

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LIII

JANUARY 1959 TO DECEMBER 1959

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DEIGHTON BELL

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CONTENTS

<i>Officers and Council of the Society 1959-60</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Report of the Council for the Year 1958</i>	vii
<i>Summary of Accounts for the Year 1958</i>	viii
<i>List of Members of the Society</i>	ix
Giant Beaker and Rusticated Ware from Lakenheath, Suffolk, and Reproduction of Ornament By GRACE BRISCOE, F.S.A.	I
Roman Godmanchester, Part I By H. J. M. GREEN	8
Notes on Pottery from some Romano-British Kilns in the Cambridge Area By B. R. HARTLEY, M.A., F.S.A.	23
Some Reflections on the Cambridgeshire Domesday By R. WELLDON FINN, M.A.	29
Proposals for the Enclosure of Coldham Common in 1666 and 1667 By SIR J. M. GRAY, M.A.	39
Review Article: <i>City of Cambridge</i> By J. C. DICKINSON, M.A., F.S.A.	47
Archaeological Notes By J. C. WILKERSON, J. LIVERSIDGE, G. BRISCOE and W. E. LE BARD, G. H. S. BUSHNELL and M. D. CRAS' TER	55

GIANT BEAKER AND RUSTICATED WARE FROM LAKENHEATH, SUFFOLK, AND REPRODUCTION OF ORNAMENT

GRACE BRISCOE, F.S.A.

In April 1958, deep ploughing on Rabbit Hill, a rough sandy space uncultivated until recently, disclosed a small black pit containing over 200 sherds of Beaker and Rusticated ware (Grid. Ref. 52/718840). A month before the discovery the field was ploughed to a depth of 6 in. and no sign of black soil appeared. The day after it was ploughed to a depth of 12 in. it was noted by Mrs Richard Briscoe that a very black patch had appeared on the surface and this patch contained numerous sherds. All the pottery in the upturned black soil was collected and then a larger area was excavated down to plough level. This disclosed the top of a black patch (area $4\frac{1}{2}$ by

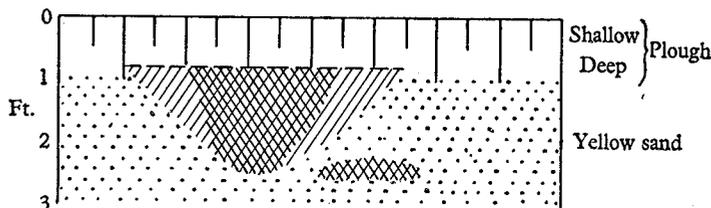


Fig. 1. Lakenheath. Vertical section of pit. Cross hatching, intense black; single hatching, dark grey.

4 ft.) which showed up well against the surrounding light yellow subsoil. It was clear that the deeper plough had removed several inches of black deposit.

The discoloured area, examined by quadrants, was cone-shaped and extended to a depth of $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. below the surface. The central portion, about 2 ft. across, was intensely black and contained numerous sherds, bones, teeth, charcoal in small quantity and many stones of flint and quartzite. Another patch of black sand, 4-5 in. thick, was found close to the point of the cone, but not touching it. It did not contain any pottery (Fig. 1).

THE POTTERY

At the end of the last century Canon Greenwell removed a fine A-type beaker from a barrow on Undley Common, Lakenheath.¹ It is now in the British Museum. In 1934 Beaker and Rusticated sherds were discovered on the Sahara site, Lakenheath,

¹ Abercromby, *Bronze Age Pottery*, vol. 1, pl. VIII, no. 61. *Victoria County History of Suffolk*, p. 266.

a mile away to the south-east (Grid. Ref. 733831). Over 400 sherds were recovered from an area measuring 120 by 40 yards.¹ Since then no Beaker sherds have been found in Lakenheath until the present find.²

Rim sherds from the Rabbit Hill site show that sixteen pots at least are represented, four of which are rusticated in style, three are plain. It has not been possible to make a complete reconstruction.

Beaker type. Fig. 2 *a*: Eight sherds belong to a coarse, thick-walled (9 mm.), flint-gritted, straight-necked vessel of very large size, external rim diameter 12½ in., the depth being known to 4 in. The decoration, bar chevrons enclosing hatched lozenges, all done with a notched technique at eleven notches to the inch, is practically the same as that on the upper part of Canon Greenwell's beaker, which is of normal size, rim diameter 5½ in. Five sherds which come probably from the lower part of this large pot are decorated with a reserved lattice enclosing hatched hexagons, the latter done with a punched technique (Plate I *b*). It has not been possible to compute the height of the pot.

Fig. 2 *c*: The lower part of a well-made pot with bar chevrons bounded by rows of crescents with one faint notch inside. The upper part of this vessel is, probably, shown in Plate I *a*. The rim, diameter 8 in., 6 mm. thick, has a line of vertical stabs along its edge; below are rows of notched lines enclosing a row of crescents with two notches inside followed by a bold criss-cross pattern enclosed in six-sided figures. All the straight lines in both parts are notched at thirteen to the inch. Fig. 2 *d*: An irregular type of decoration, using at least two tools, one of which is notched at nine to the inch. Fig. 2 *e*: Rim sherd (5¾ in. diam.) with rows of stabs and of notched lines at thirteen per inch and suggestion of metopic arrangement below. Fig. 2 *i*: A band of criss-cross is placed below the waist. Fig. 3 *a, b, c, d*: Four rims with notched or incised lines and stabs. Fig. 3 *e*: Grouped rows, vertical and horizontal, of shallow dentate markings at eleven to the inch. Fig. 3 *f*: Reserved lozenges in a wide band of horizontal notched lines bounded by rows of stabs. Fig. 3 *g, h, i, j*: Different forms of 'maggot'-like markings. Plate I *d*: Bar chevrons bounded by notched lines at fourteen per inch, hatched above and below with 'maggot' impressions. Plate I *e*: Base with notched and stab ornament.

Rusticated type. Fig. 2 *f*: Twenty-five sherds of a very large coarse vessel with a flat-topped rim of 13 in. diameter. The base is small, 7 in. diameter, the height is uncertain. Ribs on the neck and all-over decoration of stabs, arrowheads, and dumb-bell markings. Fig. 2 *g*: A small rim sherd of similar diameter has stab ornament on top of and below the rim. A body sherd with the same fabric has a diameter of 14 in. and shows dumb-bell markings. Fig. 2 *b*: Horizontal grooves, only interrupted by lines of stabs, cover the surface of the sherds. The rim is inturned. Fig. 2 *h*: Sherds with abundant flint grit are covered with arrowhead impressions.

¹ G. Briscoe, *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. XLII, p. 92.

² Recently surface indications of three habitation sites have been discovered in Lakenheath (Joist Fen, New Fen, Rightup Drove), producing sherds of Beaker and Rusticated type, with leaf-shaped and tanged arrowheads.

REPRODUCTION OF ORNAMENT

Among the bone fragments from the pit were small portions of teeth which showed signs of wear, suggesting possible use as tools. Mr E. S. Higgs found that the bones were all animal, and that the teeth were molars or premolars of the bovine type with

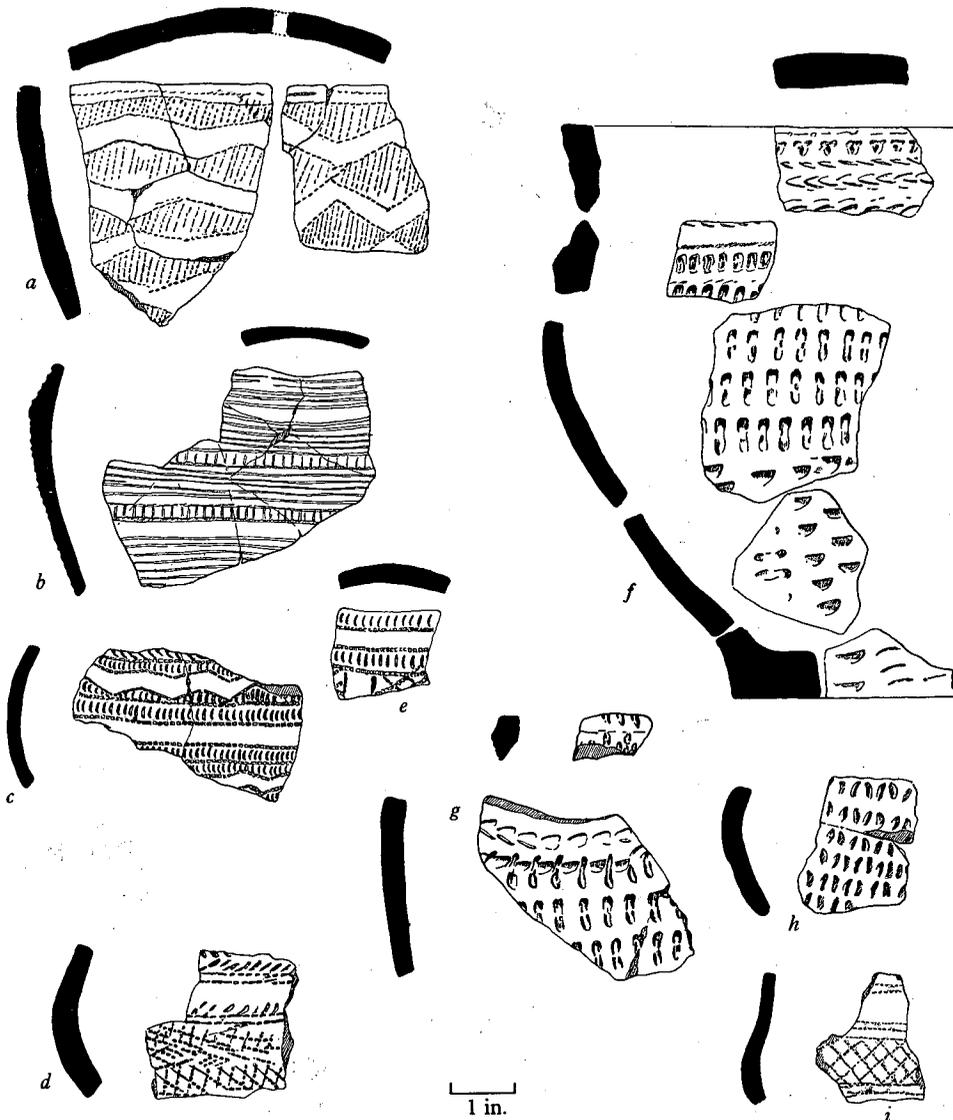


Fig. 2. Lakenheath. Beaker and Rusticated sherds.

one horse incisor. The varying states of preservation of these remains appeared to be due to different degrees of calcining. Some were scarcely affected by fire, others were so heavily calcined that the softened cement around the harder parts could be scraped away and the cusps separated from each other. Most of the teeth were

intact, but others were already in a state of disintegration. These latter portions gave rise to the suspicion that they might have been used as implements before being put into the pit.

The first one examined was a slender hollow stick of dentine, 34 mm. long, with the pointed end sufficiently worn or scraped to expose the hollow Fig. 3 *k*. Mr Higgs

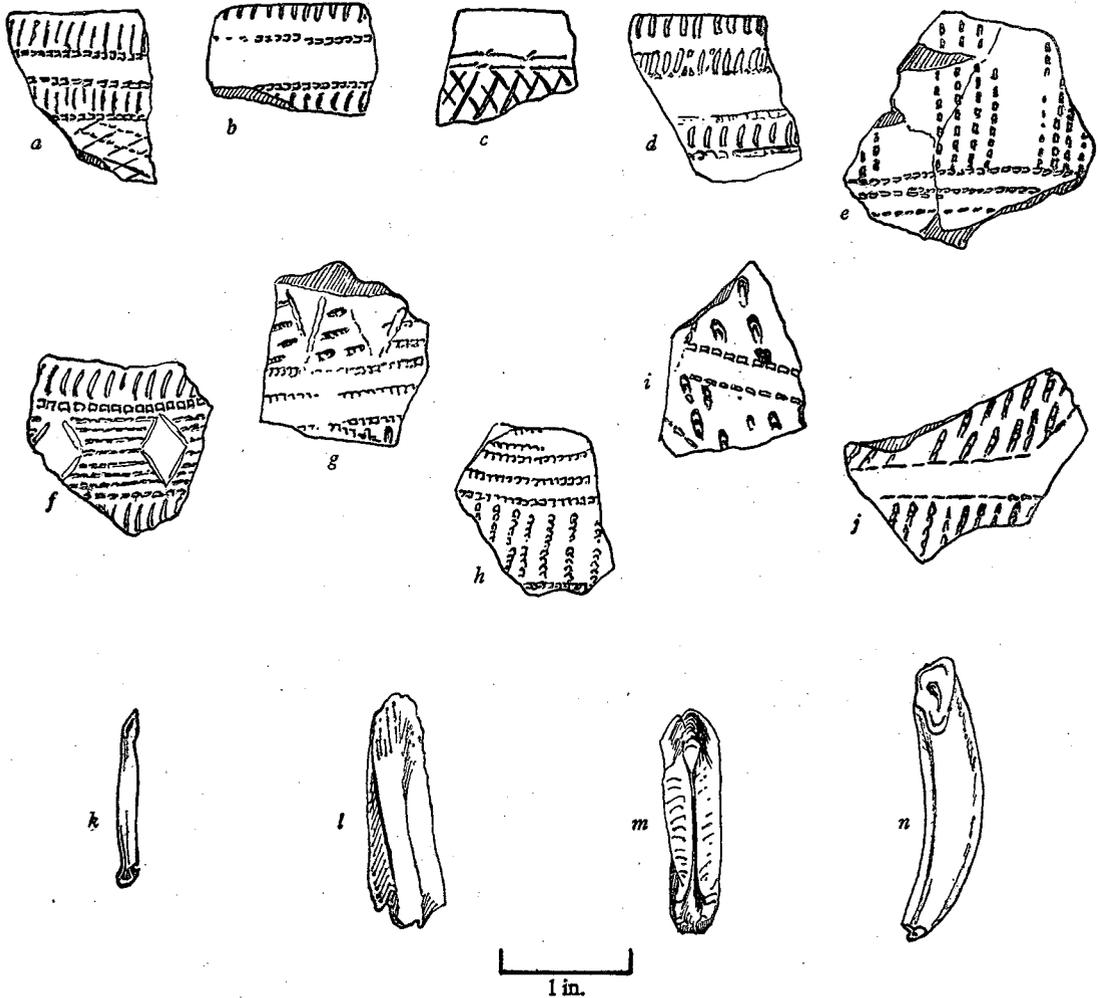


Fig. 3. *a-d*, rims; *e-j*, sherds; *k-n*, portions of teeth showing signs of wear.

recognized this as one of the small pillars accessory to the bovine molar. Slivers of dentine, 30–40 mm. long, had one end formed into a semi-circle tapered down to a fine edge Fig. 3 *l*. Another detached portion, containing one segment of the closely packed cutting-edges, suggested use as an arrowhead impression Fig. 3 *m*. The horse incisor had a cutting-edge giving a crescentic mark interrupted by faint notches, probably due to normal wear and tear during life Fig. 3 *n*. With these as guides an attempt was made to reproduce types of decoration.

The pieces of tooth which were presumed to have been employed in antiquity were used in their original state to reproduce patterns in soft clay Plate I *g*. As a result of experiment it was found that pieces of dentine lining the roots of the teeth were the most suitable for making notched impressions. The dentine is thin, fine and hard, but can still be scratched by flint, while the enamel of the cutting-edge is extremely hard and scarcely workable. The commonest form of notched ornament has a straight rectangular channel, interrupted by partitions, spaced from nine to sixteen per inch. Only small portions of the dentine slivers have straight edges and this limits the size of the tool.

The notched effect can be obtained by scratching the thickness of the dentine with the sharp edge of a flint-flake, of which there was an abundant supply in the pit. A coarser but longer tool can be made from the thin edge of a rib; the largest so made contained fifteen spaces at eleven to the inch and with this a continuous cogwheel effect can be obtained. A notched line with a V-shaped channel can be obtained by scratching the sharp edge of a flint-flake with another flake. Both types are seen on the giant sherds in Fig. 2 *a*. The 'maggot' type of decoration, which has a semi-circular channel, can be reproduced by notching a rolled-over edge of tooth root. This gives the usual outline of a 'maggot' with one end rounded and the other pointed. The length of the maggot is controlled by altering the angle between the implement and the clay Plate I *h*. Some of the decoration uses lines of round holes, very closely spaced, evidently punched with some form of comb. As it did not seem feasible to reproduce this with flint on bone, resort was made to other raw materials available to Beaker people—clay and wood. Thorns were stuck in a line into soft clay and these became set when the clay hardened by exposure to air Plate I *f*. *Berberis jamesiana* has spines which are fine and even, and long-lasting, but various other thorns can be used, even the dried-up end twigs of Virginia Creeper will give a useful comb, though it soon deteriorates. In reproducing a set figure like the hatched irregular-sided hexagons in Plate I *b*, two combs are needed with eleven and four teeth. The four long and the two short sides are quickly punched out and the hatching done by the same tools. A combination of notched and punched technique is shown in Plate I *c*. This sherd was found on the habitation site already mentioned more than a mile away and is reproduced here for the fineness of its craftsmanship.

It is not necessary to make tools to reproduce rusticated patterns. Any piece of bone or tooth which gives a sharp impression can be used. As already stated, pieces of tooth were found in the pit suitable for making arrowhead and crescentic impressions. D. Liddell has shown that some ornament can be reproduced by using the articular ends of modern bird bones.¹ From the pit no articular surfaces survived in sufficiently good condition to be used, but the large dumb-bell impressions on the giant pots can be imitated fairly closely by using the double articulated end of a modern chicken bone. Rusticated and geometrical designs are often combined on one pot, making classification difficult. Any sherd showing conventional straight lines of notching has been regarded as of Beaker type.

¹ D. Liddell, *Antiquity*, vol. III, p. 283.

The reproductions have been made on clay from the Icklingham pits and partly fired in the hot, smokeless ashes of a wood fire. The clay slabs are firm but brittle and have a buff to red colour.

Flint implements. In addition to the flakes already mentioned there were fourteen roughly made scrapers in the pit.

DISCUSSION

The outstanding feature of the collection is the presence of 'giant' Beaker and Rusticated sherds. The decoration on the largest beaker, rim $12\frac{1}{2}$ in., is similar to that on Canon Greenwell's pot of normal size found nearby. It is also very close to that on a pot from Runcton Holme, though in that case the reserved part is a lattice rather than rows of bar chevrons.¹ The voided bar chevrons or lattice with enclosed quadrilaterals of single hatching are seen not only in eastern England but also in Wales.² The suggestion of metopic arrangement seen in Fig. 2 *e* is matched by a similar suggestion on a Runcton Holme sherd.³

So far there has been little evidence of giant pots with geometrical notched beaker decoration in Britain, though recent discoveries of sherds, yet unpublished, by G. V. Taylor show that comparatively large vessels up to $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. rim diameter were used in Lincolnshire. A large sherd (Plate II) in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology has a rim diameter of $9\frac{1}{2}$ in. and a depth of $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. The fabric is thin for the size of the vessel and the surface is covered with decoration, rows of crescentic stabs, concentric circles and grouped rows of notched lines forming a saltire pattern. This sherd collected by the late C. S. Leaf had weathered out on the surface of the sandhill on Plantation Farm, Shippea Hill, on the northern flank of which a section was cut for the Fenland Research Committee in 1931 to reveal a Beaker horizon near the base of the upper peat.⁴

With the exception of the above large pots I have not been able to find examples of giant beakers with notched ornament. I submitted a drawing of sherds of the $12\frac{1}{2}$ -in. pot shown in Fig. 2 *a* to Professor W. Glasbergen of Amsterdam, who kindly gave the following opinion: 'So far no giant beakers ornamented with a dentated spatula are known from the Netherlands, and your sherds are of a type foreign to the Netherlands. Probably your beaker is a late, locally developed descendant of the pan-European or rather Maritime Bell Beaker.'

Examples of giant pots in rusticated style are more common. In the Cambridge Museum there is a large vessel, $11\frac{4}{5}$ in. high, rim diameter $7\frac{1}{4}$ in., found at Somersham, decorated all over with finger-tips in the rusticated manner, which is probably in the Dutch tradition.⁵ The Great Barton pot, now restored and in the Moyses Hall Museum, Bury St Edmunds, has an all-over pattern of jabs worked up into

¹ J. G. D. Clark, *P.P.S.E.A.* vol. VII, p. 200, fig. 3.

² W. E. Griffiths, *P.P.S.* vol. XXIII, p. 57, fig. 1.5.

³ J. G. D. Clark, *P.P.S.E.A.* vol. VII, p. 200, fig. 5 *b*.

⁴ J. G. D. Clark, *Antiq. Jour.* vol. XIII, p. 266.

⁵ Abercromby, *Bronze Age Pottery*, vol. I, pl. IX, no. 76.

ridges. It is 13 in. high with a rim (inturned) of 9 in.¹ D. N. Riley has found a mixture of Beaker and Rusticated ware at Risby Warren, Lincolnshire.² The 'giant' sherds all appear to belong to the latter class. He illustrates a fragment of a large pot with an inturned rim, diameter 12 in., with horizontal and vertical ribs below. Other rusticated fragments have diameters up to 15 in. and flat-topped rims are common. A groove and stab combination, as in Fig. 2 *b*, is seen on a rim sherd from Woodhenge.³

The close association of Beaker and Rusticated ware has been noted in this country at such sites as Chippenham⁴ and Holdenhurst.⁵ The mixture of styles on the same pot shown in the present investigation was also noted by C. S. Leaf at Chippenham.

It has been shown that the Beaker potters had at hand sufficient raw materials to make their tools for decoration, and that recognizable reproductions can be made by using those materials. The pit was scarcely large enough for a hearth or ordinary rubbish dump. The collection of disintegrated teeth with signs of wear, of unusual sherds and of flint-flakes suggest that the pit may have been used for a ritual deposit.

I am greatly obliged to Professor Grahame Clark for his advice in preparing this report.

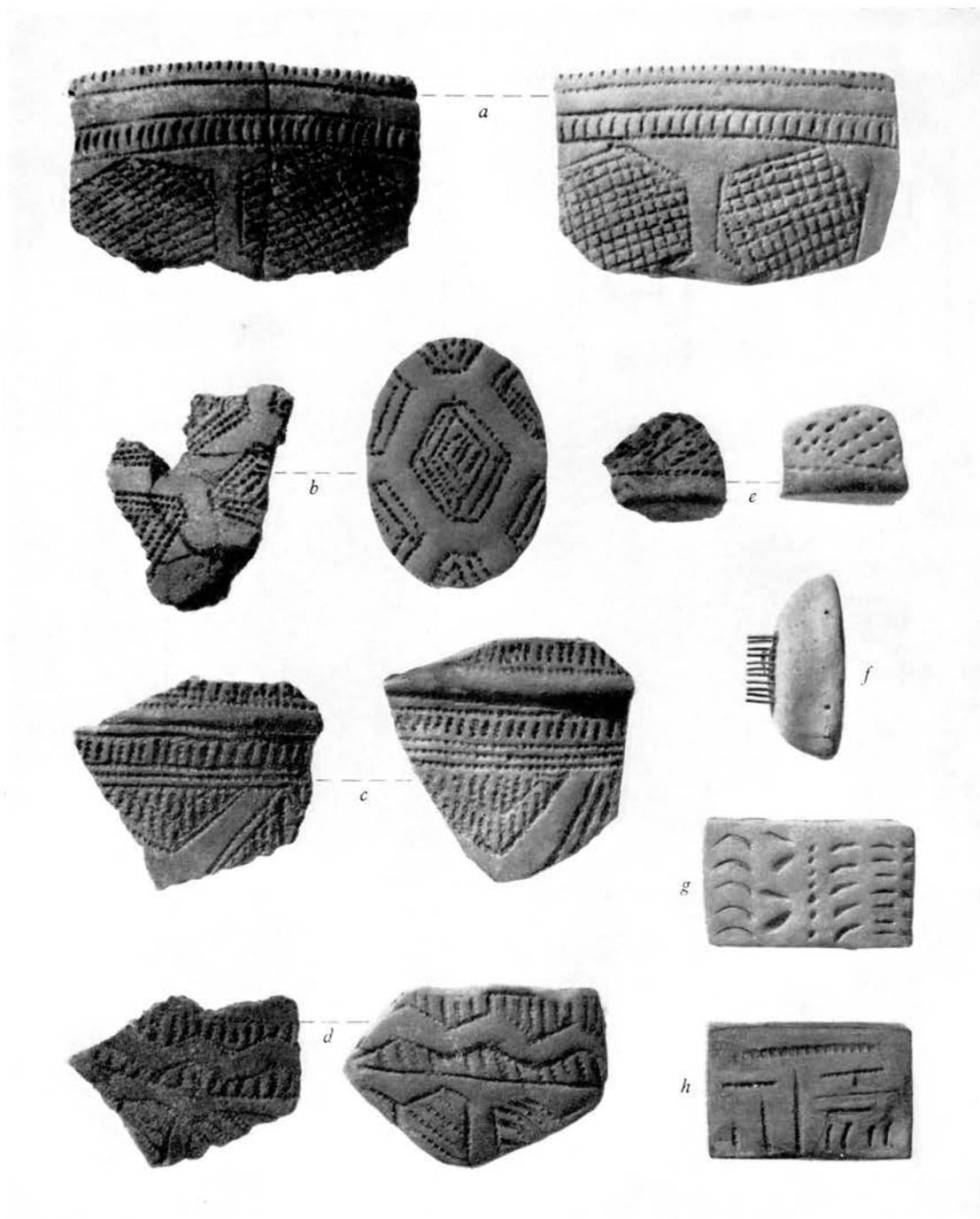
¹ C. Fox, *Arch. Camb. Region*, pl. II, 3.

² D. N. Riley, *P.P.S.* vol. XXIII, p. 40.

³ Illustrated by J. G. D. Clark in Arminghall Report, *P.P.S.* vol. II, p. 30.

⁴ C. S. Leaf, *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. XXXIX, p. 50.

⁵ S. Piggott, *P.P.S.* vol. III, p. 200.



a, b, c, d, e. Sherds on the left, reproductions on the right. All decorations by ancient materials from the pit except the thorns in the comb of *f*; *g*, impressions made by ancient materials as found (in clay); *h*, impressions made by scraps of rib, tooth and flint, notched by scratching with a flint-flake (in plasticine). 3:5



Sherd from Plantation Farm, Shippea Hill. 1:1

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CONTENTS

<i>Officers and Council of the Society 1959-1960</i>	<i>page vi</i>
<i>Report of the Council for the Year 1958</i>	vii
<i>Summary of Accounts for the Year 1958</i>	viii
<i>List of Members of the Society</i>	ix
Giant Beaker and Rusticated Ware from Lakenheath, Suffolk, and Reproduction of Ornament <i>By GRACE BRISCOE, F.S.A.</i>	I
Roman Godmanchester <i>By H. J. M. GREEN</i>	8
Notes on Pottery from some Romano-British Kilns in the Cambridge Area <i>By B. R. HARTLEY, M.A., F.S.A.</i>	23
Some Reflections on the Cambridgeshire Domesday <i>By R. WELLDON FINN, M.A.</i>	29
Proposals for the Enclosure of Coldham Common in 1666 and 1667 <i>By SIR J. M. GRAY, M.A.</i>	39
Review Article: <i>City of Cambridge</i> <i>By J. C. DICKINSON, M.A., F.S.A.</i>	47
Archaeological Notes <i>By J. C. WILKERSON, J. LIVERSIDGE, G. BRISCOE and W. E. LE BARD, G. H. S. BUSHNELL and M. D. CRA'STER</i>	55