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A Bronze Age Round Barrow, Woodchester

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BRONZE AGE ROUND BARROW, WOODCHESTER

In *The Times* of 29 August 1930 a letter, dated 13 August, was printed giving an account by Mr J. P. E. FALCONER, of Bath, of the opening, some two years previously, of a round barrow situated close to the Stroud-Dursley road, and to the east of Ivy Lodge farm, Woodchester. The barrow is marked on the 6-inch Ordnance Survey sheet XLIX NW, a little below the bench-mark 680.5. The beaker found with the burial in the barrow was illustrated in the same issue of *The Times*.

The barrow appears to have been quarried for stone in the early part of 1928, and until Mr Falconer's chance notice of the site led him to inquire into the facts no one competent to judge of their archaeological interest seems to have been aware of the circumstances. It will be seen that Mr Falconer obtained some interesting particulars—not easy to ascertain after so considerable an interval—and we are indebted to him for so patiently pursuing his inquiries and for recording them. Archaeological work in Gloucestershire has suffered in the past for want of observations made at the time and for that reason Mr Falconer's letter is now printed, and acknowledgment is made to him and to the Publisher of *The Times* for permission to do so.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE TIMES'

'The following notes on a round barrow of the Early Bronze Age which was recently dug into to obtain stones for road metal may interest your readers, as the fact of its destruction has not hitherto been published.

'The barrow is of very great interest in that it has yielded the first known (almost) complete beaker from

the Cotswolds. Hitherto only fragments of beakers have been found within the Cotswold area—namely, a fragment from Eyford (now lost) and some small fragments from a round barrow near Nailsworth, the precise locality of which has not been recorded.¹

' The barrow in question is situate in the parish of Woodchester, on Ivy Lodge farm, now in the occupation of Mr Philpot. This farm (formerly a part of Selsley farm) comprises some large open fields immediately SE of the highway that follows the line of the steep western escarpment of the Cotswolds between Selsley Common and Uley Bury, overlooking the Severn Valley. The barrow does not appear in the list of round barrows contained in Mr Witts's well-known *Archaeological Handbook of the County of Gloucester*, 1883.

' The destruction of the Ivy Lodge farm barrow became known to the writer in the following circumstances. A few weeks ago, cycling to Uley and passing along the highway before mentioned, he noticed some ploughland at the south end of Ivy Lodge farm, and thinking it might prove a good site for flint implements he entered the field, and there found Mr Philpot, the farmer, with two other men, who, on his inquiring for flint arrowheads, pointed out a clump of trees in the distance, stating that it marked the site of a tump (the barrow in question) which had recently² been dug into for stone in connexion with work on the Woodchester Park estate, and that an earthenware vessel, together with a skeleton, was there unearthed, and that these objects were in the possession of Miss Leigh, of Nymphsfield.

¹ See O. G. S. Crawford, *The Long Barrows of the Cotswolds*, 1925, p. 10.

A beaker was found in the Vale in January 1927 at Barnwood, near Gloucester, particulars of which are recorded by Mrs E. M. Clifford in her paper in this volume of *Transactions*, p. 218. It is described by Dr Cyril Fox, F.S.A., p. 220, and illustrated fig. 7.—EDITOR.

² About March 1928.—EDITOR.



BEAKER, FOUND (1928) IN A ROUND BARROW NEAR
IVY LODGE FARM, WOODCHESTER, GLOS.

Ph. Mr Thomas Falconer

facing p. 310

' Subsequently, the writer visited Miss Leigh and he was delighted to find that the vessel was an almost perfect specimen of the type of sepulchral pottery known as the beaker or drinking-cup of the Early Bronze Age period, dating from about 1800-1600 B.C. A nicely worked flint-point or javelin-head 2.37 in. long, which came from the barrow, is also in Miss Leigh's possession. It is patinated a greyish blue and its butt-end is slightly crusted. As to the skeleton, Miss Leigh stated that only a skull and a few bones had been found in the barrow, and that these had afterwards been buried in a wood near by.³

' Further investigations proved that before the quarrying the barrow was in a fair state of preservation, being a round-shaped mound about 5 ft. high. The skull with the other bones and the beaker were discovered on the ground level near the centre of the barrow. The objects were enclosed in a circular chamber that was formed of dry oolitic-walling, the whole being covered by a large slab of oolite, about 9 in. thick. This stone chamber or cist was about 2 ft. in diameter and about 3 ft. high. The mound or barrow, especially around its centre, was constructed mainly of stones and these had evidently been heaped upon the cist after the burial had taken place. Most of these stones, together with those that formed the cist, including the covering stone (which was broken up), were used to repair a portion of the drive at Woodchester Park.

' Unfortunately, it was impossible to ascertain the position in the cist of either the beaker or the skull. It is probable, however, that, as is usual in this type of burial, the body had been placed on its side, in a contracted position, with the beaker deposited near it. It seems certain that no other objects beyond those herein described were found in the barrow. It appears that the

³ The remains were afterwards found to be a secondary interment.

skull was small and slightly damaged, but that the teeth (two of which were taken away by a young man) were well preserved. Both jaws were complete.

'The beaker is entirely fashioned by hand and measures $6\frac{1}{8}$ in. high, $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. across the mouth, and $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. across the base. It is of a reddish-brown clay, this colour being probably due to the intensity of the heat to which the vessel was subjected in firing. The clay, which is somewhat perished in places, contains minute fragments of quartz, probably added to strengthen the ware. In its form the vessel, which is an example of Lord Abercromby's class A (see A. Abercromby, *A Study of the Bronze Age Pottery of Britain and Ireland*, 1912), consists of three truncated cones, of which the top and bottom incline downwards and the middle upwards. Unfortunately a portion of the mouth of the vessel is missing, and this damage may have been done when the barrow was quarried.

'The ornamentation, which was probably executed by a pointed bone or a stick, consists entirely of punch marks which mainly form three series of chevrons or interlacing cones. These are separated by bands formed by lines of dots or punch marks. The rim of the vessel, which is damaged, is slightly everted—*i.e.*, it slopes outwards, while the base is flat. The interior of the vessel is coated with a thick whitish deposit which may be the remains of some kind of a liquid food that it contained. Some of the deposit is to be seen on the outside of the vessel, as if the food had overflowed'.

We are indebted to Mr Thomas Falconer, F.R.I.B.A., for the illustration of the beaker. At the present time (June 1931) the beaker is exhibited in the Stroud Museum.