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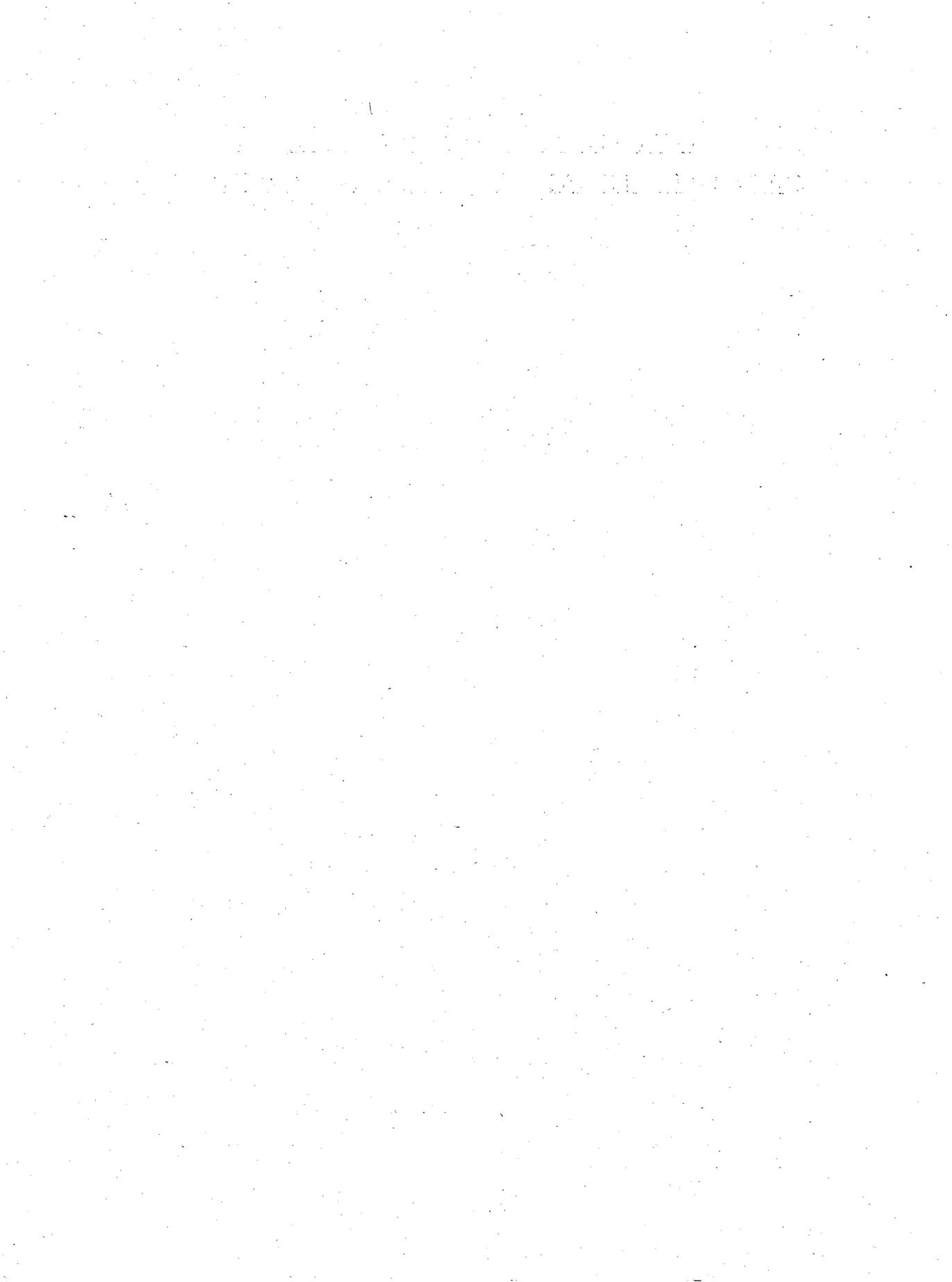
VOLUME XLV

JANUARY 1951 TO DECEMBER 1951

CAMBRIDGE
BOWES AND BOWES

1952

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A LATE BRONZE AGE URNFIELD AND GROOVED-WARE OCCUPATION AT HONINGTON, SUFFOLK

C. I. FELL, M.A., F.S.A.

DURING the summer of 1938 a number of characteristic bucket urns of Deverel-Rimbury type were brought up by the mechanical grab in a gravel pit, worked by Messrs Allen Newport of Fordham, near the west bank of the river at Honington, Suffolk (Fig. 1: O.S. 6-in. sheet, Suffolk xxiii S.W.; the National Grid reference of the

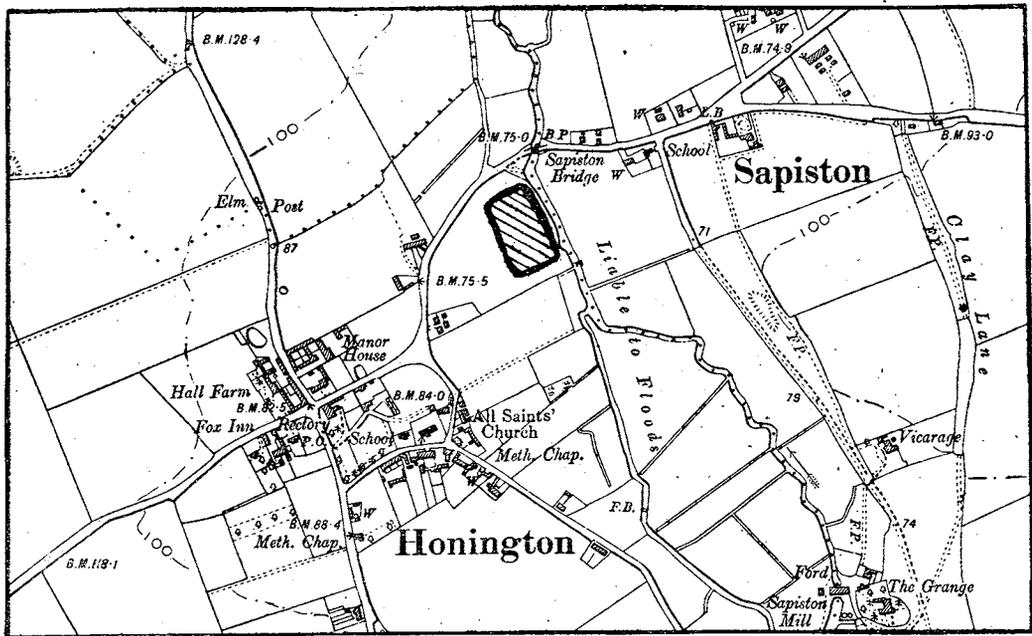


Fig. 1. Six-inch O.S. sheet, Suffolk xxiii S.W. by permission of H.M. Ordnance Survey.
The hatched area north-east of Honington village is the site of the gravel pit.

site is 52/915748). The owner of the pit, Mr A. Newport, reported the find to Major Gordon Fowler, who in turn passed the information to the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge. Dr Grahame Clark then visited the site and brought back one almost complete urn (Fig. 2a). It was arranged that the late Mr C. S. Leaf, then living at The Manor House, Freckenham, should make an investigation and decide whether excavation was desirable. No labour was available throughout the autumn months, but eventually, between 5 December 1938 and

24 February 1939, Mr Leaf directed excavations which were financed by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. Unfortunately his death has made it impossible to give a full report, but thanks to the Hon. Mrs Leaf, note-books, incomplete plans and the cream of the finds have been given to the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge (Registration numbers 49.230-260). It is on these that this account is based.

The site of the gravel pit was a large grass-covered mound of natural origin close to the west bank of the river, giving the impression that at times of flood it had formed

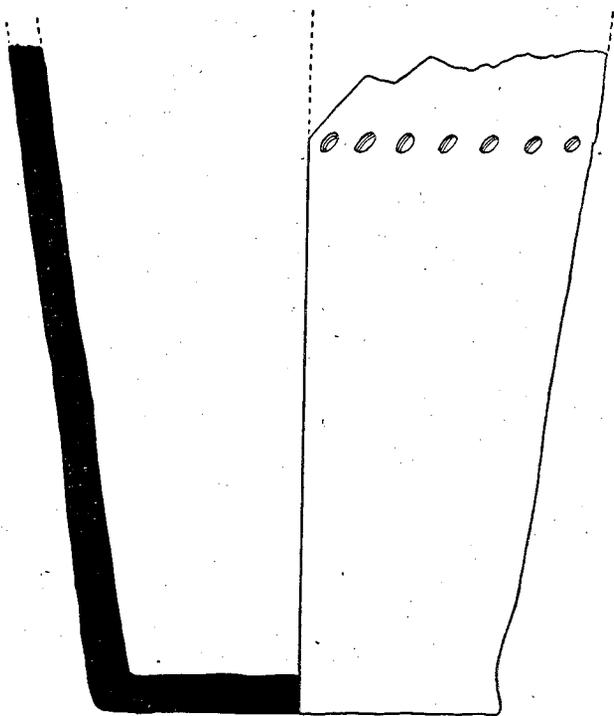


Fig. 2a. One quarter natural size.

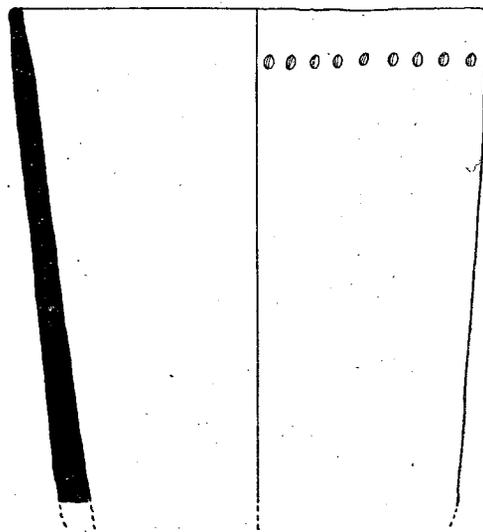


Fig. 2b. One quarter natural size.

an island. Here the gravel rested on chalk and was intersected by small gullies filled with boulder clay, the whole being overlaid by fluvial sand. Strips of gravel about 20 yd. wide, running the length of the north-south axis of the mound, were removed by mechanical grabs, starting on its eastern side. The Deverel-Rimbury urns already mentioned were found near the centre of the mound where the sand reached a depth of 4-5 ft. They had been buried in holes dug into the sand. Preliminary investigations along the eastern face of the pit revealed one more bucket urn in a broken condition, containing a cremation (Fig. 2b). Its mouth was 2 ft. below the present surface and it had been placed in a hole, the section of which showed that there had been two earlier ground levels, one 1 ft. and one 3 ft. below the modern turf. These were separated by a layer of sand containing only a few worked flints, flakes and cores and the lower one was 9 in. above the gravel (Fig. 3). Both old ground surfaces yielded

a number of worked flints very similar in character and probably more or less contemporary. Dr T. T. Paterson, who visited the site, suggested that the intervening sand was rapidly deposited by a flood from the river close by and the site temporarily abandoned, but quickly reoccupied after the water had subsided. During the 1939 excavations 6 in. of sand were deposited on the road though it was under water for less than twelve hours.

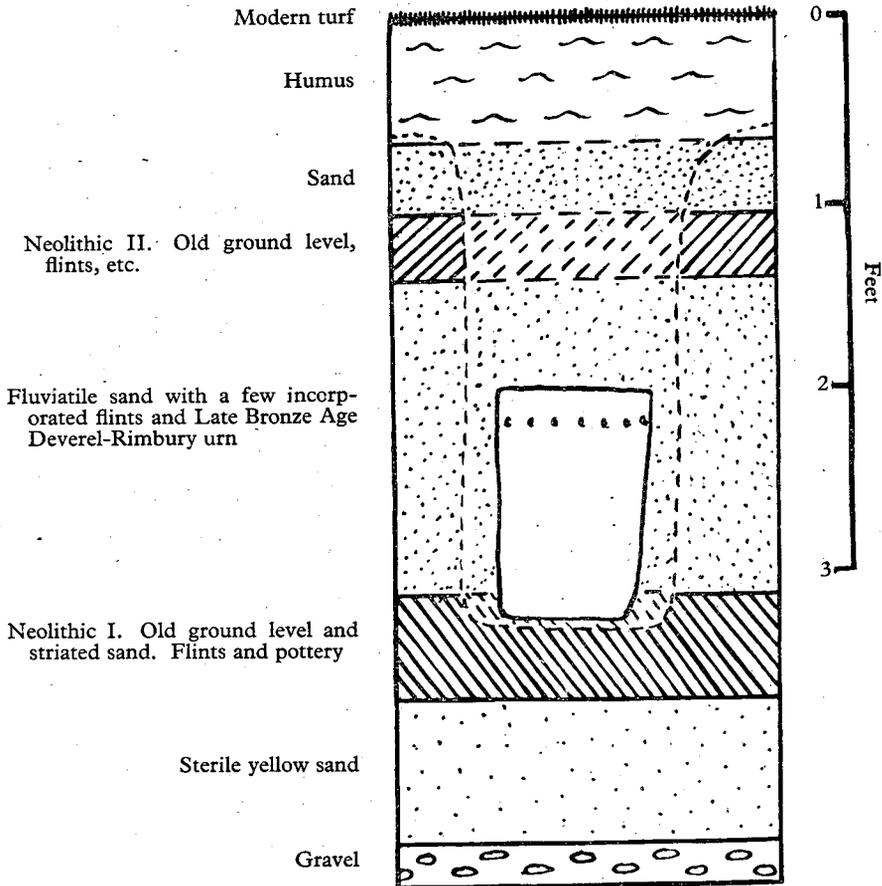


Fig. 3.

No further urns were found, but an examination of the lower old ground level revealed a cooking hole 1 ft. wide and 1½ ft. deep containing ashes and some sherds of 'grooved-ware'. A number of flakes and cores of Mesolithic character were also found and the edge of a large, discoloured patch of sand containing many flint implements (Fig. 4, Hut G). When questioned, the gravel diggers agreed that they had noticed dark patches and holes containing sherds and charcoal in the strips which they had already dug away farther to the east. What remained was evidently the more westerly part of the settlement which, on account of its liability to flood, was probably occupied only at favourable times of the year.

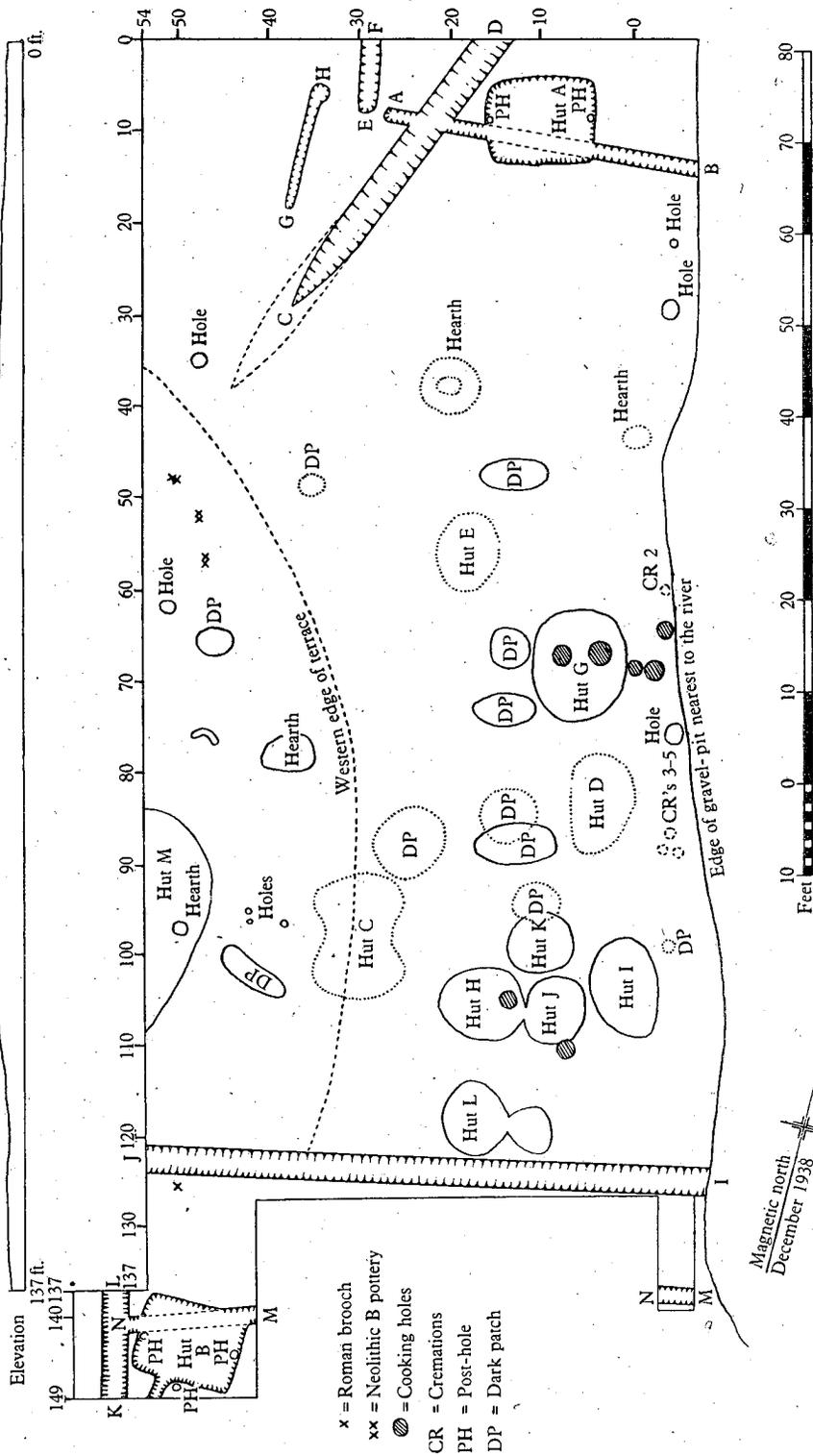


Fig. 4. Ground plan and elevation, Honington, Suffolk.

A base line was established 45 ft. west of the most westerly incursion into the face of the pit nearest the river and an area of approximately 600 sq. yd. was ultimately examined. It was cleared in strips 4 ft., and later 3 ft., wide starting at the north-east corner, and the gravel-digging plant advanced in pursuit at the rate of 4 yd. a week and sometimes more. Three men were employed in addition to Mr Leaf's two gardeners. In spite of interruptions caused by frost, snow and floods, the work was completed on 24 February 1939. The main features revealed during the excavation are shown on the ground plan and elevation (Fig. 4) and will be described in chronological order.

I. NEOLITHIC B (PETERBOROUGH)

A few sherds of abraded Neolithic B pottery with maggot and bird-bone decoration were found along the western edge of the strip which was cleared (Fig. 5). None were recorded in the low, natural terrace whose western edge is marked with a broken line on the plan. These sherds all occurred below the lower old ground level, resting immediately on the gravel subsoil. A few cores and blades of Mesolithic character were found at the same level. Dr Grahame Clark has pointed out that this small group of flints bears a patina different from the bulk of the finds from the 'grooved-ware' horizons and that they may considerably antedate that settlement. The two blades found in the Neolithic I level, and illustrated as Fig. 6, nos. 1 and 3, have the same patina as the group under discussion and may well be contemporary with the group and not with the flints of the later level. The Neolithic B occupation here definitely preceded the settlement by makers of 'grooved-ware', which was correlated with the lower old ground level.

2A. 'GROOVED-WARE' (NEOLITHIC I LEVEL)

On the lower old ground surface a series of oval, dark grey coloured patches were found which were thought to represent the floors of tents or huts. These are shown with continuous lines on the plan and were called 'Neolithic I' by Mr Leaf. The highest concentration of implements and sherds was in these discoloured areas, though there was also a scatter of worked flints outside them. Particularly rich were the huts numbered G, H and J on the plan, each of which had associated cooking holes and appeared to have been more continuously occupied than the others, which only showed as pale grey stains, often difficult to distinguish from the surrounding soil except that they usually yielded more implements. No post holes, or other evidence of structure were seen. In addition to the huts a number of small holes and dark patches were noted and in some of the former animal bones were found, often showing traces of burning.

There was an abundance of struck flint flakes and cores as well as implements at this level, and burnt stones were common in the cooking holes near the huts (see schedule at Appendix A). The most numerous implement was a serrated flake, or saw, which Mr Leaf thought might have been used for cutting rushes for thatching,

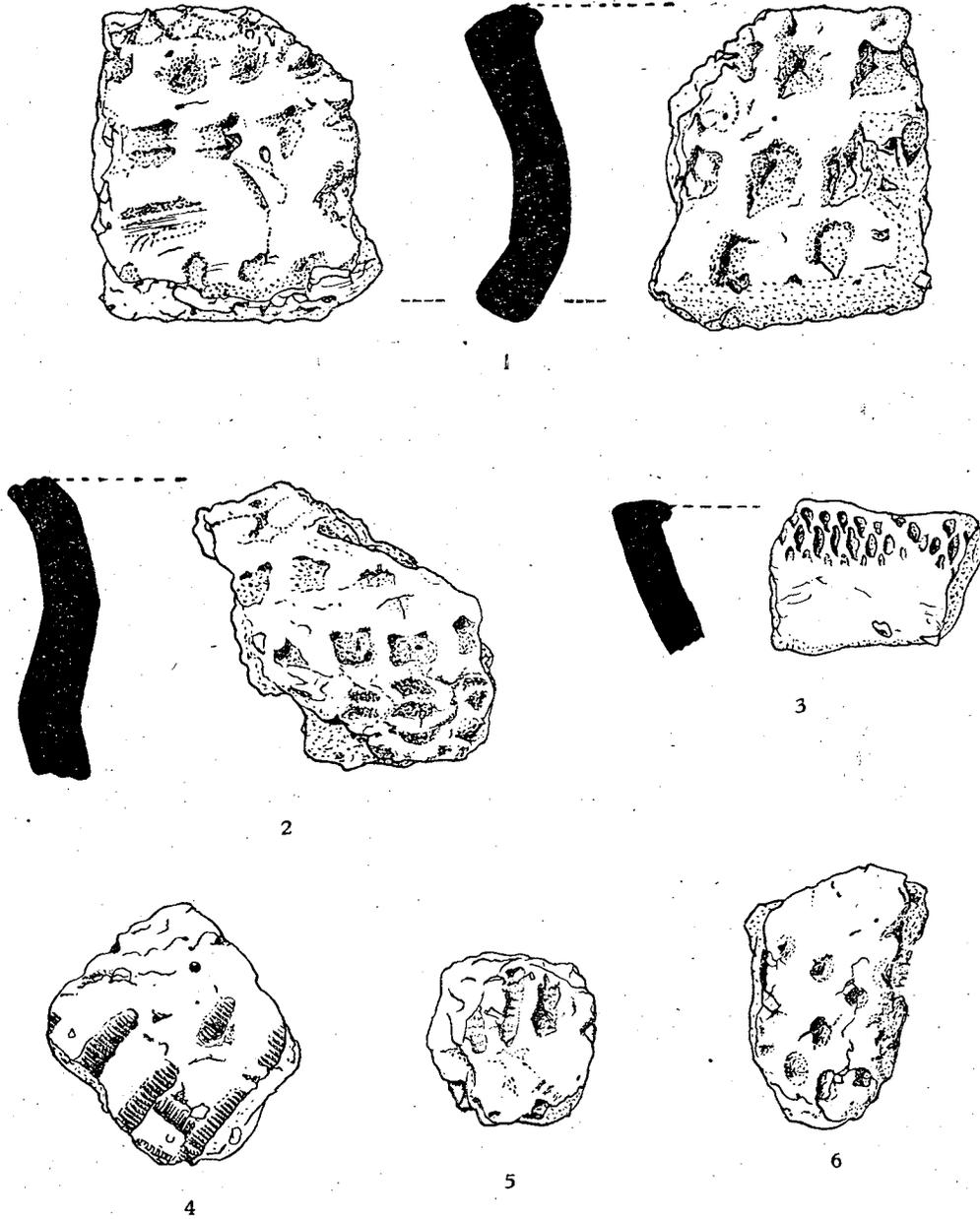


Fig. 5. Neolithic B sherds from Honington, natural size.
 Drawings by Mrs M. E. Scott.

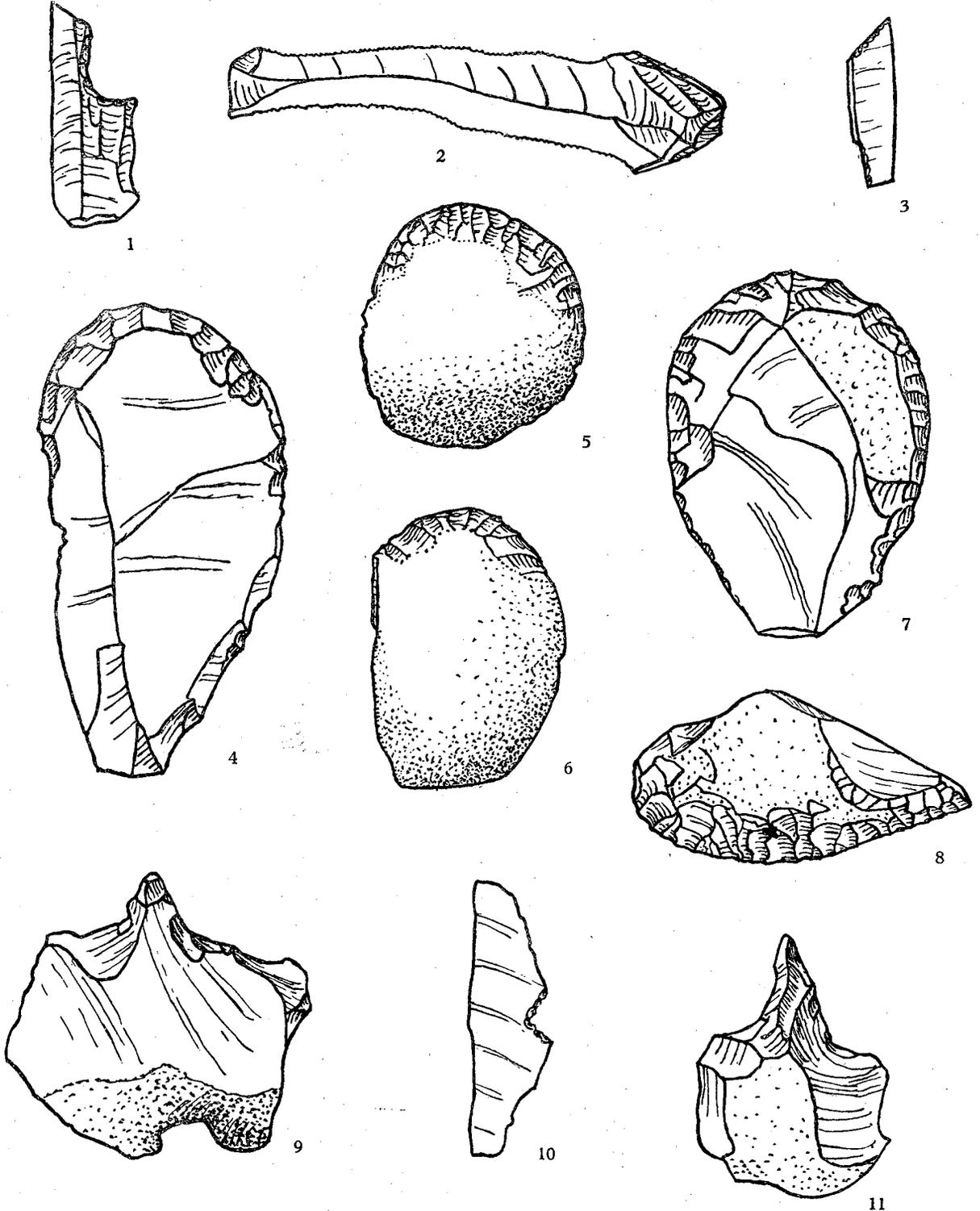


Fig. 6. Scrapers and other flint tools, natural size.

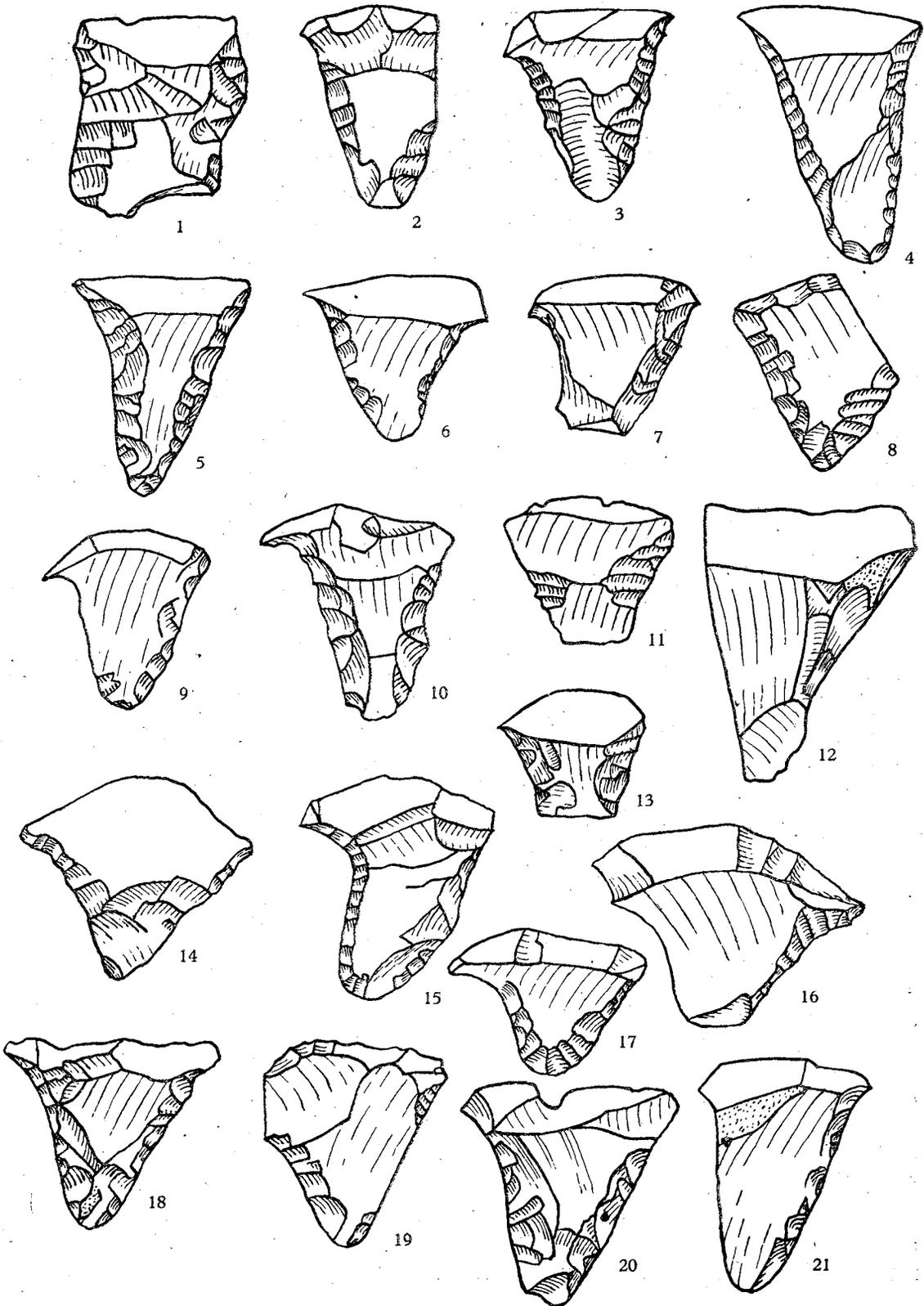


Fig. 7. Petit-tranchet derivative arrow-heads, natural size.

or basket making. Other tools included two borers, or awls (Fig. 6, nos. 9 and 11); a broken fabricator or butt end of a chisel (Fig. 8, no. 2); a rechipped fragment of a polished flint axe (there is a second fragment of a polished axe from the site but the level at which it was found is not known); part of a rectangular polished flint knife; two hammer or anvil stones; a leaf-shaped arrowhead, pressure-flaked on one side

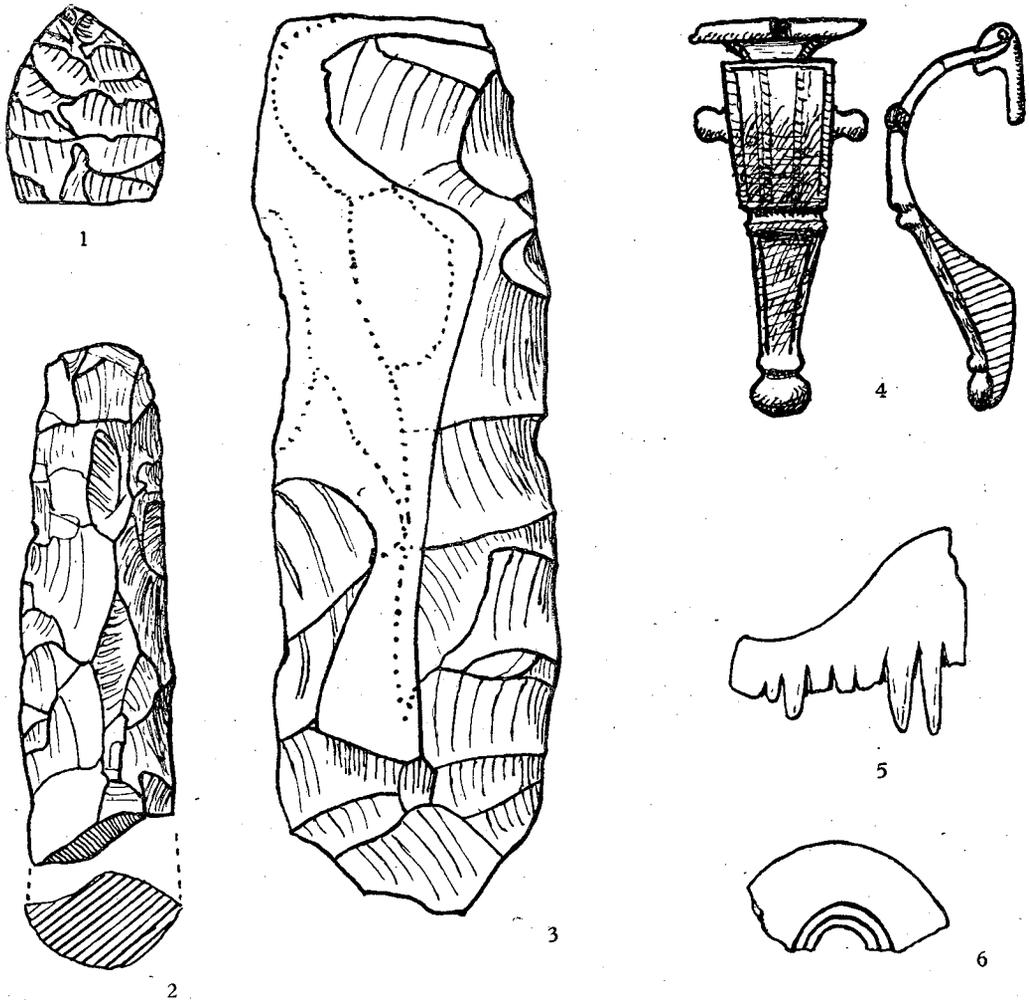


Fig. 8. Natural size.

only and one tip broken off (Fig. 8, no. 1); many large well-made scrapers, some with the cortex still adhering and some on big, broad flakes (Fig. 6, nos. 4-8); the bulbar end of a blade broken in the course of preparing a microlith by the notch technique (Fig. 6, no. 1) and a small blade of microlithic character (Fig. 6, no. 3). The patina of these two last-mentioned flints has already been discussed. Most interesting of all are the large number of petit-tranchet derivative arrowheads which were found—fourteen finished and two partly finished specimens (Fig. 7, nos. 1-16). Of these,

four are of Dr Clark's class C I¹ (nos. 2-5), three broken specimens of class C I or D (nos. 8, 11 and 13), seven of class D (nos. 6, 7, 9, 10, 14-16) and two unfinished ones (nos. 1 and 12).

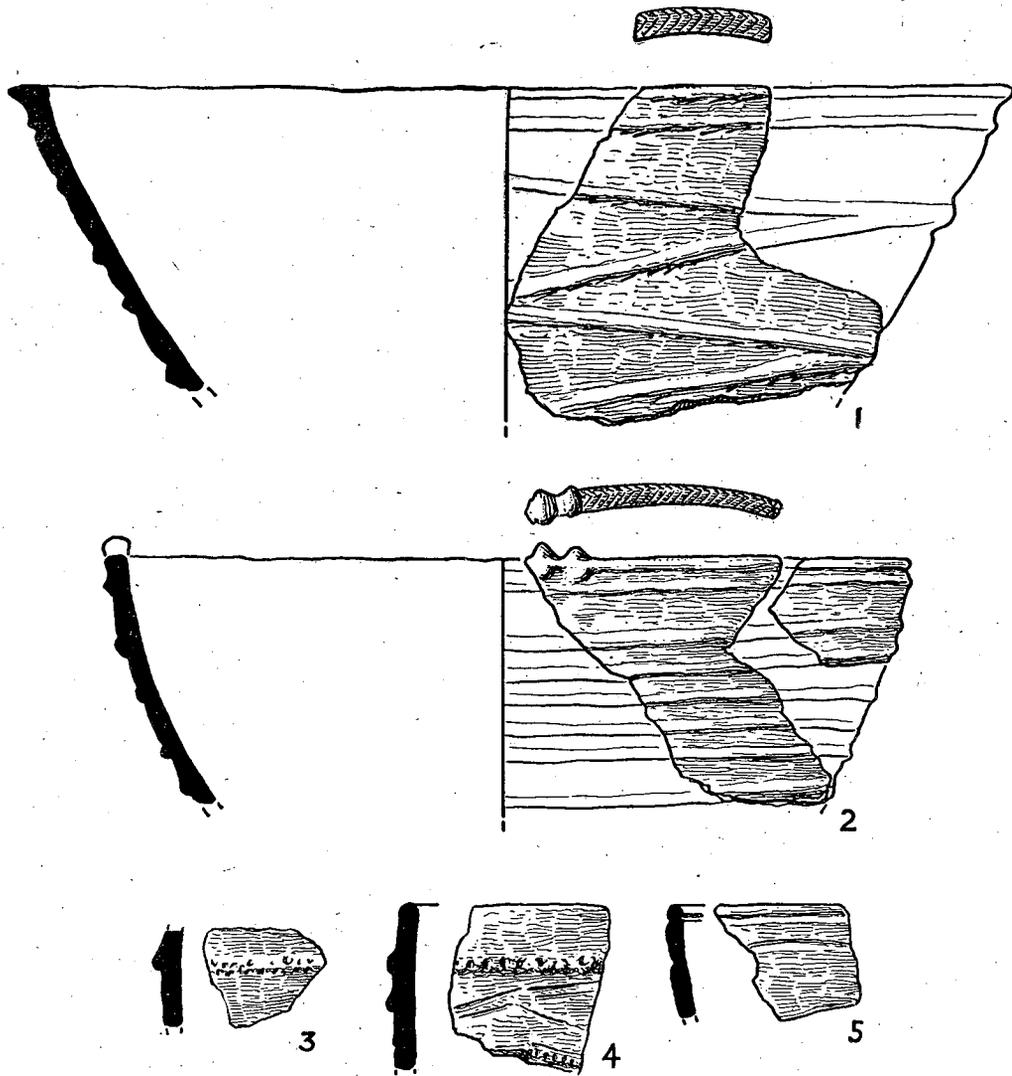


Fig. 9.

(Printed by permission of the Prehistoric Society)

'Grooved-ware' was found in the cooking holes associated with Huts G, H and J and included both decorated and plain sherds. The decorated pieces belong to at least four different vessels and most have already been illustrated in a note by Professor Stuart Piggott² though perhaps the accompanying plate (Plate VIII) gives a better idea of their texture. The ware is fragile and poorly fired, dark brown to

¹ J. G. D. Clark, *Arch. Journ.* xci, pp. 32f.

² *P.P.S.* xv, p. 127, fig. 2. In this note Honington is wrongly stated to be in Cambridgeshire.

reddish brown in colour, and seems to contain little grit. The two larger pieces bear herring-bone decoration on the rim (Fig. 9, nos. 1 and 2) and irregular raised ridges on the outer surface. Finger-nail impressions on each side of the ridges can be seen in the first piece, and the second has two knobs astride the rim. Both pieces come from wide-mouthed bowls $10\frac{1}{2}$ and $8\frac{3}{4}$ in. in diameter at the rim. In outline they had almost straight sides and are the shape of a truncated cone. The other decorated sherds (Fig. 9, nos. 3-5) are from the upright rims of beaker-like vessels. In addition to the ornamented fragments, a number of plain pieces were found, particularly in the cooking holes connected with Hut G. These were of a reddish brown coarse ware, showing black in the fracture—far thicker and heavier than the decorated sherds. These vessels had flat bases and conform to the flower-pot shape noted in the report on Lion Point, Clacton.¹ If the stratification were not known it would be difficult to distinguish these sherds from the Deverel-Rimbury urns also found at the site. Mr Leaf noted four plain sherds of what he took to be Neolithic A ware, also found at this level. He said that they came from the body of a vessel, but they have not been identified.

2B. SAND LAYER (DILUVIAL)

Incorporated in the layer of fluviatile sand which separated the upper from the lower old ground level, various flint flakes and cores and a few implements and scraps of pottery were found. The worked flints include one class D petit-tranchet derivative arrowhead (Fig. 7, no. 17), eleven scrapers, ten saws and a hammer stone. Mr Leaf labelled this layer 'Diluvial'.

2C. SECOND OCCUPATION (NEOLITHIC II)

Above the layer of sand and on the upper old ground surface, traces of a second occupation were found. Again there were dark patches representing the floors of huts or tents. These are shown with dotted lines on the plan and Mr Leaf has called this level 'Neolithic II'. No cooking holes were found and no pottery was present in the huts. Flints were similar in type to those from the lower layer and, though the second occupation appears to have been of shorter duration than the first, there is no evidence that it was far removed from it in time. The flint implements include two class CI and two class D petit-tranchet derivative arrowheads (Fig. 7, nos. 18-21); twelve scrapers; one small notched flake (Fig. 6, no. 10); twenty-one saws (Fig. 6, no. 2) and a fair abundance of cores and struck flakes (see Appendix A). Again, no trace of structure was noted.

3. LATE BRONZE AGE II

Apart from the Late Bronze Age urnfield there is no evidence that the site was used during the Bronze Age after it was abandoned by the makers of 'grooved-ware'. No Beaker sherds, or flint types, nor any Middle Bronze Age pottery was found. The major part of the urnfield was destroyed by the mechanical grabs,² from which one

¹ *P.P.S.*, II, p. 181.

² *Proc. Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History*, Vol. xxv, Part 2 (1951), p. 214.

urn was salvaged (see pp. 30-31 above), and one more was excavated by Mr Leaf. He found three other cremations without urns which had been buried in holes in the ground and probably dated from the Deverel-Rimbury urnfield. This urnfield forms part of a group left by settlers who made their way inland along the rivers of the Essex and Suffolk coasts during Late Bronze Age II times,¹ but it is impossible to say how late pottery of this type continued to be made here.

4. ROMANO-BRITISH AND ANGLO-SAXON

A scatter of Romano-British and later sherds were found in the top spit of humus underlying the modern turf and well above the upper old ground level. Fragments of grey ware, cordoned vessels suggesting a Belgic ancestry, a rim sherd of a red-ware face-urn, indicate occupation here from the first to the third centuries A.D. if not longer. Two sherds of grey ware with large finger-tip frilling on the rim and on an applied band compare closely with the eleventh-century pottery recovered in such quantities from the late Saxon town at Thetford.

At the north-east and south-west corners of the excavated area, two rectangular huts were found and are marked A and B on the plan (Fig. 4). The former measured about 12 by 9½ ft. and had a central hearth and a single, well-defined post hole in each of the narrower sides. It was traversed by and was later than a ditch A-B. Other ditches marked E-F and G-H were also noticed and were thought by Mr Leaf to relate to the Romano-British occupation and were possibly field boundaries. They did not run up on to the mound itself where the soil was sandy, but kept to its sides where a foot of loam was found to overlie the gravel and provided more suitable ground for cultivation. A fourth ditch, C-D, was traced on to the mound as far as is shown with broken lines. From this ditch a pair of iron shears was recovered and it is probable that it is later than the others, possibly dating from Saxon times. Pottery from Hut A is scanty, but includes hand-made wares which might equally well be Early Iron Age or Anglo-Saxon—no rim fragments were preserved. Romano-British sherds found in this hut may have come from the ditch which it had cut across. Part of a stone spindle whorl (Fig. 8, no. 6) was also found there. Hut B, at the south-western corner, measured about 11 by 9 ft. It had a post hole in the middle of each of the shorter sides and a third on the south side which was approached by a narrow entrance. Ditch M-N traversed the hut and, as in the case of Hut A, antedated it. Some hand-made pottery, dark grey to black in colour, with plain rims, was found in the hut and also one sherd of wheel-turned grey ware. A fragment of a Roman hypocaust tile with parallel combing, animal bones and part of a single-edged bone comb (Fig. 8, no. 5) have also been preserved. The comb is of Anglo-Saxon type and as the plans of the huts compare closely with those excavated at Sutton Courtney, Berks,² and West Row, Mildenhall,³ and not with Early Iron Age dwellings,

¹ R. C. C. Clay, *Wilts Arch. Mag.* XLIII, p. 323, pl. 1.

² E. T. Leeds, *Archaeologia*, XCII, p. 79.

³ T. C. Lethbridge, *C.A.S.* XXXIII (1933), p. 133, fig. 1.

it seems probable that Huts A and B were constructed and occupied during the Anglo-Saxon period.

Two other large ditches were uncovered, I-J which traversed the site on the south side, and K-L running roughly north and south, only a portion of which was excavated. These ditches were not dated. A Roman silvered bronze brooch of winged 'Hod Hill' type and mid-first-century date (Fig. 8, no. 4) was found 1 ft. south of the southern lip of the ditch I-J resting on the gravel, but this does not help in the dating of the ditch itself.

About 20 ft. north of the great south ditch (I-J), a row of nine clay lumps, the greatest diameter of which was 2 ft. and depth 1 ft. 4 in., placed about 9 ft. apart, probably mark the line of a much later boundary fence and have not been shown on the plan.

GENERAL

The special interest of the site lies in the 'grooved-ware' settlement and its associated flint implements and also in the fact that Neolithic B pottery here antedated that occupation and that there was no trace of Beaker or other Bronze Age admixture. The low-lying nature of the site, close to the river, is in keeping with other Neolithic B and 'grooved-ware' settlements in East Anglia, Wessex and the Thames Valley.¹ The closest parallel to the ridged sherds (Fig. 9, nos. 1 and 2) is with 'grooved-ware' from Sutton Courtney, Berks,² though those fragments are from upright rims of beaker-like vessels and not from bowls like the Honington examples. The notched projection on the rim of Fig. 9, no. 2 has been compared with sherds from Woodlands, Amesbury, near Woodhenge.³ Further afield, if the comparison still holds good, Professor Gordon Childe illustrates a pot from Scara Brae with a scalloped rim and mentions a second on which that effect was secured by fixing strips of fine clay obliquely astride the rim.⁴ His recent finds at Rinyo, Ronsay, Orkney have produced further examples.⁵ The projection on the rim of the Honington bowl was also added after the rest of the pot had been made. Other sherds, e.g. Fig. 9, no. 4, are more closely allied with the beaker-like vessels from the Dutch Megaliths such as the example from Bronnegar, Drenthe, illustrated in *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, vol. II, p. 199, fig. 9. The position of Honington follows the known distribution of 'grooved-ware'. The settlers may have come via the Wash, Ouse and Little Ouse, or by the Orwell and Gipping and thence north to the tributary of the Little Ouse on which Honington stands.

Above all, the finds confirm the association of petit-tranchet derivative arrowheads with 'grooved-ware'. When discussing the type⁶ Dr Grahame Clark reached the conclusion that his class B to I derivatives did not precede the Peterborough-Beaker overlap, continued in use into the Early Bronze Age, and were abundant on sites at

¹ Mr J. A. W. Moore has recently found 'grooved-ware' in east Yorkshire.

² E. T. Leeds, *Ant. Journ.* XIV, p. 265, pl. XXIX.

³ J. F. S. Stone, *P.P.S.* xv, p. 123.

⁴ V. G. Childe, *Scara Brae*, p. 129, pl. XLVI.

⁵ V. G. Childe and W. G. Grant, *P.S.A.*, Scot. LXXXI, pp. 16f. and pl. X, 1-2.

⁶ *Arch. Journ.* xci, p. 32.

which 'grooved-ware' had been recognized. This association is known at Lion Point, Clacton,¹ Newport, Essex,² Pishobury near Sawbridgeworth,³ Sutton Courtney, Berks,⁴ the West Kennet avenue at Avebury,⁵ the second occupation level at Windmill Hill,⁶ Ratfyn near Amesbury,⁷ and at Woodhenge.⁸ The Honington site confirms that the derivative forms first appeared in this country, in association, not with the Western Windmill Hill people, but with the descendants of the North European Forest Folk, known here from their Peterborough and 'Grooved-ware' cultures. It is also interesting that serrated flint flakes are common at the 'grooved-ware' settlements. They have been noted from all the sites from which petit-tranchet derivative arrowheads have been recorded above with the exception of the West Kennet Avenue, Windmill Hill and Woodhenge, but they have also been found at Woodlands, Amesbury.⁹

The transverse-edged axe, part of a rectangular polished flint knife¹⁰ and the twenty-one petit-tranchet derivative arrowheads point to a Mesolithic strain in the ancestry of the 'grooved-ware' culture represented at Honington. That it was introduced at the very end of Neolithic times has already been deduced from existing evidence, for an overlap with Beaker culture has often been noted.¹¹ Here, at Honington, the 'grooved-ware' settlement definitely post-dated the Neolithic B occupation and no trace of the Beaker culture was found.

Finally I should like to thank Mr T. C. Lethbridge, Dr Grahame Clark and Dr G. H. S. Bushnell for reading this paper and for making many helpful suggestions, and Miss Joan Liversidge for comments on the Romano-British material.

APPENDIX A

These figures must be read with caution as they have been compiled from Mr Leaf's rough schedules.

Level	Tranchet derivative arrowheads	Leaf-shaped arrowheads	Chisels and axes	Borers	Hammers and anvils	Scrapers	Saws	Utilized flakes and blades	Burnt stones	Cores	Flakes
From gravel subsoil overlying chalk	—	—	—	—	—	2	14	13	42	140	1028
Neolithic I	16	1	2	2	2	48	97	23	781	890	5356
Diluvial	1	—	—	—	1	11	10	2	111	281	1532
Neolithic II	4	—	1	—	—	12	21	21	158	529	2028
Miscellaneous including humus	—	—	—	—	—	3	3	—	11	37	282
Totals	21	1	3	2	3	76	145	59	1103	1877	10226

¹ *P.P.S.* II, pp. 178f.

³ *P.P.S.* II, p. 193.

⁵ *P.P.S.* II, p. 194.

⁷ *Wilts Arch. Mag.* XLVII, p. 55.

⁹ *P.P.S.* XV, p. 122.

² *P.P.S.* II, p. 193.

⁴ *Ant. Journ.* XIV, p. 265.

⁶ *P.P.S.* II, pp. 194-5.

⁸ Cunnington, *Woodhenge* (1929), pp. 118-25.

¹⁰ *P.P.S.E.A.* VI, pp. 41f.

¹¹ E.g. Creting St Mary. *Proc. Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History*, Vol. xxv, Part 2 (1951), p. 209.

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