

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LV

JANUARY 1961 TO DECEMBER 1961

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DEIGHTON BELL

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*Published for the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (incorporating the Cambs and Hunts
Archaeological Society) by Deighton Bell, 13 Trinity Street, Cambridge*

*Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge
(Brooke Crutchley, University Printer)*

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A BRONZE BOWL AND OTHER VESSELS FROM ICKLINGHAM, SUFFOLK

JOAN LIVERSIDGE

IN 1960 an R.A.F. Bomb Disposal unit began to clear an area on the Earl of Iveagh's estate at Icklingham beside the road from Barton Mills to Bury St Edmunds (Nat. Grid. Ref. 737738). At this spot a German bomber had crashed in 1942, scattering bombs, ammunition and German pamphlets, and now the mechanical digger brought to light parts of the aircraft with 130 bombs. It also uncovered, at a depth of 10 to 12 ft., a find of rather earlier date and more peaceful purpose: a large metal bowl or cauldron containing a small pewter platter and a shallow pottery bowl, with a packing of hay or straw. Accounts vary slightly as to the exact disposition of the two smaller vessels, but, judging from the marks on the pad of vegetation, this was put in first, then the pewter dish with its footstand leaving a clear imprint, and, on top of it, the pottery bowl.

The bowl (Pl. *Ia*), measures 7 in. in diameter and 2.1 in. in depth and is made of a hard, reddish ware covered with a dark grey slip which has worn away in places. It has a grooved vertical rim and is an uncommon type, probably inspired by the Samian form Ludowici Tn.¹ So far no exact parallels have been found for it, but it is probably of fourth-century date. The pewter platter which accompanied it is 6.1 in. in diameter, rimless, but with a thickened edge and standing an inch high on its low base (Pl. *Ib*). It too is an unusual form, and the possibility that it might have been used as a lid was considered. On the whole, however, its identification as a platter seems far more likely.

The metal bowl must have been an impressive object when complete, as it measures approximately 12½ in. in diameter and is about 9 in. deep (Pl. *Ic*). It is made of very thin bronze and a small hole in the base, which must originally have possessed a bronze plug, indicates that it was spun on the lathe. It has been painstakingly patched at least five times, the patches being held in place by rivets, or by small bronze lugs pressed through the bronze and hammered back like modern paper fasteners. The latter method was also employed for some smaller holes. No signs of rust or other traces of an iron rim or handles have survived but there are two pairs of rivet holes 2½ in. apart just below the rim, visible on Pl. *Ic*. One pair still holds fragments of bronze in place on either side of the rim and, if this pair is considered in conjunction with the patch and holes beneath, they might indicate the point where an anchor-shaped mount has been torn adrift in antiquity. The evidence

¹ For this suggestion I am indebted to Mr B. R. Hartley.

for this, however, is not entirely convincing and nothing similar for a second handle was found elsewhere although isolated holes do occur below the rim.

The closest parallel to this bowl appears to be the rather larger one found at Baschurch, Shropshire, some years ago. It has the same convex base and carinated sides but with a less-pronounced curve above the carination. The published report notes that 'At two opposite points are small round holes about $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. below the top edge, and 4 in. below each is a similar hole. These were intended for riveting an anchor-shaped mount to each side, and the outline of this was still shown by rust.'¹ Another bowl of similar type, nearly 10 in. in diameter and $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. deep, was found in Well I, Insula XXIII at Silchester. It also has been spun on the lathe, and just below the plain-cut rim there is a groove formerly covered by an iron rim binding, a few pieces of which have survived. The escutcheon of one handle is missing and the other appears to be a simple iron loop forming an extension of the rim binding, with a repair at the back of it. The cauldron shows traces of soot and, like the Icklingham example, had been patched on several occasions.²

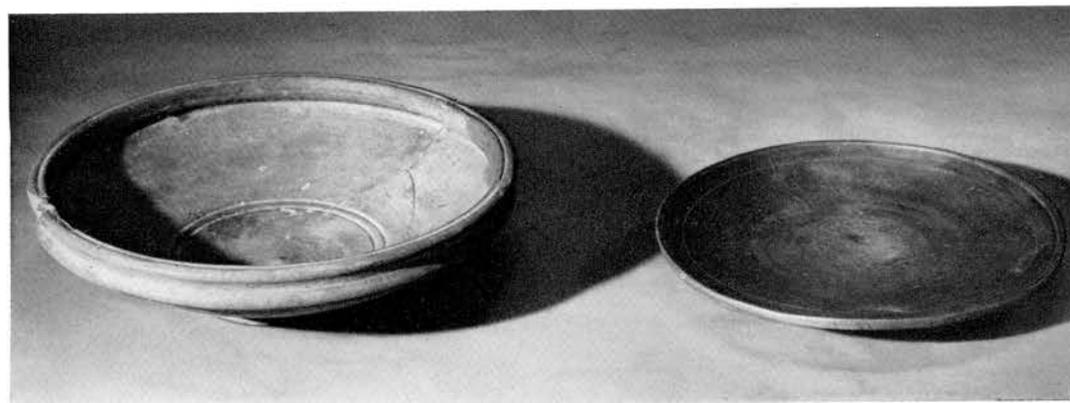
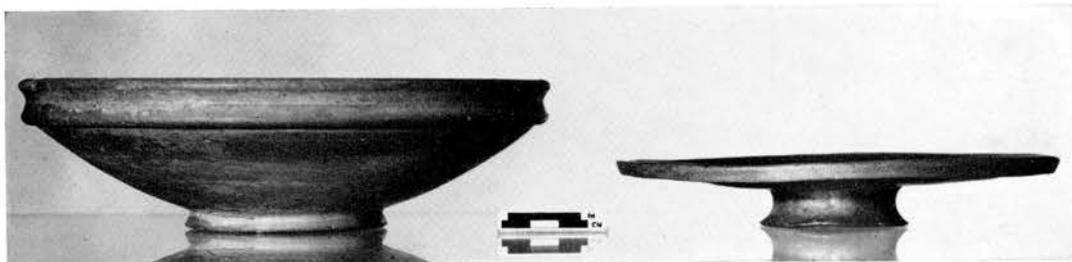
All these vessels belong to the large category of late bowls or cauldrons which Professor Hawkes has described as a development of the British bronze industry affected by Roman influences in the third century. This class dates from around the late third century until well into post-Roman times and the vessels are often found in hoards associated with other objects.³ A late third, or more probably, a fourth-century date would fit in with all three of the items from the Icklingham discovery. Its purpose is uncertain and on present evidence one can only describe it as some kind of votive deposit. Fragments of Romano-British pottery are plentiful in this neighbourhood and a few years ago a coin of Constantius II (A.D. 323-61) was turned up, only a few yards away from the site where the cauldron was discovered.⁴

¹ *Proc. Soc. Ant. London*, XXI (1907), p. 325.

² *Archaeologia*, LVII (1901), p. 246. For further particulars about this bowl I am indebted to Mr J. Wymer of Reading Museum.

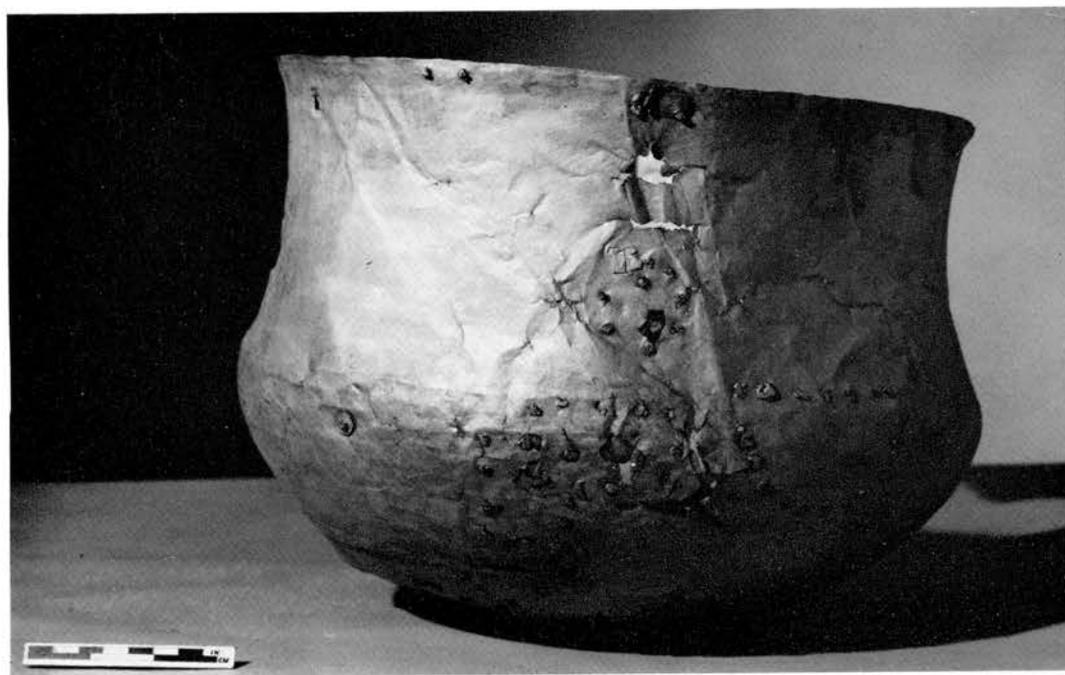
³ W. F. Grimes (ed.), *Aspects of Archaeology* (1951), pp. 186 ff.

⁴ For this information and for the news of the cauldron's discovery the author is indebted to Grace, Lady Briscoe, and to Mr L. P. Morley for the photographs.



(a)

(b)



(c)

Roman votive hoard from Icklingham, Suffolk. (a) Pottery bowl; (b) pewter dish; (c) bronze cauldron.

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