Observation of an excited $B^\pm c$ meson state with the ATLAS detector


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Observation of an Excited $B_c^{\pm}$ Meson State with the ATLAS Detector

G. Aad et al.*

(ATLAS Collaboration)

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A search for excited states of the $B_c^{\pm}$ meson is performed using 4.9 fb$^{-1}$ of 7 TeV and 19.2 fb$^{-1}$ of 8 TeV $pp$ collision data collected by the ATLAS experiment at the LHC. A new state is observed through its hadronic transition to the ground state, with the latter detected in the decay $B_c^{\pm} \rightarrow J/\psi \pi^{\mp}$. The state appears in the $m(B_c^{\pm} \pi^{\mp})-m(B_c^{\mp})-2m(\pi^{\mp})$ mass difference distribution with a significance of 5.2 standard deviations. The mass of the observed state is $6842 \pm 5 \pm 5$ MeV, where the first error is statistical and the second is systematic. The mass and decay of this state are consistent with expectations for the second $S$-wave state of the $B_c^{2\pm}$ meson, $B_c^{2\pm}(2S)$.

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* Full author list given at the end of the article.

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mass of the $B_c^\pm$ candidate, $m(B_c^\pm \pi\pi)$ is the invariant mass of the $B_c^\pm$ candidate combined with two charged pion candidates, and $m(\pi^\pm)$ is the charged pion mass [11]. The $B_c^\pm$ candidates are reconstructed through the decay $B_c^\pm \rightarrow J/\psi(\mu^+\mu^-)\pi^\pm$. Since hadronic decays of excited $B$-meson states have no observable displacement from the $pp$ interaction point, these candidates are then combined with two charged pion candidates, both originating at the corresponding $pp$ interaction point. The mass difference ($Q$) distribution is formed and analyzed in the range 0–700 MeV.

The $B_c^\pm$ selection criteria for the events are optimized separately for 7 and 8 TeV data using the corresponding Monte Carlo (MC) samples, produced in the ATLAS simulation framework [12,13]. Differences between the 7 and 8 TeV selection criteria are due to the higher $\sqrt{s}$ and the number of simultaneous $pp$ interactions per bunch crossing, hereafter called pileup. The increase in the $B_c^\pm$ production cross section between the 7 and 8 TeV MC samples is approximately 3%.

The PYTHIA 6 and 8 MC generators [14,15], tuned for the LHC conditions [16], are used along with a dedicated PYTHIA extension for $B_c^\pm$ meson production, based on calculations from Ref. [17]. The following MC samples are used to optimize the event selection criteria (charge conjugates implied): $B_c^+\rightarrow J/\psi\pi^+, J/\psi K^+, J/\psi\rho^+(p^-\rightarrow \pi^0\pi^-), J/\psi\mu^+\nu, J/\psi\pi^0\pi^+, J/\psi\pi^+\pi^+\pi^-$, as well as $J/\psi X$ produced inclusively or from $b\bar{b}$. The MC simulated events are treated in exactly the same way as the collision data, and the same analysis selections are always applied. The exclusive ($B_c^\pm$) channels are generated with PYTHIA 6, and inclusive ($J/\psi X$) channels are generated with PYTHIA 8.

This analysis involves several steps. First the $J/\psi$ candidates are formed as described below. Then a pion track candidate from the same vertex is added to form a $B_c^\pm$ meson candidate. Finally, the $B_c^\pm$ (28) candidates are formed by adding two pion candidates originating at the primary vertex (PV); the selection of the primary vertex is defined below.

The $J/\psi$ candidates are reconstructed from pairs of oppositely charged muons. These pairs are fitted to a common vertex with the procedure described in Ref. [18]. The following requirements are applied to each $J/\psi$ candidate:

(i) The $p_T$ of the higher-$p_T$ muon candidate must be above 6 GeV, and the $p_T$ of the lower-$p_T$ muon candidate must be above 4 GeV; these are approximately the $p_T$ values for which the trigger is fully efficient. (ii) The $J/\psi$ vertex fit chi-square per degree of freedom $\chi^2/NDOF < 15$ (this selection keeps more than 99.9% of the candidates, and is included only to remove spurious dimuon combinations). (iii) The invariant mass resolution of the $J/\psi$ depends on the direction of the muons, with more forward candidates showing poorer resolutions. The sample is split into three categories and selection requirements are optimized for each of them: (i) both muons have $|\eta| < 1.05$, (ii) one muon has $|\eta| < 1.05$ and the other one has $1.05 < |\eta| < 2.5$, (iii) both muons have $1.05 < |\eta| < 2.5$. The invariant mass $m(\mu^+\mu^-)$ is calculated from the track parameters adjusted by the common-vertex fit to be in a three standard deviation ($\pm 3\sigma$) mass window around the world average mass $m(J/\psi)$ [11], where the $J/\psi$ reconstructed width $\sigma$ varies in the range 40–90 MeV depending on muon reconstruction precision in different regions of pseudorapidity and on the data-taking period.

Selection requirements for the $B_c^\pm$ were chosen by maximizing $S/\sqrt{S+B}$, using MC events. Here, $S$ is the number of signal events and $B$ refers to the number of background MC events scaled according to the production cross section. The production cross sections are taken from the MC generators’ predictions. The optimization has been carried out separately for the two different data sets. The pion candidate from the $B_c^\pm$ is required to have $p_T > 4$ GeV. Hit requirements in the pixel detector and SCT are imposed on all tracks to ensure a reliable impact parameter reconstruction.

$B_c^\pm$ candidates are reconstructed by fitting two muon tracks from the $J/\psi$ candidate together with a pion candidate track to a common vertex. The invariant mass of the two muons is constrained to the world average of $m(J/\psi)$. The yields per unit of integrated luminosity, and the central values of the dimuon invariant mass distributions, are verified to be consistent within each data set.

A significant part of the combinatorial background consists of real $J/\psi$ candidates combined with candidate pions that are not associated with a $B_c^\pm \rightarrow J/\psi\pi^\pm$ decay. This background is reduced by imposing a lower cut on $d_0/\sigma(d_0)$; $d_0$ here represents the projection of the pion track impact parameter relative to the primary vertex onto the transverse plane, and $\sigma(d_0)$ is the track-by-track uncertainty on $d_0$. Pion candidates are required to have $d_0/\sigma(d_0) > 5$ for 7 TeV data and $> 4.5$ for 8 TeV data. In 7 TeV data the PV is defined as the collision vertex with the highest summed scalar $p_T^2$ of its constituent tracks. In 8 TeV data—the data collected with higher pileup—the PV is identified as the vertex closest in three dimensions to the reconstructed decay vertex of the $B_c^\pm$ candidate. All reconstructed $B_c^\pm$ candidates are also required to satisfy the following selection criteria:

(i) The $J/\psi \pi$ vertex fit $\chi^2/NDOF < 2$ for 7 TeV and $< 1.5$ for 8 TeV data. (ii) The $p_T$ of the $B_c^\pm$ candidate must be above 15 GeV for 7 TeV and above 18 GeV for 8 TeV data.

Figure 1 shows the invariant mass distributions for the $B_c^\pm$ candidates for 7 TeV data and 8 TeV data in the mass range 5620–6820 MeV. Both distributions are fitted separately using an extended unbinned maximum likelihood fit, with a Gaussian function modeling the signal and an exponential modeling the background shape. The various
exclusive $B_c^\pm$ decay modes mentioned above are shown to have negligible contribution to the background shape. The results of the fits are summarized in Table I. The fitted mass values are consistent with the world average for the $B_c^\pm$ mass [11]. The signal yield per fb$^{-1}$ of the $B_c^\pm$ is lower in 8 TeV data due to the harder $p_T$ requirements. The stability of the $B_c^\pm$ yield was checked through its normalization to $B_c^\pm \to J/\psi K^\pm$ decays that were reconstructed with similar requirements.

The reconstruction of the excited state candidates uses the $B_c^\pm$ ground state candidates within $\pm 3\sigma$ of the fitted mass value of the corresponding data set. These candidates are combined as described below with two pion candidate tracks associated with the corresponding primary vertex. The $p_T$ threshold of the pion candidates is 400 MeV. No additional selection requirement is applied to the $B_c^\pm (2S)$ pion candidates. The three tracks from the secondary vertex and the two tracks from the primary vertex are refitted simultaneously with the following constraints given by the decay topology: the refitted triplet of the $B_c^\pm$ tracks and the pair of PV pion tracks must intersect in two separate $B_c^\pm$ and $B_c^\pm (2S)$ vertices. The invariant mass of the refitted muon tracks is constrained to the $J/\psi$ world average mass, and the combined momentum of the refitted $B_c^\pm$ tracks must point to the $B_c^\pm (2S)$ vertex. When multiple $B_c^\pm (2S)$ candidates are found in the same event, the one with the best $\chi^2$ value returned by the fitter is kept as an excited state candidate. Wrong-charge combinations ($B_c^\pm \pi^+ \pi^- \pi^+$ and $B_c^\pm \pi^- \pi^- \pi^+$) are kept separately for comparison with the combinatorial background shape in the right-charge combinations (oppositely charged pion pairs).

Figure 2 shows the mass difference distribution $m(B_c^\pm \pi\pi) - m(B_c^\pm) - 2m(\pi)$ for the right-charge combinations $B_c^\pm \pi^+ \pi^-$ as well as the wrong-charge combinations. A structure is observed in the mass difference distribution. In order to characterize it, an unbinned maximum likelihood fit to the right-charge combinations is performed. The fit includes a third-order polynomial to model the background and a Gaussian function for the structure. The background shape resulting from the fit is verified to be consistent with the wrong-charge combinations (which are not used to constrain the model in the right-charge fit) by fitting the same shape to them, with the normalization as the only free parameter. Alternative models for the signal and the background parametrizations are studied as sources of systematic uncertainty. A Breit-Wigner contribution was tested in convolution with the Gaussian function and was found to be negligible, implying that the natural width of the structure is small relative to the detector resolution. The resulting fit parameters (with statistical uncertainties only), as well as the distributions of the wrong-charge ($B_c^\pm \pi^+ \pi^-$, $B_c^\pm \pi^- \pi^-$) combinations are shown in Fig. 2. The wrong-charge combinations, are normalized to the same yield as the right-charge background.

The relative $B_c^\pm (2S)/B_c^\pm$ yield ratio is verified to be statistically consistent between the 7 and 8 TeV data. The fit finds the peak at a mass difference ($Q$) value of $288.2 \pm 5.1$ MeV in the 7 TeV data and $288.4 \pm 4.8$ MeV in the 8 TeV data. The fit yields $22 \pm 6$ signal events in the 7 TeV data and $35 \pm 13$ events in the 8 TeV data. The Gaussian width of the structure is found to be $18.2 \pm 3.8$ MeV in the 7 TeV data and $17.6 \pm 4.0$ MeV in the 8 TeV data. All uncertainties mentioned in this paragraph do not include systematic uncertainties.

There are two dominant sources of systematic uncertainty on the position of the peak. One comes from the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Signal events $\pm$</th>
<th>Peak mean [MeV] $\pm$</th>
<th>Peak width [MeV] $\pm$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 TeV</td>
<td>100 $\pm$ 23</td>
<td>6282 $\pm$ 8</td>
<td>49 $\pm$ 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 TeV</td>
<td>227 $\pm$ 25</td>
<td>6277 $\pm$ 6</td>
<td>50 $\pm$ 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The $Q = m(B_{c}^{\pm}\pi\pi) - m(B_{c}^{0}) - 2m(\pi^{\pm})$ distribution for the right-charge combinations (points with error bars) and for the same (wrong) pion charge combinations (shaded histogram) in 7 TeV data (top) and in 8 TeV data (bottom). The wrong-charge combinations are normalized to the same yield as the right-charge background. The solid line is the projection of the results of the unbinned maximum likelihood fit to all candidates in the range 0–700 MeV. The dashed line is the projection of the background component of the same fit.

uncertainty on the mass of the $B_{c}^{\pm}$ ground state candidate and is largely canceled in the mass difference distribution. The other involves systematic uncertainties in the fit of the mass difference distribution itself. The uncertainty on the mass of the $B_{c}^{\pm}(2S)$ candidate is dominated by the fitting procedure and estimated below to be about 3.6 MeV. The contribution from the uncertainty on the pion momentum scale to the $B_{c}^{\pm}$ mass is 1.2 MeV. The residual uncertainty from the $B_{c}^{\pm}$ candidate mass in the mass difference distribution, $\delta m_{B_{c}^{\pm}(2S)} = \delta m_{B_{c}^{\pm}} \times \left(m_{B_{c}^{\pm}} / m_{B_{c}^{\pm}(2S)}\right)$, where the $\delta m_{B_{c}^{\pm}}$ is the world average uncertainty on the $B_{c}^{\pm}$ mass [11], is about 1.7 MeV. The systematic uncertainty on the mass difference introduced by the fitting procedure is estimated by (i) varying the background model. An exponential threshold function $(f(Q) \sim Q^a e^{-bQ})$, where $a$ and $b$ are free parameters) and second- and fourth-order polynomials were considered as alternatives, resulting in a 3.4 MeV systematic uncertainty; (ii) varying the fit mass range from 0–700 to 0–1500 MeV, results in a 1.2 MeV contribution to the systematic uncertainty; (iii) using different models for the signal. A single Breit-Wigner function, a Breit-Wigner function convolved with a Gaussian function, and a double Gaussian function were considered. This results in a negligible systematic uncertainty, compared to the above two.

In each case the largest difference between any of the variations mentioned and the default fit model is used as the systematic uncertainty. The values are calculated as the weighted mean of the 7 and 8 TeV mass values.

An additional systematic uncertainty of 2 MeV is obtained from the study of the mass bias in the selection of the candidate with the best $\chi^2$ of the vertex fit.

The various sources of systematic uncertainty are treated as uncorrelated. The total averaged systematic uncertainty propagated to the mass value of the new structure is approximately 4.1 MeV.

The significance of the new structure is evaluated with pseudoexperiments. A large number of background-only mass difference distributions are generated. Parameters of the generation are taken from the fit with their uncertainties to account for systematic effects. The background shape is scaled to the observed number of events. The mean mass value of the signal contribution is left free to vary within the theoretically motivated range ($6835–6917$ MeV) to evaluate the “look-elsewhere effect” [19]. The significance is calculated as the fraction of the pseudoexperiments in which the difference of the logarithms of fit likelihoods $\Delta \ln L$ with and without signal is larger than in the data. In terms of standard deviations the significance of the observation is $3.7\sigma$ in the 7 TeV data and $4.5\sigma$ in the 8 TeV data. For the combined 7 and 8 TeV data set the total significance of the observation is found to be $5.2\sigma$. The local significance of the observation, obtained by fixing the mean value of the signal component, is $5.4\sigma$.

In conclusion, the distribution of the mass difference $Q = m(B_{c}^{\pm}\pi^{\pm}\pi^{\mp}) - m(B_{c}^{0}) - 2m(\pi^{\pm})$ for events with the $B_{c}^{\pm}$ meson reconstructed in its decay to $J/\psi\pi^{\pm}$ has been investigated in $pp$ collisions at the LHC using the ATLAS detector. The analysis is based on an integrated luminosity of $4.9 (19.2)$ fb$^{-1}$ of $pp$ collisions at a center-of-mass energy of $7 (8)$ TeV. A new state is observed at $Q = 2883 \pm 3.5 \pm 4.1$ MeV (calculated as the error weighted mean of the 7 and 8 TeV mass values) corresponding to a mass of $6842 \pm 4 \pm 5$ MeV, where the first error is statistical and the second is systematic. The significance of the observation is $5.2\sigma$ with the look elsewhere effect taken into account, and the local significance is $5.4\sigma$. Within the uncertainties, the mass of the resonance corresponding to the observed structure is consistent with the predicted mass of the $B_{c}^{\pm}(2S)$ state.

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[7] ATLAS uses a right-handed coordinate system with its origin at the nominal interaction point (IP) in the center of the detector and the z axis along the beam line. The x axis points from the IP to the center of the LHC ring, and the y axis points upward. Polar coordinates (r, ϕ) are used in the transverse (x, y) plane, ϕ being the azimuthal angle around the beam pipe. The pseudorapidity is defined in terms of the polar angle θ as η = − ln tan θ/2.
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(Atlas Collaboration)

1 Department of Physics, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia
2 Physics Department, SUNY Albany, Albany, New York, USA
3 Department of Physics, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
4 Department of Physics, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey
5 Department of Physics, Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey


212004-13
4c Division of Physics, TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Ankara, Turkey
5 Turkish Atomic Energy Authority, Ankara, Turkey
6 LAPP, CNRS/IN2P3 and Université de Savoie, Annecy-le-Vieux, France
7 High Energy Physics Division, Argonne National Laboratory, Argonne, Illinois, USA
8 Department of Physics, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, USA
9 Department of Physics, The University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas, USA
10 Physics Department, University of Athens, Athens, Greece
11 Institute of Physics, Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, Baku, Azerbaijan
12 Institut de Física d’Altes Energies and Departament de Física de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain
13a Institute of Physics, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia
13b Vinca Institute of Nuclear Sciences, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia
14 Department for Physics and Technology, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway
15 Physics Division, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and University of California, Berkeley, California, USA
16 Department of Physics, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany
17 Albert Einstein Center for Fundamental Physics and Laboratory for High Energy Physics, University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland
18 School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom
19a Department of Physics, Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey
19b Department of Physics, Dogus University, Istanbul, Turkey
19c Department of Physics Engineering, Gaziantep University, Gaziantep, Turkey
20a INFN Sezione di Bologna, Italy
20b Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia, Università di Bologna, Bologna, Italy
21 Physikalisches Institut, University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany
22 Department of Physics, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA
23 Department of Physics, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, USA
24 Universidade Federal do Rio De Janeiro COPPE/EE/IF, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
24a Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF), Juiz de Fora, Brazil
24b Federal University of Sao Joao del Rei (UFSJ), Sao Joao del Rei, Brazil
24d Instituto de Fisica, Universidade de Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil
25 Physics Department, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, New York, USA
26a National Institute of Physics and Nuclear Engineering, Bucharest, Romania
26b Physics Department, National Institute for Research and Development of Isotopic and Molecular Technologies, Cluj Napoca, Romania
26c University Politehnica Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania
26d West University in Timisoara, Timisoara, Romania
27 Departamento de Física, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina
28 Cavendish Laboratory, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom
29 Department of Physics, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
30 CERN, Geneva, Switzerland
31 Enrico Fermi Institute, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA
32a Departamento de Física, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile
32b Departamento de Física, Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María, Valparaiso, Chile
33a Institute of High Energy Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, China
33b Department of Modern Physics, University of Science and Technology of China, Anhui, China
33c Department of Physics, Nanjing University, Jiangsu, China
33d School of Physics, Shandong University, Shandong, China
33e Physics Department, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China
34 Laboratoire de Physique Corpusculaire, Clermont Université and Université Blaise Pascal and CNRS/IN2P3, Clermont-Ferrand, France
35 Nevis Laboratory, Columbia University, Irvington, New York, USA
36 Niels Bohr Institute, University of Copenhagen, Kopenhagen, Denmark
37a INFN Gruppo Collegato di Cosenza, Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, Italy
37b Dipartimento di Fisica, Università della Calabria, Rende, Italy
38a Faculty of Physics and Applied Computer Science, AGH University of Science and Technology, Krakow, Poland
38b Marian Smoluchowski Institute of Physics, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland
39 The Henryk Niewodniczanski Institute of Nuclear Physics, Polish Academy of Sciences, Krakow, Poland
40 Physics Department, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, USA
41 Physics Department, University of Texas at Dallas, Richardson, Texas, USA
42 DESY, Hamburg and Zeuthen, Germany
43 Institut für Experimentelle Physik IV, Technische Universität Dortmund, Dortmund, Germany
Also at Chinese University of Hong Kong, China.

Also at Department of Financial and Management Engineering, University of the Aegean, Chios, Greece.

Also at Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, LA, USA.

Also at Institut Català de Recerca i Estudis Avançats, ICREA, Barcelona, Spain.

Also at Department of Physics, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA.

Also at Institute of Theoretical Physics, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Also at CERN, Geneva, Switzerland.

Also at Ochadai Academic Production, Ochanomizu University, Tokyo, Japan.

Also at Manhattan College, New York, NY, USA.

Also at Novosibirsk State University, Novosibirsk, Russia.

Also at Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

Also at LAL, Université Paris-Sud and CNRS/IN2P3, Orsay, France.

Also at Academia Sinica Grid Computing, Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

Also at Laboratoire de Physique Nucléaire et de Hautes Energies, UPMC and Université Paris-Diderot and CNRS/IN2P3, Paris, France.

Also at School of Physical Sciences, National Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhubaneswar, India.

Also at Dipartimento di Fisica, Sapienza Università di Roma, Roma, Italy.

Also at Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology State University, Dolgoprudny, Russia.

Also at Section de Physique, Université de Genève, Geneva, Switzerland.

Also at International School for Advanced Studies (SISSA), Trieste, Italy.

Also at Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA.

Also at School of Physics and Engineering, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China.

Also at Faculty of Physics, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia.

Also at Moscow Engineering and Physics Institute (MEPhI), Moscow, Russia.

Also at Institute for Particle and Nuclear Physics, Wigner Research Centre for Physics, Budapest, Hungary.

Also at Department of Physics, Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom.

Also at Department of Physics, Nanjing University, Jiangsu, China.

Also at Institut für Experimentalphysik, Universität Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany.

Also at Department of Physics, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA.

Also at Discipline of Physics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

Also at University of Malaya, Department of Physics, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.