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# ANALECTA PRAEHISTORICA LEIDENSIA 40

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## BETWEEN FORAGING AND FARMING

AN EXTENDED BROAD SPECTRUM OF PAPERS  
PRESENTED TO LEENDERT LOUWE KOOIJMANS

EDITED BY

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### 21.1 INTRODUCTION

The recent recognition of a Dutch-style Beaker grave, excavated in 2005 in advance of gravel quarrying at Upper Largie in the Kilmartin Valley, in the west of Scotland, refocuses attention on the nature of the links between Scotland and the Netherlands during the Beaker period – links that had long been recognised, as part of a broader north British phenomenon (*e.g.* Abercromby 1912; Case 1977; 2001; Childe 1935; Clarke 1970; Crichton Mitchell 1934; Needham 2005; Shepherd 1986; Sheridan 1997; Watkins/Shepherd 1980. The question of Dutch links with parts of southern England will not be considered here). The description of the Upper Largie grave, and the subsequent brief discussion of Dutch-Scottish Beaker period links presented here, are offered to Leendert Louwe Kooijmans with affection and warmest thanks for three decades' friendly correspondence and encouragement.

### 21.2 THE UPPER LARGIE BEAKER GRAVE

The gravel quarry at Upper Largie lies at the northern end of the Kilmartin Valley in Mid Argyll (fig. 21.1), an area famous for the abundance of its Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments (RCAHMS 1999). The fluvio-glacial terrace in which the quarry is located is a well-defined topographic feature: a flattish area, terminating in a sharp escarpment, overlooking the rest of the valley and itself overlooked by hills to the east and west. Quarrying activity, from the early 1980s, has necessitated several episodes of archaeological intervention and it was during the latest episode, in 2005, that a large sub-rectangular pit, surrounded by a ring-ditch with post-holes in it (fig. 21.2) and containing three Beakers and two flint artefacts, was discovered by Martin Cook of AOC Archaeology Group (Cook *et al* in prep; Pitts 2008). A second large pit, surrounded by a ring of post-holes, had been found around 80 metres to the south in 1993; this will be described below.

The pit discovered in 2005 (053 on fig. 21.2) measured 3.2 m × 1.75 m and was up to 0.63 m deep, with straight sides and a flat base; it had been cut through a pre-existing tree-throw hole, and was aligned NE–SW. Its primary fill comprised a dark brown, damp organic silty deposit – probably the remains of a plank-built wooden chamber – in

which the artefacts were found. Above this was a 0.2 m thick layer of rounded cobbles, each 0.1–0.25 m in diameter, covered by a 0.5 m thick layer of larger, flattish stones 0.2–0.7 m in length; the upper fill consisted of a mid-grey sandy clay with some stones. The positioning of the stone layers, and the fact that the larger stones tilted towards the centre of the pit, suggested that these had originally formed a small cairn over the timber chamber, and had collapsed into it when it decayed. This cairn might originally have been covered by an earthen barrow, but no traces of one were noted (except perhaps as the sandy clay overlying the large stones). The pit lay eccentrically within a partly truncated subrectangular 'ring'-ditch, measuring 5.8 × 5.7 m; the ditch width varied between 0.45 m and 0.8 m, and its maximum depth was 0.4 m. Fifteen post-holes were found within the fill of the ditch, mostly at its outer edge and cut into it, spaced between 0.1 and 0.9 m apart; there may well have been more in the truncated north-western segment of the ditch. The posts that had originally stood in these holes had been 0.2–0.5 m across; their holes were up to 0.4 m deep. Immediately to the south was an arc of four larger post-holes, 0.46–0.9 m across, which echoed but were not quite concentric with those in the ring-ditch. It is unclear whether these had formed part of the original monument, or whether they had been associated with a secondary sub-rectangular pit that had been dug immediately to the east of the ring-ditch, cutting it (132 on the plan, and see below).

The artefacts were found at the bottom of the pit, along its east and southern sides (fig. 21.2); all the pots had originally been deposited upright. The collapse of the putative timber chamber had damaged all of the pots, but to differing degrees. Pot 1 (SF 4 on fig. 21.2), found roughly mid-way along the pit on its eastern side, had had its upper part knocked in on itself as it toppled over, and had been crushed flat (fig. 21.3.1). Only around two-thirds of the pot survived. Such was the weight of (presumably damp) material on it that it warped, making physical reconstruction impossible (fig. 21.3.2), although it was possible to extrapolate its original shape on paper (fig. 21.3.3). Pot 2, found in the southwest corner of the pit, was the least damaged: its rim and much of its neck had been knocked off, and the rest of the neck experienced some abrasion, but it remained upright

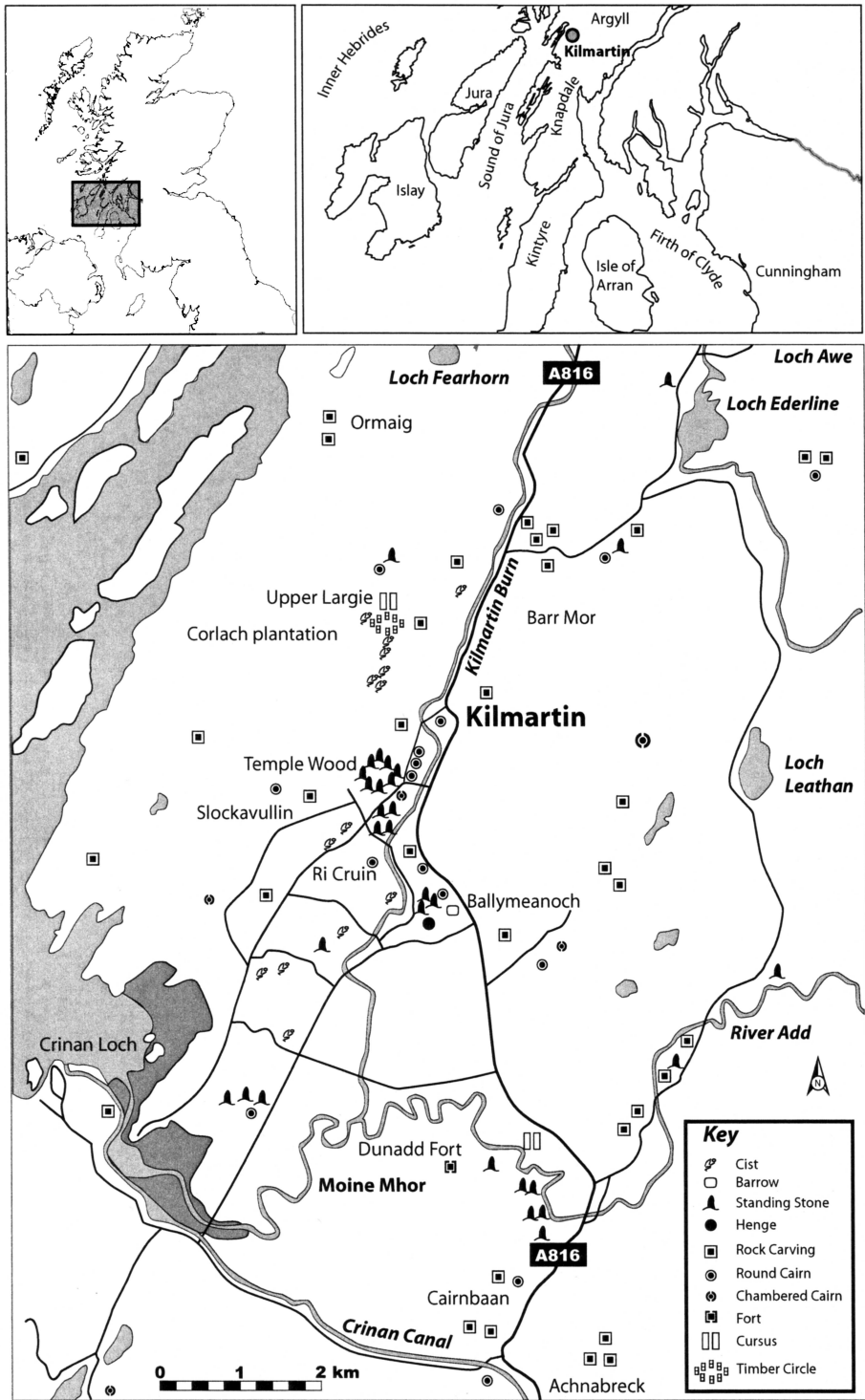


Figure 21.1 Map showing location of Upper Largie (Image: AOC Archaeology Group).

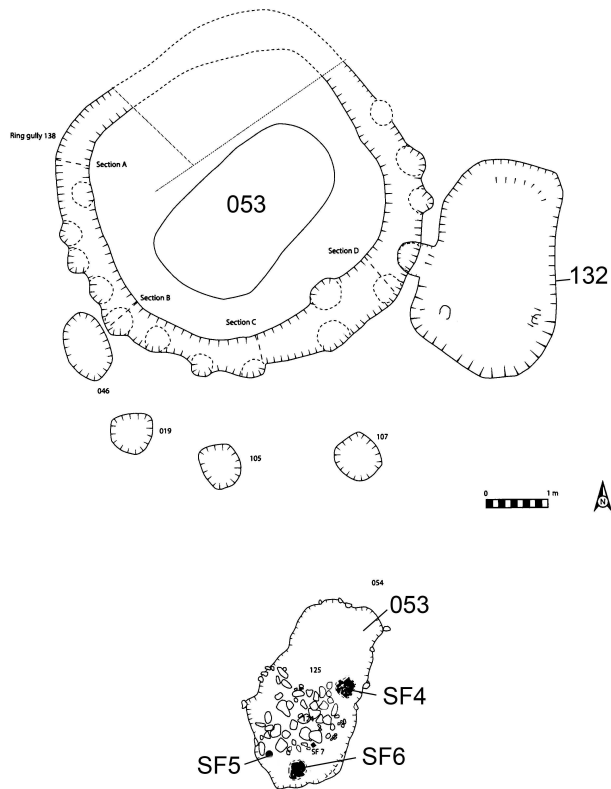


Figure 21.2 The Beaker grave at Upper Largie, and the secondary Early Bronze Age grave to the east of it. Top: overall plan and site photograph; bottom left: detailed plan of the destroyed grave chamber pit; bottom right: photo showing stones over burial chamber pit (Images: AOC Archaeology Group).

(fig. 21.2, SF 5; fig. 21.4). Pot 3, in the southeast corner, had been knocked over and crushed flat, but the sherds refitted to form the original shape of the pot (fig. 21.2, SF 6, fig. 21.5). Summary descriptions of the pots are as follows:

#### *Pot 1* (fig. 21.3)

A fairly large, thin-walled, fine-textured vessel with an S-profile, a low belly around a third of the vessel's height, and a flat base, minimally concave on its exterior. Dimensions: estimated height *c.* 250 mm; estimated rim and belly diameters *c.* 180 mm and *c.* 210 mm respectively; base diameter 96 mm; wall thickness *c.* 6–10 mm. The exterior is decorated with 13 bands of horizontal comb-impressed lines, made with a short comb (*c.* 7.5 mm long); all except the bottom two bands comprise three lines, the band just above the base comprising a single line and the one above that, three to four lines. A pair of discrete comb impressions lies between the topmost two bands. The exterior colour is basically reddish, with buff and grey areas. Inclusions are very sparse and generally under 5 mm long; they comprise



locally-available stone plus a very little grog. Extensive organic residue traces hint at the pot's former contents and are currently being analysed. Stylistically, this pot is in the Maritime Bell Beaker tradition, although not a 'classic' example. According to the latest typological scheme for British Beakers (Needham 2005), it could be described as a Low-Carinated Beaker (with Maritime-Derived decoration), although it also resembles his 'low-bellied S-profile' Beakers (*ibid.*, 179). It would arguably fall within 'step 1' or 'step 2' of Lanting and Van der Waals' scheme for British Beakers (1972), and within their type 2<sup>1a</sup>, according to their 1976 scheme for Dutch Beakers (Lanting/Van der Waals 1976).

#### *Pot 2* (fig. 21.4)

A smaller, slightly squatter vessel than Pot 1 but nevertheless thin-walled and fine-textured, with an S-profile, a low belly at a third of the vessel's height, and a flat base, minimally concave on its exterior. Height 128 mm; estimated rim and belly diameters *c.* 130 mm and *c.* 123 mm respectively; base diameter 68–70 mm; wall thickness *c.* 5–10 mm. The exterior

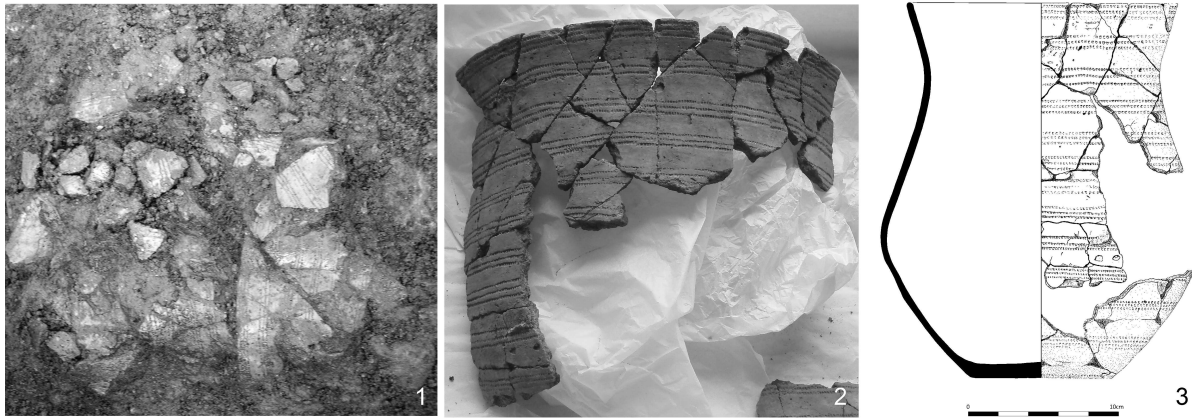


Figure 21.3 Upper Largie Pot 1: in the ground, partly reconstructed and reconstructed on paper (Images: Roddy Regan; Alison Sheridan; Graeme Carruthers).



Figure 21.4 Upper Largie Pot 2: in the ground, partly reconstructed and reconstructed on paper (Images: AOC Archaeology Group; Alison Sheridan; Graeme Carruthers).

is decorated with four bands, each comprising short diagonal lines of comb impressions in a herringbone arrangement, and with thin horizontal lines of twisted cord impression at the top, bottom and middle of each band. The exterior is orange-buff and grey-buff. Inclusions are similar to those found in Pot 1, including sparse grog; there are also three accidental impressions of barley grains. This pot is a Cord-Zoned Maritime (CZM) Beaker (a low-bellied S-profile Beaker, according to Needham's scheme; Lanting/Van der Waals 'step 1'/type 2<sup>la</sup>). According to Lanting and Van der Waals' Dutch Beaker scheme, the use of cord for the horizontal lines is an early feature of this type of Beaker (1976, 9). Needham concurs, adding that CZM Beakers represent "an early horizon after the initial corded Ware/Maritime Beaker fusion...probably around the middle of the 3rd millennium BC" (Needham 2005, 200).

#### Pot 3 (fig. 21.5)

Intermediate in size between Pots 1 and 2, this vessel shares with them its thin walls, fine texture and S-shaped profile; its low belly just below a third of the vessel's height, and its flat base, minimally concave on its exterior. Height 165 mm; rim and belly diameters *c.* 180 mm and *c.* 210 mm respectively; base diameter 96 mm; wall thickness *c.* 6–10 mm. The exterior is decorated with horizontal lines of twisted cord impressions, extending from immediately below the rim to immediately above the base. The exterior is a light brick-red colour with buff patches; inclusions match those of Pots 1 and 2. This is an All-Over-Cord Beaker (Needham: low-bellied S-profile; Lanting/Van der Waals: step 1/type 2<sup>lib</sup>).

The two flint artefacts, found near Pot 3, comprise a small knife of yellow-brown flint (mistakenly described as a hollow-based arrowhead in Pitts 2008) and a double-ended



Figure 21.5 Upper Largie Pot 3: in the ground, partly reconstructed and reconstructed on paper (Images: Roddy Regan; Alison Sheridan; Graeme Carruthers).

fabricator or strike-a-light of light grey flint (fig. 21.6); both had been used (Saville pers. comm.).

Although no trace of human remains was spotted during the excavation, and it had not been deemed worthwhile to undertake phosphate analysis due to the freely-draining nature of the gravels, there seems little doubt that this had been a grave. As to the likely disposition, age and sex of the body, all that can be said is that the pit was sufficiently large to have accommodated an adult and that since, in the Netherlands, strike-a-lights and knives appear to be associated with men in Bell Beaker-associated graves (Drenth/Lohof 2005, 443), it may well be that this had been the grave of an adult male.

A piece of hazel charcoal from the organic-rich fill at the bottom of the pit (*i.e.* at the level of the artefacts) produced a radiocarbon date of  $3915 \pm 40$  BP (SUERC-15119, 2470-2340 cal BC at  $1\sigma$ , 2570-2280 cal BC at  $2\sigma$ , calibrated using OxCal v.3.10). Similar dates were obtained from oak charcoal found in one of the post-pipes within the ring-ditch, and from the fill of the ring-ditch: SUERC-15120,  $3900 \pm 35$  BP, 2470-2340 cal BC at  $1\sigma$ , 2480-2280 cal BC at  $2\sigma$ , and SUERC-15121,  $3880 \pm 35$  BP, 2460-2300 cal BC at  $1\sigma$ , 2470-2210 cal BC at  $2\sigma$  respectively. This dating of the grave to the 25th or 24th century BC makes this one of the earliest Beaker findspots in Britain and Ireland.

### 21.3 THE SECONDARY GRAVE AND A NEARBY COMPARANDUM FOR THE BEAKER GRAVE

Cutting into the eastern edge of the ring-ditch was a second sub-rectangular pit (132 on fig. 21.2), measuring  $3.5 \times 2.1 \times 0.76$  m and aligned NNE-SSW. This, too, is believed to have contained a plank-built wooden chamber or coffin; once

again, no traces of human remains were found, but the presence of a pot in its primary fill strongly points to its having been a grave. The pot, which contained ten pebbles that may well have been deposited as amulets, is a footed Food Vessel, unique in showing a combination of features typical of both Irish and Yorkshire Food Vessels (see fig. 21.7 and Cook *et al.* in prep and Pitts 2008 for details). Although the pit produced no radiocarbon-datable material, it is most likely to date – on the basis of a recent comprehensive study of Irish Food Vessel chronology (Brindley 2007) – to 2160-2080 BC. Its significance is discussed below.

Around 80 m to the south of these graves was found a large sub-circular pit, 6.8 m in diameter and up to 1.8 m deep, orientated NE-SW and surrounded by an irregular ring, around 11 m in diameter, of at least 17 definite and probable post-holes (fig. 21.8). Although larger than the Beaker grave, this shares many features in common, including the suspected former presence of a wooden chamber. The function of the pit as a grave can only be conjectural, although the discovery of a deposit of cremated remains, presumably human, beneath a slab in one of the ring-pits indicates the use of at least part of the structure for burial. The only artefactual finds comprise pieces of chopped wood, found with unworked waterlogged wood (mostly roundwood) in the fill of a re-cut of the pit; these provided a radiocarbon *terminus ante quem* for the pit of  $3350 \pm 45$  BP (AA-43010, 1730-1530 cal BC at  $1\sigma$ , 1750-1520 cal BC at  $2\sigma$ ). Oak charcoal from two of the posts in the ring produced *termini post quos* dates around and shortly after the turn of the millennium (AA-48050-1,  $3570 \pm 45$  BP and  $3645 \pm 45$  BP, 2020-1820/2040-1770 cal BC at  $1\sigma$  and  $2\sigma$  and 2130-1940/2140-1890 cal BC respectively). *Prima facie* these dates suggest that this pit and ring was



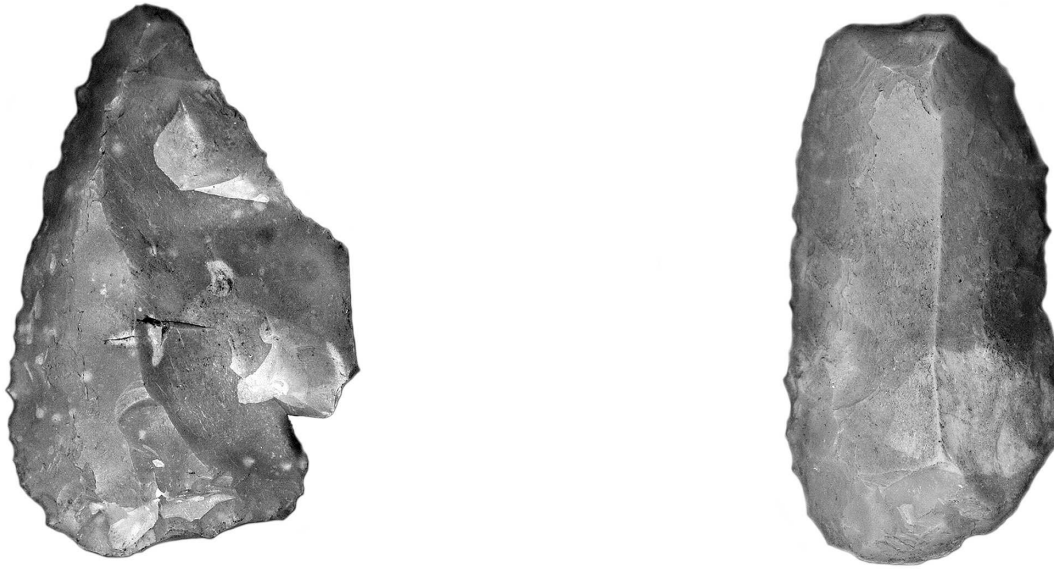


Figure 21.6 Flint artefacts from the Upper Largie Beaker grave: left, knife; right, fabricator or strike-a-light (Images: AOC Archaeology Group)

constructed several centuries after the Beaker grave, and, as with the Food Vessel grave, they indicate a continuity (or revival) of the practice of using timber funerary structures at a time when burial in stone cists had become the norm, both in the Kilmartin Valley and elsewhere in northern Britain.

#### 21.4 THE UPPER LARGIE BEAKER GRAVE AS A DUTCH-STYLE GRAVE

The Beaker grave at Upper Largie represents a striking novelty in funerary practice and associated material culture, owing nothing to pre-existing traditions in Scotland. While it stands out as being different from most Scottish Beaker graves – insofar as it is not a stone cist grave – several of its features immediately recall Dutch funerary practice of the mid-third millennium BC (cf. Drenth/Lohof 2005, fig. 19.7; Lanting/Van der Waals 1976). The practice of burying the deceased in a timber chamber or coffin in a pit, and surrounding that with a ring-ditch, with posts in its fill (probably to screen the grave prior to the erection, in some cases, of a covering round barrow: Drenth/Lohof 2005, 440), is characteristic of the Single Grave Culture which preceded the Bell Beaker Culture, but whose traditions persisted into the latter, in the Netherlands. While individual elements of this rite are known from other parts of the Beaker-using world – individual inhumation within a grave pit, sometimes in a wooden structure and sometimes with a surrounding ring-ditch, is widespread in central Europe and along the Rhine, for example (Heyd 2007) – nevertheless the specific

combination of features seen at Upper Largie, along with the ceramic association, points forcefully to the Lower Rhine Basin (see Lanting/Van der Waals 1976 for examples, including two AOC-associated graves at Anlo. Here, the ring-ditches and post-rings had not been covered by a barrow). The only difference seems to lie in the orientation of the grave pit: the NE–SW orientation at Upper Largie differs from both the E–W orientation of ‘classic’ Single Grave Protruding Foot Beaker (PFB) graves and from the NW–SE ( $\pm 45^\circ$ ) orientation of All Over Ornamented and early Bell Beaker graves (Lanting/Van der Waals 1976, 44–45). However, NE–SW orientated graves are not unknown, as the PFB grave from Hijkerveld indicates (*ibid.*, fig. 30).

As indicated above, the ceramic assemblage also finds strong parallels in the Lower Rhine. Close parallels can be cited for individual vessels – with the CZM Pot 2 resembling those from Mol and Grossenbornholt, for example (*ibid.*, figs 22 and 24) – and for the techniques of manufacture, which included scraping, wet-smoothing, adding modest amounts of grog, and slapping the base to prevent sticking and cracking (cf. Hammersmith 2005; Van der Leeuw 1976). In origin, all three of the Upper Largie Beakers can be regarded as the product of interaction between users of Maritime Beakers and Corded Ware, with the Middle and Lower Rhine forming a key area for this interaction (Needham 2005, 178–179 and fig. 3). While similar combinations of the general types are attested elsewhere (*e.g.* in Brittany: *ibid.*, 179), the closest parallels are to be found in the Lower (and

Middle) Rhine. Furthermore, the practice of interring multiple Beakers with a single individual is also attested in the Netherlands, as at Mol; Lanting and Van der Waals have observed that “Deposition of two or more vessels in PFB graves is to our knowledge limited to the later PFB graves... The tendency increases with AOO graves but seems to decrease already in early BB times (too few finds are really known from this period)” (1976, 63). This practice is rare in Britain, with almost all examples belonging to the earliest period of Beaker use, as at Biggar Common, South Lanarkshire (Sheridan 1997). In terms of the chronological relationship between the Upper Largie assemblage (and grave) and its Dutch *comparanda*, a date in the 25th century BC for the latter – and therefore broad contemporaneity with Upper Largie – seems plausible. This holds good irrespective of whether one follows Lanting and Van der Plicht in dating the first use of Maritime Bell Beakers in the Netherlands to between 2500 and 2400 BC (2002, 3.6.1.1), or accepts Drenth and Hogestijn’s view that they were already in use – alongside late PF Beakers and All-Over-Ornamented (including AOC) Beakers – during the final phase of the Single Grave Culture, 2600-2500 BC (2001, 312).

It is hard to resist the conclusion, therefore, that the Upper Largie grave is a Dutch-style grave with an assemblage of Beakers that could easily be ‘lost’ among those found in the Netherlands. We shall, regrettably, never know whether its putative occupant had been a Dutchman, since no trace of the tooth enamel that could (through strontium and oxygen isotope analysis) have indicated his origin has survived. However, this grave is not the only Dutch-style Beaker grave in Scotland. The following sections will briefly describe other ‘exotic’ early Scottish Beaker graves, plus other evidence for Dutch links during the centuries of Beaker use in Scotland.

#### 21.5 OTHER ‘EXOTIC’ EARLY SCOTTISH BEAKER GRAVES

While most Beaker graves in Scotland take the form of stone cists set into the ground, with or without a covering mound, a small number feature cist-free pits, with traces of a wooden coffin or chamber having been noted in some cases. The Beakers found in these have almost all been of early types, with clear international characteristics; and, as with the Upper Largie grave, a Dutch connection can be proposed for most or all of these.

The most similar of these to the Upper Largie grave was found at Newmill, Perth & Kinross, in east central Scotland, in 1977 (fig. 21.9; Watkins/Shepherd 1980). Here, a thin organic coffin, round-ended and U-shaped in section, was found in a pit orientated roughly E–W (actually ESE–WNW), and surrounded by a penannular ring-ditch around 6.3 m in internal diameter; there was no sign of any barrow (or of the upcast from the ring-ditch), although a heap of

very large pebbles overlay the grave pit, forming a modest cairn. Several post- and stake-holes were found in the general vicinity, but did not form a ring and may well post-date the grave. No sign of the body had survived; here, as at Upper Largie, the grave had been cut into gravel. The grave goods (fig. 21.9) comprised an S-profiled All-Over-Ornamented Beaker (type 2<sup>IIc</sup>) with herringbone decoration, made by stabbing and dragging a spatula across the surface, together with a fabricator and a flake knife, both of flint and both used before deposition. Although undated, this grave may well have been roughly contemporary with the Upper Largie grave, falling within the late Single Grave Culture (Drenth/Hogestijn 2001, 313).

A further grave with strong Dutch connections was found dug into an existing Early Neolithic long barrow at Biggar Common, South Lanarkshire, in the early 1990s (fig. 21.9; Johnston 1997). This, too, was orientated roughly E–W; the shallow pit was edged with boulders, and had been covered with small to medium-sized angular stones. Again, no human remains survived, and there was no radiocarbon-datable material. Within the pit was found a crushed Low-Carinated Beaker, with bands of horizontal comb-impressed and incised lines (Sheridan 1997). This vessel (labelled ‘1’ on fig. 21.9), with its clear Maritime-influenced design, is comparable with Lanting and van der Waals’ type 2<sup>Ia</sup> Beakers. Fragments of a small undecorated dish (‘3’) were found both within the grave pit and among the stones covering it; and a small cord-decorated vessel (‘2’) was found in pieces on this ‘cairn’ at its western end. This last vessel, with its cord-impressed decoration over the upper half of its body, is reminiscent of some PF Beakers; however, according to Lanting and van der Waals (1976, 5), by the time that Beakers comparable to the Low-Carinated vessel had begun to be used in the Netherlands, cord-decorated PF Beakers had fallen out of use, their place being taken by herringbone or diagonal-line designs executed using a spatula. Nevertheless, the assemblage could be expected to date to around the 25th century BC, on the basis of Dutch *comparanda* for the Low-Carinated Beaker. Lithic finds comprised a small stone axehead, a scraper, three flakes and one fragment of flint, a flake and a fragment of chert, a possible quartz core, and two pebbles of white quartzite and agate.

Off the west coast of Scotland, at Sorisdale on the isle of Coll (Inner Hebrides), a further E–W orientated shallow grave pit was found in 1976 (fig. 21.9; Ritchie/Crawford 1978). This contained the partly-disturbed skeleton of a young adult (aged 17-25) of indeterminate sex, with a Low-Carinated AOC Beaker beside his/her head. This grave lay beside the remains of a house, of which only the curved east end survived; a discontinuous midden beside the house produced sherds of a later style of pottery, of a kind seen in Early Bronze Age settlements elsewhere in the Hebrides.



Figure 21.7 Footed Food Vessel from the secondary, Early Bronze Age grave at Upper Largie (Image: National Museums Scotland).

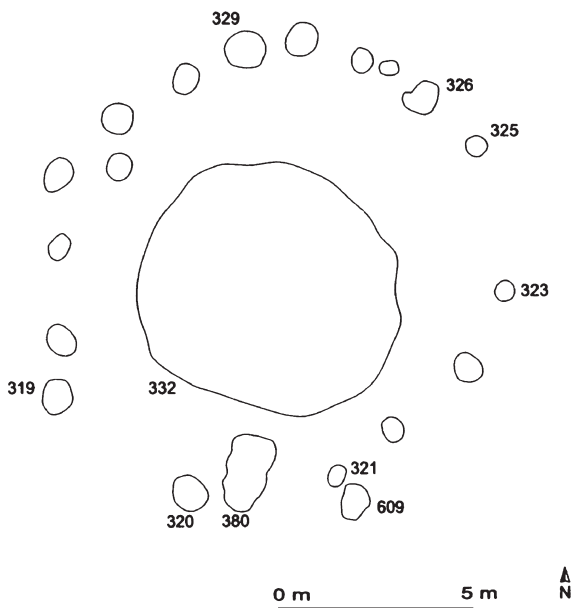
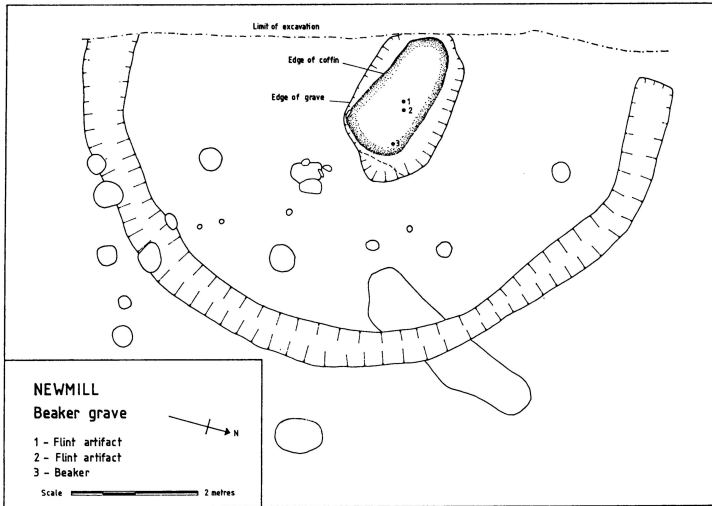


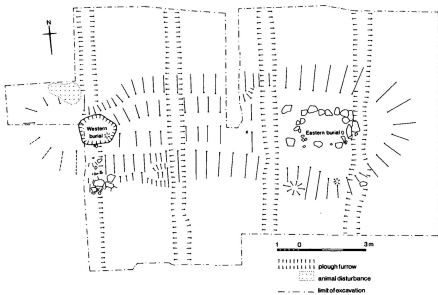
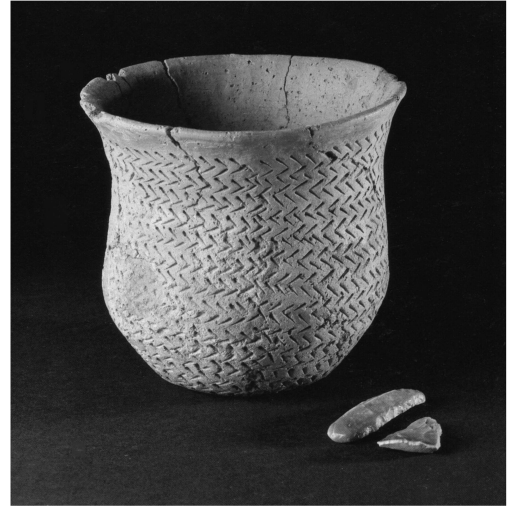
Figure 21.8 The second possible Beaker grave at Upper Largie (Image: AOC Archaeology Group).

The excavators reported that the stratigraphic relationship between the grave, the house and the midden could not be ascertained. The skeleton has recently produced a radiocarbon date of  $3879 \pm 32$  BP (OxA-14722, 2460-2280 cal BC at  $1\sigma$ , 2470-2230 cal BC at  $2\sigma$ ; Sheridan 2007), which is closely comparable to the dates obtained for the Upper Largie Beaker grave. Recent isotopic analysis of tooth enamel from this individual, undertaken as part of a nationwide research project, the *Beaker People Project* (Jay/Richards 2007; Parker Pearson *et al.* 2007), has revealed that the person had not spent the first few years of his/her life on Coll, but had come from an area of young Cenozoic or Cretaceous geology; the Netherlands cannot be ruled out as a possibility, and this is currently being investigated (Janet Montgomery pers comm). If the imminent oxygen isotope analyses confirm a Dutch origin for this individual, this would constitute the first direct evidence for a Beaker period immigrant in Scotland, comparable in age (although not in ultimate origin) to the 'Amesbury Archer' in Wiltshire, southern England (Fitzpatrick 2002).

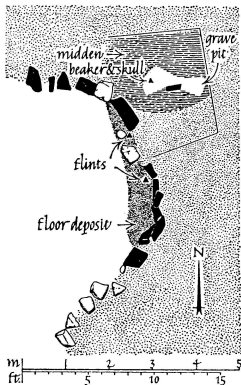
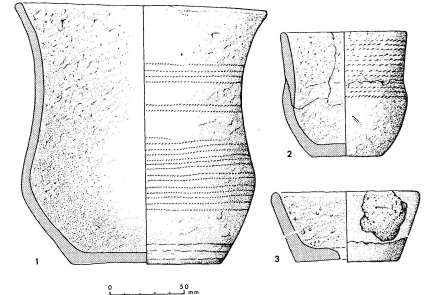
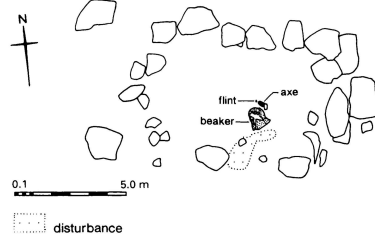
The other sites to be considered in this regard (fig. 21.10) – all lacking human remains, but suspected to have been



1



2



3

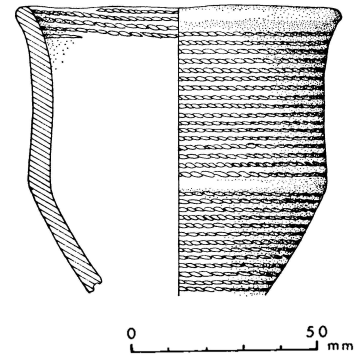
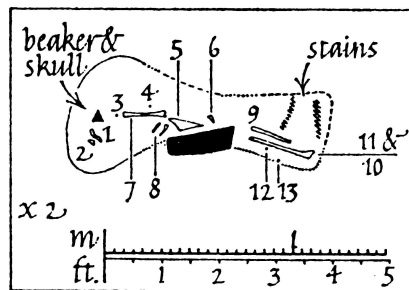


Figure 21.9 Other Scottish early Beaker graves with possible Dutch connections (Images: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and NMS):  
 1 Newmill, Perth & Kinross  
 2 Biggar Common, South Lanarkshire  
 3 Sorisdale, Coll.

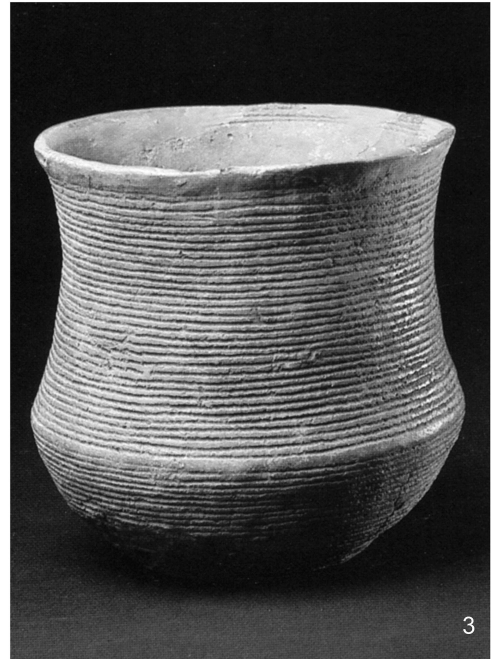
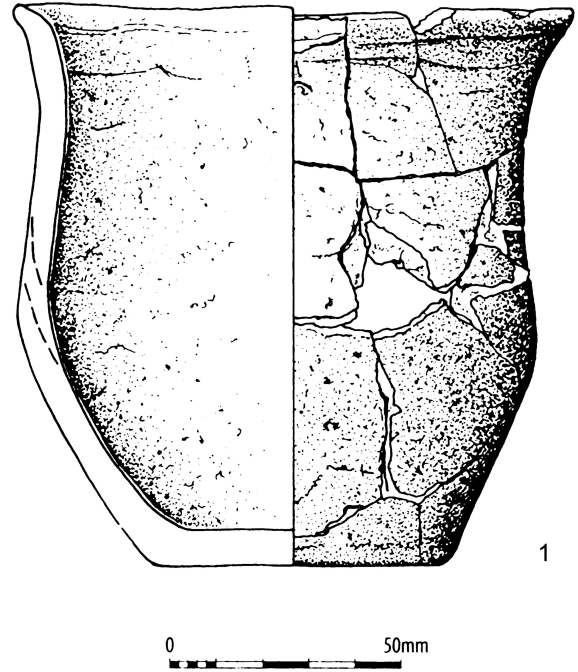
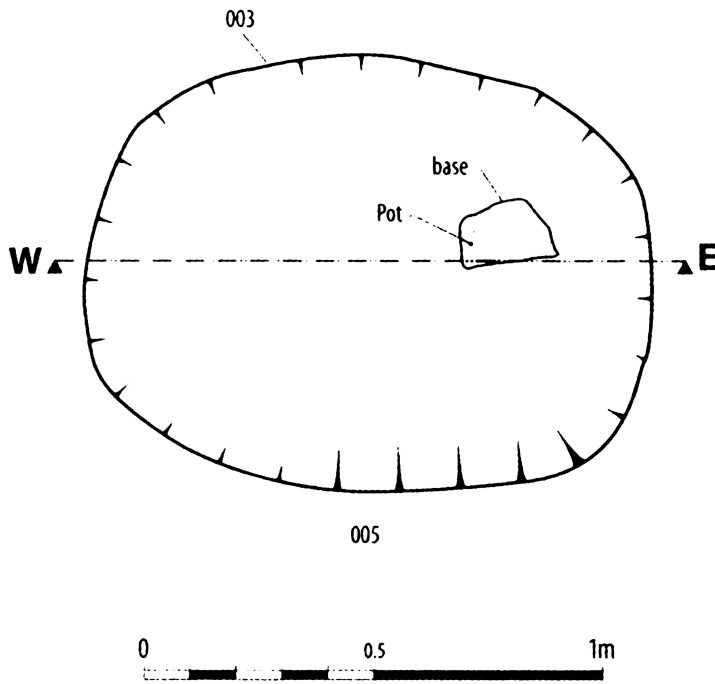


Figure 21.10 Further Scottish early Beaker graves with possible Dutch connections:  
(Images: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and NMS)

1 Beechwood Park, Highland

2 Rhynie, Aberdeenshire

3 Bathgate, West Lothian.

graves – comprise an E–W orientated pit containing an undecorated Low-Carinated Beaker at Beechwood Park, Inverness, in northeast Scotland (Suddaby/Sheridan 2006) and a mostly-destroyed pit containing a sinuous-profiled, loosely-decorated AOC Beaker at Barflat, Rhynie, Aberdeenshire (again in northeast Scotland: Cook/Scott 2005). It is likely that two Low-Carinated AOC Beakers (fig. 21.10), found in a sand quarry at Bathgate, West Lothian, in the Central Belt of Scotland, had also come from grave pits, which would have been unrecognised at the time of the pots' discovery (Mann 1906, 369-71).

This brief review does not purport to cover all the finds of early Beakers in Scotland, or to go into the question of the evolution of Beaker funerary practices; a brief review of the evidence, highlighting the very wide distribution of AOC Beakers in Scotland, has already been presented elsewhere (Sheridan 2007). Suffice it to say that, thanks to campaigns of radiocarbon dating in Scotland (*ibid.*), it is clear that the practice of burial in a stone cist was adopted soon after the appearance of these non-cist graves (*e.g.* at Dornoch Nursery, in the far northeast of Scotland: *ibid.*, 109); and that, as indicated above, the practice of using timber chambers or coffins persisted after cist burial had become popular (*e.g.* at Kintore, Aberdeenshire: here a timber chamber had been covered with a stone cover: Cook pers comm).

#### 21.6 OTHER EVIDENCE FOR DUTCH BEAKER PERIOD LINKS

Previous commentators have argued for Beaker period links between Scotland and the Netherlands on the basis of metal finds, as well as ceramic finds (*e.g.* Case 1977; Coles 1969; Cowie 1988; Shepherd 1986; cf. O'Connor 2004). Here a distinction needs to be made between the introduction of individual copper items during the earliest period of Beaker use, and the introduction of the practice of metal *working* – involving both copper and gold – at a later date. The latter implies a maintenance, or re-establishment, of connections across the North Sea. (The question of the introduction of bronze metallurgy will be touched on briefly below.)

Regarding the earliest, 'pioneering' period of Beaker use, the artefact which has been cited as having strong (albeit not exclusive) links with the Netherlands is the tanged copper 'dagger' (*e.g.* Lanting/Van der Plicht 2002). (As Humphrey Case has pointed out (2004, 205), these objects are generally more likely to have been used as knives than as daggers; henceforth they will be referred to as 'blades'.) Ian Shepherd has emphasised the marked similarity between the broad tanged blade from East Pitdousie, Auchterless, Aberdeenshire, and Dutch examples including those from Exloo and Ede – the latter associated with a Maritime Bell Beaker of 2<sup>nd</sup> type (Shepherd 1986, 8; cf. Cowie 1988, fig. 6 and Lanting/Van der Waals 1976, fig. 25). Compositional analysis

of the Auchterless blade, along with another Aberdeenshire blade from Inverurie, has shown it to have been made of high-nickel 'Bell Beaker-metal', whose ultimate source may lie in the copper mines of Asturias; importation of these blades from the Netherlands, where 'Bell Beaker-metal' artefacts of similar (but not identical) composition have been found, is a possibility (Needham 2002; 2004; see these references for other finds of 'Bell Beaker-metal' in Scotland). A further early Beaker find may be that of a fragmentary tanged copper blade, found in a cist along with an AOC Beaker at Salen, on the Hebridean island of Mull (Ritchie 1997, 54). However, this evidence must be treated with caution as it is clear that AOC Beakers continued to be made for some time after their initial appearance (as demonstrated by a date of 3775 ± 35 BP, SUERC-5299, 2280-2130/2300-2040 cal BC for a non-funerary find at Eweford, East Lothian: Sheridan 2007, 116). That these blades continued to be made or used for some considerable time is indicated by the fragmentary example from Tavelty, Aberdeenshire, dated (from the associated skeleton) to 3710 ± 70 BP (GU-2169, 2210-1980/2300-1890 cal BC: *ibid.*, 114; O'Connor 2004, 206).

That the users of early Beakers in Scotland did not rely solely on Continental imports of metal objects is suggested by the presence of flat axeheads made of Irish copper, almost certainly from the Ross Island mine in County Kerry, southwest Ireland (Needham 2004, fig. 19.4). While none is directly dated, and while the use of copper artefacts is known to have continued after the inception of bronze metallurgy in northeast Scotland around 2200 BC (*ibid.*), some, at least, may have been imported during this initial, 'pioneering' phase of Beaker period activity. Given the pivotal location of the Kilmartin Valley during the Neolithic period and from the 22<sup>nd</sup> century in the movement of Irish artefacts up the Great Glen into northeast Scotland (Cressey/Sheridan 2003), can one envisage the Upper Largie 'pioneer' as a very early entrepreneur, facilitating the import of Irish axeheads into Scotland? If this had been the case, it begs the question of how the links with the early Beaker metalworkers in southwest Ireland had been forged.

As far as the introduction of metal *working* (as opposed to imported metal artefacts) to Scotland is concerned, Shepherd has argued (1986) that a second episode or phase of immigration from the Netherlands was responsible, with Dutch metalworkers settling in specific parts of northeast Scotland. He cites evidence such as the resemblance between the pair of copper neck rings or diadems from Lumphanan, Aberdeenshire, to the Veluwe Beaker period gold diadem from Bennekom (Shepherd 1986, fig. 8; cf. O'Connor 2004, 207). If Shepherd is correct, then the earliest date at which this could have occurred is *c.* 2300 BC, since this is believed to be the earliest date at which metalworking commenced in the Netherlands (Butler/Fokkens 2005). Support for this is

given by O'Connor and Needham's reconsiderations of Scottish Chalcolithic metalwork (2004); and indeed this is a time when a large number of Beakers were deposited in northeast Scotland (Sheridan 2007). However, whether the ceramic evidence supports this view of a strong link with the Netherlands at this time is a question that needs further consideration, including a detailed comparison of Beakers in this part of Scotland and the Netherlands. At present, although certain vessels from northeast Scotland (and indeed elsewhere in northern Britain) approach classic Dutch Veluwe Beakers in their form (*e.g.* Shepherd 1986, fig. 20), the similarity is unconvincing; instead, close attention to possible links with *early* Veluwe Beakers needs to be paid.

Whatever was the case as regards the Chalcolithic introduction of metalworking to Scotland, it appears that subsequent North Sea links – probably with central Europe, whether or not mediated through the Netherlands – may well have stimulated the development of Scotland's earliest bronze manufacturing 'industry', the 'Migdale-Marnoch' phenomenon, around 2200 BC (Needham 2004). This is strongly suggested by the style of some artefacts in the hoard from Migdale in northeast Scotland, which echoes Straubing Culture fashions in Bavaria. This hoard has been dated, from wood inside one of its constituent tubular sheet bronze beads, to 3655 ± 75 BP, OxA-4659, 2140-1930 cal BC at 1σ, 2300-1750 cal BC at 2σ (Sheridan *et al.* 2003).

## 21.7 CONCLUSIONS

The fact that the early Beaker period graves described above represent such a striking novelty within mid-third millennium Scotland, and point so forcefully towards the Netherlands as the place of origin for their occupants, raises the very real possibility that we are dealing with Dutch immigrants during or around the 25th century BC. Of course, the idea of incoming 'Beaker people', for so long unfashionable in Britain, has been revived by the evidence from the famous 'Amesbury Archer' in Wiltshire, who appears to have been an immigrant from central Europe, possibly Bavaria (Fitzpatrick 2002). The isotope evidence from another Wessex grave, the so-called 'Boscombe Bowmen' collective Beaker grave in Wiltshire, also indicates that the three adults that were present had been immigrants. Although Wales has been suggested as a place of origin, Brittany seems equally or more plausible (Montgomery/Evans pers. comm.; Evans *et al.* 2006; [www.wessexarch.co.uk/projects/wiltshire/boscombe](http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/projects/wiltshire/boscombe)). Furthermore, the evidence from the copper mine at Ross Island in southwest Ireland (O'Brien 2004) points to expert metalworkers having moved from continental Europe to prospect, then exploit, the rich copper resources of southwest Ireland. Clearly, then, Beaker immigrants to different parts of Britain and Ireland seem to have come from different parts of Continental Europe. New discoveries

and research will no doubt clarify, and perhaps complicate, the picture. Needham's model (2005) of an initial phase around the mid-third millennium, when a few immigrants were present and when the beaker 'package' of novelties represented a rare and exotic opportunity to find new ways of gaining and expressing power, seems plausible.

The question of why these Continental immigrants came remains hotly debated. Metal prospecting seems the most plausible explanation in the case of the Ross Island miners; but, as Stuart Needham has pointed out (2007), metal prospecting need not have been the only reason why people came. While the multi-faceted funerary identity of the 'Amesbury Archer' had included 'metal worker', to judge from some of his grave goods, it is a moot point whether he had come to Wessex looking for metal. It has been suggested (by Timothy Darvill) that he had been drawn to the area by the fame (and alleged healing properties) of Stonehenge. The undertaking of dangerous, long-distance journeys by the elite has long been acknowledged as a means of enhancing one's power, and Needham has argued (2007) that this, rather than some nebulous *Wanderlust*, may have lain behind some of the journeys undertaken at this period.

Whether Dutch people came to Scotland (and elsewhere in Britain) to look for metals, or as a strategy to enhance their power 'back home', or for some other reason, will continue to be debated. Similarly, the question of whether we are dealing with more than one episode or phase of Beaker period contact with the Netherlands needs to be investigated further as a distinct possibility. As far as the Upper Largie individual is concerned, however, we can say that he was not alone. Quite apart from the fact that other similarly-minded people must have been responsible for burying him in the traditional Dutch fashion, and for making the pots that accompanied him, we can point to a couple of other finds of similarly-early Beaker pottery in the area (namely sherds of a Maritime Bell Beaker with cockle-shell impressions, and an AOC Beaker: Clarke 1970, fig. 80 and p. 529). Was Upper Largie Man drawn to the Kilmartin Valley by the fame of the pre-existing sacred sites there? Or by rumours (well-founded) of copper deposits in the area? Was he involved (through some unknown means) in establishing the northward flow of southwest Irish copper artefacts (*e.g.* axeheads) to other parts of Scotland? We simply do not know. However, what we can say is that this individual was sufficiently notable, within the Kilmartin Valley, for a subsequent important person – who almost certainly *was* involved in the northward movement of Irish copper – to be buried immediately beside him, in a similar wooden chamber, during the 22nd century. And the changes that were wrought in Britain and Ireland by the introduction of the 'Beaker package' were to have a profound influence on subsequent developments there.

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