

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LXVI

JANUARY 1975 TO DECEMBER 1976

IMRAY LAURIE NORIE AND WILSON

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FOUR ANGLO-SAXON POTS FROM WEST SUFFOLK

DAVID H. KENNETT

THE four pots which are the subject of this note are now in the collections of Luton Museum.¹ They were acquired in 1964 from the collection of the late Owen Williamson of Strathmore Avenue, Luton, who stated that he had dug them up in 1947 in West Suffolk between the villages of Lackford and Icklingham.

The area of West Suffolk within the boundaries of a line drawn between Newmarket, Bury St Edmunds and Thetford and with the other two sides of the figure completed by the county boundary with Norfolk and Cambridgeshire is rich in Anglo-Saxon cemetery finds.² Hence additional material from the area is not unlikely. Indeed both the villages of Icklingham³ and Lackford⁴ have produced important and well-known cemeteries. These are very different in character. Lackford is one of the largest of all cremation cemeteries found in England. The five hundred or so cremations dug by Lethbridge in 1947 may not account for even half of the total probably original buried there.⁵ Like many cemeteries whose discoveries have been made over a number of years, the urns from Lackford have become dispersed. The main collection is in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge, but sizeable numbers are also in Moyses's Hall Museum, Bury St Edmunds, the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and the British Museum. There are also urns in Prittlewell Priory Museum, Southend-on-Sea, and Ipswich Museum. It would be no surprise to discover

¹ I am grateful to Luton Museum, and in particular Mr R. K. Hagen, the Archaeological Assistant, for drawing my attention to these pots. Permission to publish them was kindly granted by Mr Peter Smith, the then director.

² The cemeteries from the area are given a summary listing in A. L. Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (1964), 224–236. Recent publication of material from the area includes P. Hutchinson, 'The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Little Eriswell, Suffolk', *Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc.* 59 (1966), 1–32; T. Briscoe, 'The Anglo-Saxon S-shaped brooch in England . . .', *Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc.* 61 (1968), D. H. Kennett, 'Anglo-Saxon Finds from Tuddenham, Suffolk', *Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc.* forthcoming. Older summaries are those by C. F. Fox, *Archaeology of the Cambridge Region* (1923, reprinted 1948), 264–5 but with illustrations pls. 29 nos. 2–4, 32 no. 5, 33 nos. 1 and 3; and rather more full by R. A. Smith, *V.C.H. Suffolk I* (1911), 325–355.

³ This cemetery has no readily available publication. For a summary see R. A. Smith in *V.C.H. Suffolk I* (1911), 343. Items are individually noted in this piece, with reference to museum location.

⁴ T. C. Lethbridge, *A Cemetery at Lackford, Suffolk*. [*Cambridge Antiquarian Society 4to Publ.* n.s. VI, (1951).]

⁵ J. N. L. Myres, *Anglo-Saxon Pottery and the Settlement of England* (1969) 7, n. 1.

that other museums also have small collections. Nor would it seem improbable that other small groups are in private possession, awaiting acquisition by museum collections distant from the place of discovery.

The cemetery found at Icklingham was very different in rite. It was a purely inhumation cemetery, probably arranged around a Bronze Age barrow. Its finds have also become split between several museums. Material from this cemetery has been located in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, who have the major part, the British Museum, London, Moyses's Hall Museum, Bury St Edmunds, and Colchester Museum. Publication is also scattered⁶ and as an important inhumation cemetery in the area, with grave groups still reconstructable, at least from the items in Oxford,⁷ it deserves extended treatment. The brooches, few of which have been figured, include eleven cruciform brooches of Aberg's groups II–V,⁸ the head of a radiate brooch of Kuhn's type 22,⁹ and a number of small-long brooches.¹⁰ There are also buckle plates with style I ornament¹¹ and some scabbard fittings decorated with ornament of Salin's style II.¹² There is also the usual range of minor accoutrements, though weapons are few in their survival.¹³

The suggestion can therefore be made that our four pots are more likely to have been found in the Lackford cemetery rather than the Icklingham one. The year of discovery, 1947, would not be inconsistent with the main discoveries at Lackford while the finds from Icklingham were made in the late nineteenth century. Also Lackford is a cremation cemetery with no inhumations. In contrast the purely inhumation cemetery at Icklingham has yet to record any

⁶ See n. 3 above. There are brief comments in *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Arch.* 6 (1888) 67–71, and H. Prigg, *Icklingham Papers* (1901) opp. 63, both cited by A. L. Meaney, *op. cit.* n. 1, 231, but not available to me.

⁷ Until recently, some grave groups were still exhibited as such by the Ashmolean Museum.

⁸ N. Aberg, *The Anglo-Saxons in England* (1926) table I, nos. 26, 28, 70, 71, 72, 120, 205, 206, 207. This omits British Museum, register number 1927 2–12, 21, an example of group III, and 1856 6–26, 4, an early example of group II.

⁹ Bury St Edmunds, Moyses's Hall Museum; omitted by H. Kuhn in the lists to *Die Germanischen Bugelfibeln der Völkerwanderungszeit in der Rheinprovinz* (1940), and by Aberg, *op. cit.* n. 8, table V. The present author is in the process of making a list of radiate brooches from eastern England and has found several additions to the lists of Kuhn and Aberg.

¹⁰ Conveniently listed, E. T. Leeds, 'The Distribution of Angles and Saxons Archaeologically Considered', *Archaeologia* 91 (1945), 1–106.

¹¹ Bury St Edmunds, Moyses's Hall Museum.

¹² Bury St Edmunds, Moyses's Hall Museum; illustrated E. T. Leeds, *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology* (1936, reprinted 1968) pl. 18, e.

¹³ The lack of survival of ironwork is probably more common than might at first be recognised. Apart from problems of disintegration, if not conserved properly, ironwork is less 'pretty' than jewellery and may not have been saved by nineteenth century collectors.

cremation burials, and I am not aware of any accessory vessels from this site.

The four pots in Luton Museum (Fig. 1) are all cremation urns. They add to the range of ceramics already known from the area. The first has a series of linear grooves split by one line of stamps. This form of decoration is found on a number of globular vessels at Lackford, mostly illustrated by schematic diagrams and including one with an 'S' stamp¹⁴ as here. If a potter is to be identified for Fig. 1.1, a more probable candidate is the maker of some very differently decorated vessels, which also have an 'S' stamp. These have a row of 'S' stamps in decorative schemes with grooves and on occasion swags or diamond inter-lace.¹⁵

Two pots (Fig. 1.2, 3) are shoulder boss urns. One is plain (Fig. 1.2) and these have been found at Lackford.¹⁶ The other (Fig. 1.3) has groups of cross-in-circle stamps between groups of three shoulder bosses. The last of these vessels (Fig. 1.4) has its decoration placed above the carination, as a series of grooves below the neck above an arrangement of three vertical grooves alternating with five dimples. It is an example of biconical linear ornament: Myres' pots from Loveden Hill, Lincs., and Illington, Norfolk,¹⁷ have stamps between their vertical grooves but essentially illustrate the same scheme.

None of these four pots is easy to date, though chronology should not always be the prime consideration in Anglo-Saxon ceramic studies. One may postulate a sixth-century dating for each, though not with any firm parallels with dateable associations. It is possibly more useful to note the existence of these vessels and that Luton Museum should in all probability be added to the list of museums which hold pots from Lackford, Suffolk.

NOTE: each of these vessels is in Luton Museum, under the general accession number of x/181/64 OW (x being the individual number of each vessel). They are illustrated on Fig. 1.

¹⁴e. g. Lethbridge, *op. cit.* n. 4, fig. 19 no. 49 28; those schematically shown fig. 32, nos. 50 96, 50 67A, and 50 65B.

¹⁵Lethbridge, *op. cit.* n. 4, fig. 20, nos. 49 1, 49 23, 48 2484, 48 2482, and 48 2483.

¹⁶Myres, *op. cit.* n. 5, fig. 13, nos. 975 and 978.

¹⁷Myres, *op. cit.* n. 5, fig. 19, nos. 2250 and 1280, respectively.

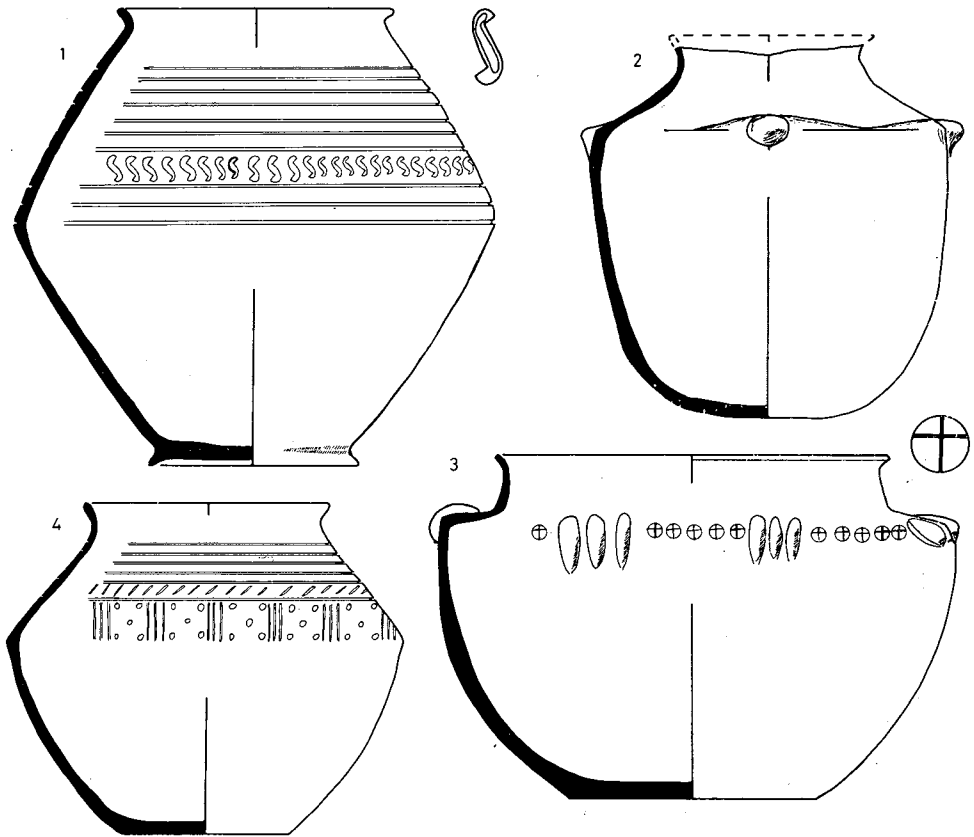


Fig. 1. Parts In Luton Museum, possibly from Lackford

Description of pots figured

1. Footed biconical urn in dark grey ware with a lumpy surface, decorated with a set of ten horizontal grooves above the mid-point. Between the seventh and eighth grooves is a row of 'S' stamps. Rim missing. Height extant 23.7cm, base diameter 11.3cm.
2. Shouldered urn with four bosses on distinct shoulder carination, in a dark grey gritty ware with smooth surfaces. The pot lacks the rim, part of the neck and two large areas of the body and the base is damaged. Height extant 20.0cm, base 13.4cm.
3. Large shouldered urn, almost a bowl, in sparsely gritted dark brown ware with smooth surfaces. On the shoulder are six sets of three bosses with groups of five (in once case six) cross-in-circle stamps between them. Height 18.5cm, rim diameter 20.8cm, base 13.2cm.
4. Biconical urn in brown ware with grits but smooth surfaced, lost on part of one side. Decoration consists of six grooves with a flat collar of diagonal slashings between the lowest two. Below the lowest groove is a set of panels of five dimples each separated by three vertical grooves. Below the carination the pot is plain. Height 17.8cm, rim 13.0cm, base 8.8cm.

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