

THE IRON AGE ASSEMBLAGES FROM DARMSDEN, HINDERCLAY AND KETTLEBURGH

by *C. J. Balkwill*

There are few published groups of Iron Age pottery from Suffolk and those considered here are virtually the only ones to have been described in the last ten years. All the groups are at Ipswich Museum, where examination of the records has recently shown that the published accounts need to be revised. This note aims simply to put the record straight.

1. Darmsden (Cunliffe, 1968, 184).

Two groups of pottery, excavated in 1938 and 1945, were fully described and illustrated by Professor Cunliffe, who also noted the unreliable nature of the 1938 group. The important 1945 material was recovered by Mr H. E. P. Spencer, who deposited at the Museum a description both of the pit and the finds from it. This document throws some new light on the Darmsden group, and seems worth quoting in detail:

August 8th 1945. I collected a quantity of potsherds from the talus of both mounds [two pits left standing after the removal of gravel around them]; the northern one appeared to contain a proportion of Roman ware. . . . The excavation of the southern midden, which appeared the easiest to work, proved it to be the bowl-shaped bottom of a pit some 12 feet deep. The upper part was a grey soil very full of large stones, chiefly flints, with occasional flakes and cores, and pieces of pottery.

Although fragments of black burnished ware occurred in the upper part of the deposit (4 feet above the bottom) the ware was chiefly a rough reddish or brownish coarse type with abraded edges. There were also some bones.

At the bottom of the deposit was a light brownish sand, buff when dry, with occasional grains of charcoal which increased in size and quantity upwards. Above this sand and passing down into it was a layer of grey material passing upward into brown of the same composition. This layer was largely wood ash and was rich in charcoal, it contained the bulk of the pottery recovered, also bones and teeth of food animals . . .

Pottery

Part of a very small cup was found in the talus, decorated with fingernail impressions. Buff ware, hand-made (Owles and Smedley, 1962, Fig. 25c).

Part of the shoulder with projecting nob of a burnished, black ware, hand-made pot (Cunliffe, 1968, No. 27).

Portion of rim and neck of a handsome, burnished, light red ware pot with impressed ring and panels of dots (Cunliffe, 1968, No. 52).

Several fragments of black, hand-made burnished ware of globular (?) form with groove and dot ornament (Cunliffe, 1968, No. 24).

Some fragments of a brown, wheel-made tazza (unpublished).

A number of parts of an urn, with some rim, having a shallow rim and faceted shoulder. Brown hand-made ware striated in the shaping (Cunliffe, 1968, No. 36).

Portion of a loomweight.

Piece of hand-made burnished ware pierced with a hole for use as a spindlewhorl?

Pieces of burnished hand-made ware, black and red from unequal firing.

Some of the pottery is $\frac{5}{8}$ in thick, which may be an indication that large pots were in use on the site. Other fragments are of poor quality ware badly fired. One sherd,

if found elsewhere would be taken as a Bronze Age urn, but it was found in the lower part.

Much of the ware contains grit intentionally mixed with the clay.

Flints

Scattered throughout the lower four feet of the midden were a quantity of flakes of flint, usually black and unpatinated. Also a number of core pieces. There were a few core scrapers of ordinary type. The best of these, made of whitish flint, was found below the talus on the north side.

This account raises two questions in particular. The 'fragments of a brown, wheel-made tazza' are presumably those registered 1946.207.8, a reconstructed body sherd of a cordoned vessel. The form is virtually identical to examples from the second pit, which contains Belgic and early Roman wares. It seems therefore that the sherds may have been among those collected initially from both pits.

The main interest of this description lies in the inclusion of the haematite vessel among the 1945 finds rather than those of 1938. There cannot be any doubt of its identity since no other similar sherds are present, except one small rim in the 1945 group, which probably belongs to the same pot.

The reason for the error is that the haematite-coated sherd is marked with the 1938 number. However, the above description indicates that the marking is incorrect and several other clues support it. In 1939, R. Rainbird Clarke published a small selection of the 1938 sherds without, however, mentioning what would have been the most conspicuous find (Rainbird Clarke, 1939, Fig. 5). Secondly, index cards at the Museum refer to a haematite-coated urn among the items registered in 1946, and these sherds appear to have been responsible for the date of c.400 B.C. published in 1951 (Maynard, 1951, 210).

It follows from this discussion that some other sherds might have been attributed to 1938 when they had been excavated in 1945. Such an explanation might lie behind the fact that two distinct groups seemed to be present in the 1938 material (Cunliffe, 1968, 188-9). Yet another factor in the confusion may be that the pit excavated in 1945 had already been partially removed as early as 1938 (Maynard; 1951, 210); closer examination of the material may yet throw some light on these problems.

The inclusion of the haematite vessel with the rest of the 1945 Darmsden sherds runs counter to Professor Cunliffe's view that it can be separated from them on 'typological grounds'. On the contrary, there are good typological grounds for associating them. Also from the pit is a black-burnished bowl with furrowed neck and pendant triangles (Cunliffe, 1968, No. 24), the decoration of which lacks only punched dots inside the triangles to be a very close imitation of that on the haematite jar. Since linear decoration is very uncommon on East Anglian Iron Age pottery it may well be that imported vessels with such distinctive traits were being copied by local potters.

The dating implications of these arguments will not be discussed here, but it may be noted that the haematite jar from Darmsden has elements very much in common with Professor Cunliffe's Early All Cannings Cross group, which he dates to the 8th to 7th centuries (Cunliffe, 1974, Fig. A2).

2. Hinderclay (Cunliffe, 1968, 189).

The finds were recovered from a drainage trench which seems to have cut through a filled-in stream bed, in which were found some large timbers. Mr Basil Brown visited the site between August and October 1961 and noted in his diary: 'a box of pottery was obtained by searching and levelling the spoil heaps which contained numerous sherds. These include some Beaker

fragments, but the majority appear to be Early Iron Age' (Museum records, 1977.40.107, p. 128).

The group cannot therefore be regarded as closed, although, with the exception of two Beaker sherds, most of the pieces are very similar in fabric. From this same site, in 1955, another important group of unpublished pottery was excavated which, however, was quite different in its forms from the 1945 Darmsden assemblage, although flint-gritting was also the predominant fabric type.

3. Kettleburgh (O'Connor, 1975).

Two groups of pottery from the Deben valley were thought to have come from separate sites, although there are no grounds for this assumption from the Museum records. The evidence suggests, in fact, that only one site is concerned.

There were four acquisitions by the Museum, the first being found on Home Farm, Kettleburgh, and registered 1928.148. The second group came from a disused sandpit, located at TM 26455979 (O'Connor's Group 1). The third and fourth groups were acquired in 1948, one being given by Mrs Bowen, the other by Mrs Austin. Both were thought to come from the same site, as also was a Beaker given at the same time. The place of origin was said to be the sandpit which produced O'Connor's Group 1, which was duly recorded on the Museum's index cards. The 1928 group contained pieces of one pot, which were found to join some of those given by Mrs Bowen so that they and the others registered in 1948 made up O'Connor's Group 2. The likeliest explanation is that the sandpit was, in 1928, on land attached to Home Farm.

More important for the pottery itself, however, is the fact that the 1948 acquisition came from two different sources. The significance of this fact was noticed by the curator, Mr Guy Maynard, although overlooked by O'Connor, and the distinction was maintained in the registration and marking of the sherds.

Of the two groups, Mrs Bowen's group (group *a*) comprises: O'Connor, 1975, Fig. 65, Nos. 1-2, both of which consist of 1928 and 1948 sherds, and surely comprise the same vessel; Fig. 65, No. 4, to which another piece joins (the pieces have different surface colours, and were therefore broken before deposition; three other sherds may belong to the same vessel); Fig. 66, No. 1; Fig. 67, No. 2; two other sherds with finger impressions, not illustrated. The entire group was registered 1948.145.1-5, and Maynard was probably right in seeing the remains of five pots, more or less well represented. Whether they were urns, as he believed, is uncertain.

Mrs Austin's group (group *b*) comprises: O'Connor, 1975, Fig. 66, No. 2; Fig. 67, Nos. 1, 3-5; also another rim sherd and over 40 body sherds. The carinated bowl was wrongly marked as coming from Mrs Bowen, but was listed with the rest as being given by Mrs Austin. The group was registered 1948.145.6-12. Maynard regarded group *a* as late Bronze Age, group *b* as early Iron Age.

There is therefore reason to believe that two separate finds are included in O'Connor's Group 2, not only because of the two donors but because the forms and decoration are now distinctive. Mrs Bowen's pottery contains all the finger-marked sherds, and no examples of the carinated bowl or burnishing of the surfaces. Mrs Austin's pottery is distinguished by an absence of decoration, except vertical linear scoring and, in one case, combing.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Mr H. E. P. Spencer for discussion about the Darmsden find, and for permission to quote from his report.

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