library (BL add ms 33718), Skinner drew a sketch of this urn along with a cylindrical white bead found with the accompanying cremation (Fig 3a).

Skinner's ink sketches of Bronze Age pottery are frequently unreliable and his rendering of the Woolmer vessel would be of limited value were it not for a visit made by Skinner several years earlier to his old friend Sir George Burrard in Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. In April 1817 Skinner excavated a number of barrows just south of Yarmouth at Afton Down near Freshwater Bay (Grinsell and Sherwin 1940). His finds included two urns from barrows 5 and 8 which were sketched by him in his journal (BL add ms 33650). Like the Woolmer



Fig 3a. Inkwash of the Woolmer urn from John Skinner's journal of 1830 (by kind permission of the British Library). The illustration overlies an earlier pencil sketch.

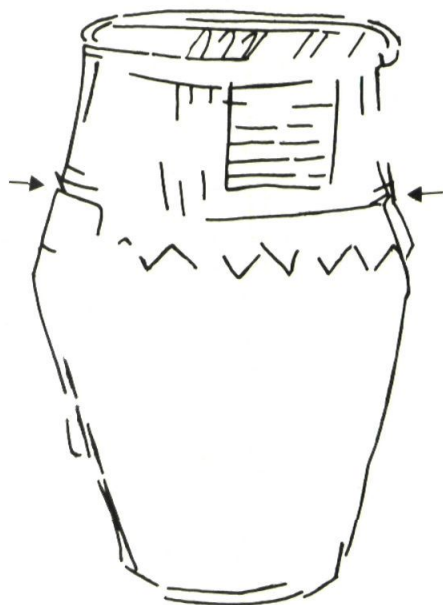


Fig 3b. Analysis of the pencil strokes concealed in the inkwash shown in Fig 3a. The oblique lines (arrowed) clearly demarcate the collared profile.

urn, the sketches are of poor quality but the urn from barrow 8 shows a motif similar to that recorded at Woolmer.

Throughout his antiquarian life, Skinner's drawing techniques show a number of changes. In September 1815, when excavating the Priddy Nine Barrows, Skinner recorded the pottery with short hesitant strokes in a small notebook (BL add ms 28794). These items were later redrawn by Skinner in BL add ms 33648 by which time a more confident use of the pen was employed. At Freshwater, in 1817, Skinner made small thumbnail ink sketches which were later improved by a superimposed ink wash which was probably added sometime later during leisure hours at Camerton.

The precise typology of the urns recovered from barrows 5 and 8 at Afton would remain uncertain were it not for the visit to Burrard made fourteen years later in 1831. On this occasion other barrows in the Afton Down group were opened and Skinner obtained further urns similar to those found in 1817. Of particular interest are two urns recorded in Skinner's journal as watercolours (BL add ms 33722 f s 50, 64). The watercolours reveal both vessels to be collared urns and on this occasion Skinner clearly reveals his lifelong difficulty of adequately recording the overhang present in this type of vessel. Despite this defect, the collar decoration is faithfully reproduced and one urn clearly shows the Longworth motif C.

Armed with our knowledge of the Afton urns, we may approach the Woolmer find with some confidence. The sketch shows a collared urn bearing collar decoration of Longworth's motif C, and a shoulder decoration of motif G (Longworth 1961, 1984). Like the 1817 drawings at Afton, no indication of the overhang is conveyed in the profile (Fig 3a). A close examination of the manuscript reveals, however, that the ink sketch overlies an earlier pencil drawing in which the collared profile is more clearly represented (Fig 3b). Skinner records the height of the urn as 24½ inches (60.8cm) and the circumference as 33 inches (84cm). To maintain the proportions given in his sketch

we must assume the latter measurement to refer to maximum circumference at the shoulder. These dimensions enable a reconstruction to be made as presented in Fig 4.

Skinner gives few further details of this burial. In a footnote to the drawing he describes the find as a 'Belgic British urn found in a Tumulus in Woolmer Forest accompanied by a small white bead perforated as to resemble the fragment of a tobacco pipe. Quantities of charcoal and burnt bones.'

The sketch of the bead shows a cylindrical object which if drawn at actual size in accordance with Skinner's common custom would seem to be 3.3cm long. Beads of this type are uncommon in British Early Bronze Age contexts and no reliably dated analogies can be readily found. Thurnam (1871, 440) illustrates a similar bead of an 'osseous substance' 2.9cm long from a barrow at Roughridge, Wilts but it is unfortunately unassociated. In general, the North Moulton, Upton Pyne, Upton Lovell, Tan Hill and Lake necklaces seem to attest to a preference for shorter beads made of materials other than bone and fashioned in biconical, segmented, spherical and quoit-shaped forms. Bone imitations of segmented faience beads are known such as those from Farway (Thurnam 1871, 440) and Warminster G10 (Annable and Simpson 1964, 51, 106), but these show no associations with plain bone cylinders.

The use of bone to replicate other types of bead leads us to an attractive analogy to be found amongst the cylindrical beads of rolled bronze. These were first employed by beaker communities and are present in the Migdale hoard. The continued use of such beads by urn cremating groups is attested at Roke Down, Bere Regis, Dorset where two rolled bronze cylinder beads were each interred with a cremation in a biconical urn (Payne 1892, 13-14; Abercromby 1911, urns 374 and 375). The length of one was 2.5cm. The Woolmer bead could represent the replication of bronze cylinder beads by a collared urn group while the occurrence of single beads only at Roke Down and Woolmer may infer the occasional deposition of token beads as part of the burial

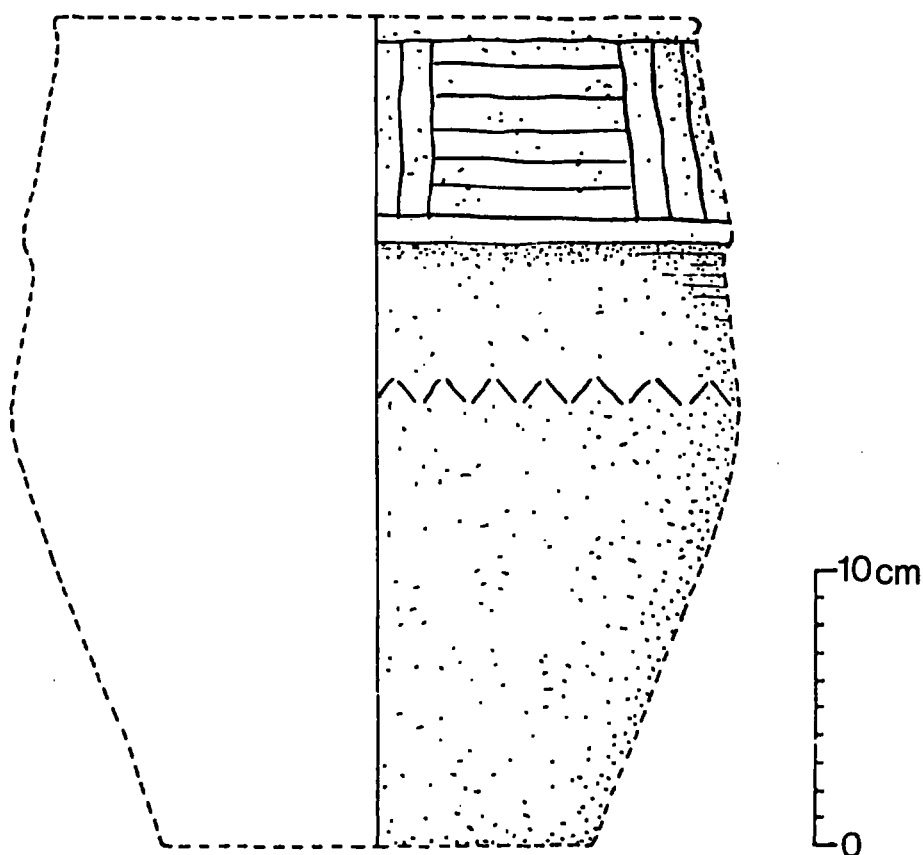


Fig 4. Reconstruction of the Woolmer collared urn based on dimensions and proportions recorded by John Skinner.

ritual. At Collingbourne Kingston G8, Wilts (Annable and Simpson 64, 119) and Stockbridge, Hants (Stone 1958 198), the minor contribution of shale, amber and faience beads which occur without fire damage in collared urn cremation burials provides some further evidence for such a practice.

Grinsell's survey (1938, map V) shows a notable concentration of some 38 round barrows in the area of Woolmer Forest. Like the well-known Petersfield Heath group, most of the mounds are concentrated in the vicinity of a large mere. No details are known of early excavations in barrows in this group.

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A BRONZE DAGGER FROM TICHBOURNE DOWN, CHERITON, NEAR WINCHESTER

Location and circumstances of find

The dagger was found by Mr J McGovern and his son in a field known as Dark Copse, which lies on Tichbourne Down. The map reference is SU591300. I am grateful to Mr McGovern for supplying this and the following information. The dagger was found in November 1982, 9 in (225 mm) down in a new plough furrow; a small excavation was carried out, but there was no evidence of a burial, or of a former barrow. No Bronze Age pottery has been found in the vicinity. The field is mainly on chalk with flint, but there are areas of heavy clay. Mr McGovern continues to survey this field as part of a survey of the Civil War battlefield.

Description (Figs 5 and 6)

Triangular bronze dagger with ogival shaped blade, slightly curved hilt plate with two rivets *in situ*, central rivet notch and omega-shaped mark in the centre. Four ribs extend three-quarters of the way down the blade each side of the convex midrib, which is decorated with a fine pattern of dots, or pointillé. The rivets are slightly squared with expanded ends, 11mm long and c 5mm thick. The dagger is a finely made piece, not heavily used, but it has damage consistent with some usage. The hilt plate is rather uneven across the top and both rivet holes are wrenched and split to the top. The blade has well-milled edges, although rather notched and battered, and is bent along its length. The ribs alongside the midrib are quite clear, but slightly polished out towards the tip. There are fine score marks on the butt

and some on the blade; some heavy scraping along one midrib may be due to modern damage. The dagger has an overall green patina with red patches of disease, and is 160mm in length, greatest width (across the hilt plate) 56mm.

Discussion

This dagger is a typical Wessex type of the Camerton-Snowhill phase (Gerloff 1975, 100), and can be placed within Type Camerton. Our dagger can indeed be closely paralleled by the type example from Timsbury, Camerton, and the pointillé is similar to the example from Edmondsham (Gerloff 1975, 104-5, Nos 175 and 182). These daggers are usually associated with cremations under barrows, sometimes with inhumations, and some occur in Arretton hoards (Gerloff 1975, 109). As a class, Camerton-Snowhill daggers are quite widely distributed in Britain, but those with pointillé decoration seem to be confined to south-west England, concentrating in south Dorset and the Salisbury Plain, with single examples from Devon, Cornwall and Hampshire. (Gerloff 1975, 115); Proudfoot suggested a source for them around Dorchester, because of their concentration there (1963, 410).

The decoration has aroused much comment by previous authors on its possible origins: Piggott drew attention to the similar decoration on spearheads and thought that it might be a logical extension of decoration using gold studs, and as seen on the Aldbourne Cups (1938, 62). Proudfoot pointed