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OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
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(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LXX

1980

IMRAY LAURIE NORIE AND WILSON

1981

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

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1950

BY
J. H. GOLDSTEIN
AND
R. F. SCHWENKER

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A RE-INTERPRETATION OF CHIPPENHAM BARROW 5, WITH A DISCUSSION OF THE BEAKER-ASSOCIATED POTTERY

Alex M. Gibson

I. THE BARROW

Barrow 5 was one of a number of barrows to be excavated in the 1930's by C. S. Leaf, and reported in *P.C.A.S.* (Leaf 1936, 1940), all of which produced evidence for pre-barrow occupation by way of sherds and flints from the old ground surface. Barrow 5, however, yielded rather more concrete evidence, and it is this barrow that forms the subject of this report.

The barrow is recorded by Leaf as being 147ft. (c. 45m.) in diameter with an outer bank but no visible mound, although there was a thin capping of sand covering a small natural knoll. The barrow seems to have been a sand mound, therefore, and not reinforced by turves etc. The surrounding bank was of gravel.

During the excavation of the central area a double ring of stake-holes was found just inside the gravel bank for stakes about 4 ins. (10 cms) in diameter and 3 ins. (7.3 cm.) deep. Eight feet (2.5 m.) within the bank was another ring of larger posts 9 ins. (22 cm.) in diameter and 6 ins. (14.7 cm.) deep. As noted by the excavator, these posts, filled with charcoal, may have been deeper, as subsequent ploughing has destroyed much of the top of the layer. Mr Leaf's interpretation was that 'the outer double ring would form a low palisade while the inner would form a circle of large posts, some of which were apparently arranged in pairs'. He then observes that similar stake circles beneath barrows have been found in the Netherlands.

This is, of course, true and stake and postholes are common beneath round barrows not only in Holland but in Britain too (Ashbee 1960). In most cases, however, the circles are rather more regular than at Chippenham. For example in Barrow 5 only some of the inner circle of posts are double, and the outer stake hole circle disappears beneath the surrounding bank on the east and north-east side (fig. 1). Especially unusual are the two large postholes to the north east, numbered hearths I and VII in Mr Leaf's plan. The fact that they were at first thought to be hearths suggests that they were filled with charcoal, but they proved to be large postholes forming an entrance. Dimensions for these postholes are not given in the report but from the plan it is possible that they were about 3 ft. (c. 1m.) across, very out of character with the 4 in. (10 cm.) diameter stakes of the outer ring. Seven large hearths were found within the central area, two of which, hearths III and IX, cross the line of the outer stake circle; but it is not clear from either the plan or the description whether the hearths are stratigraphically earlier or later than the stakeholes. It may be assumed that these

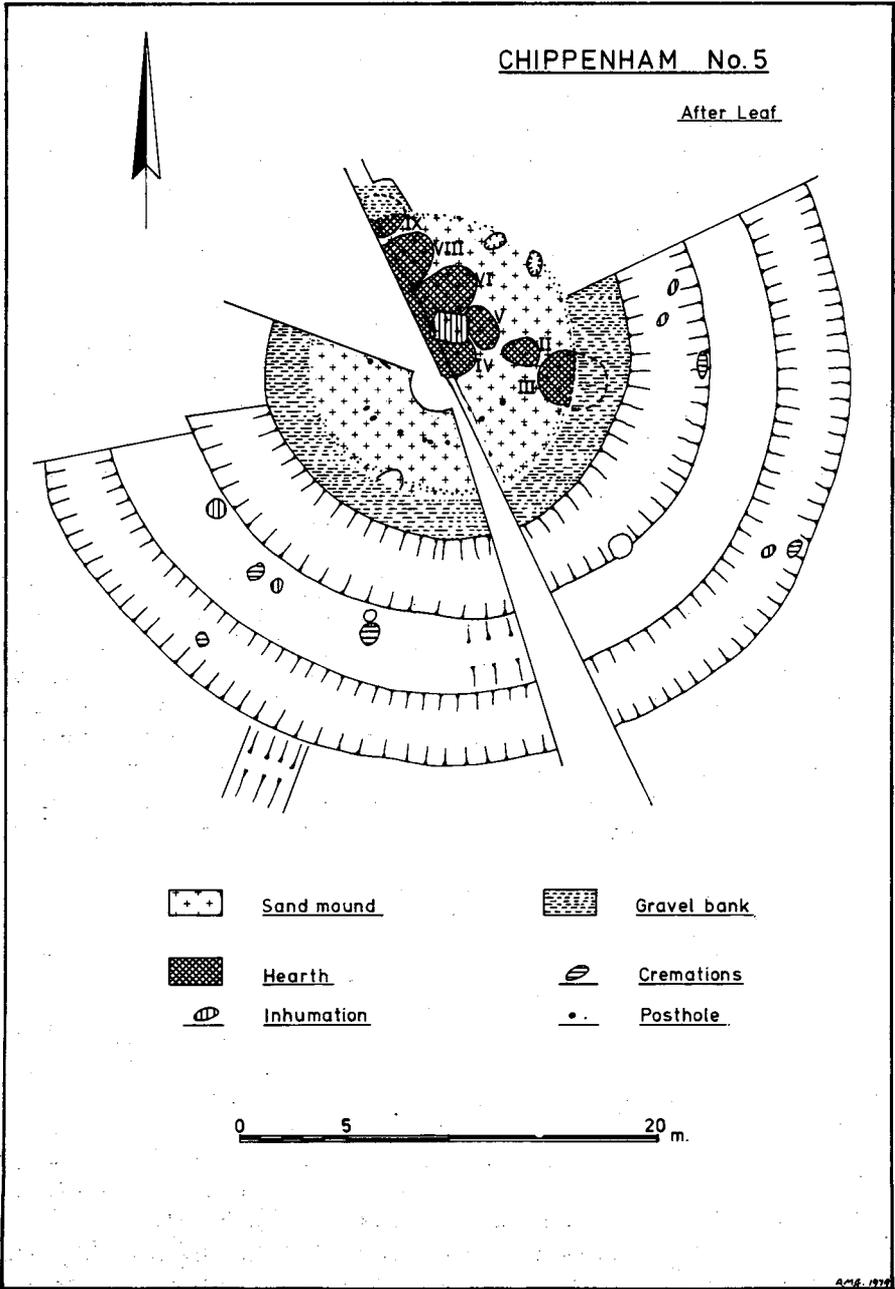


Fig. 1. Chippenham, Barrow 5 (after Leaf).

hearths are earlier for the following reasons:

- 1) there is no sterile layer mentioned between the hearth and the old ground surface as might be expected if the hearth were later, and it was clearly found beneath the mound which Mr Leaf saw as contemporary with the stake circles;
- 2) if this was a thin hearth above the posts then it would have been destroyed by the modern ploughing which was reported to have done so much damage to the post and stake holes;
- 3) there is no mention of a large spread of charcoal over the site around the area of the hearth as would be expected if the hearth was a later deep one of which only the lowest part had escaped plough damage;
- 4) the sherds from these hearths are said to have been few and abraded while those from the hearths nearer the centre and within the stake circle are comparatively fresh;
- 5) these hearths, as well as the stake holes, are certainly pre-bank as they both underlie that feature, but they cannot be contemporary with each other.

A mesolithic working floor was found beneath hearths VIII and IX on the northern part of the site.

The sequence of activity on the site, then, is seen by the writer to be as follows. Firstly, Mesolithic occupation as attested by the floor just mentioned; secondly, Neolithic occupation of a rather scanty nature represented by a carinated western Neolithic bowl and a late Neolithic incised hammer rim found in a depression near the outer ditch on the east side, and from beneath the inner bank on the east-north-east respectively. At least hearths III and IX may be associated with the second sherd mentioned, but cannot, at any rate, be far removed in date. We then would have the construction of the stake and posthole circles, associated with, possibly, hearth IV or VIII, then the primary unaccompanied inhumation and the erection of the first phase of the two-period barrow.

RE-INTERPRETATION

The writer sees the structure beneath barrow 5 at Chippenham not as representing wooden circles of a ritual nature, but a round hut about 40 ft. in diameter (c. 3.35m.), (fig. 2). The outer wall is of paired stakes which supported a wattle and daub wall, fragments of daub having been found on the site, and the posthole circle represents larger freestanding posts which formed roof supports. The fact that some are double suggests re-cutting and the replacement of decayed timber. The two large postholes on the outer circle represent an entrance, and their large size is not unparalleled. The hearths, pottery, flint and domestic animal bones all reinforce the theory that there was domestic activity on the site before the erection of the barrow.

There is a problem, however, and that is that all the hearths could not be contemporary, but all except hearths V and IX have produced Beaker pottery and so cannot be too far separated chronologically. Even hearths V and IX had some Beaker

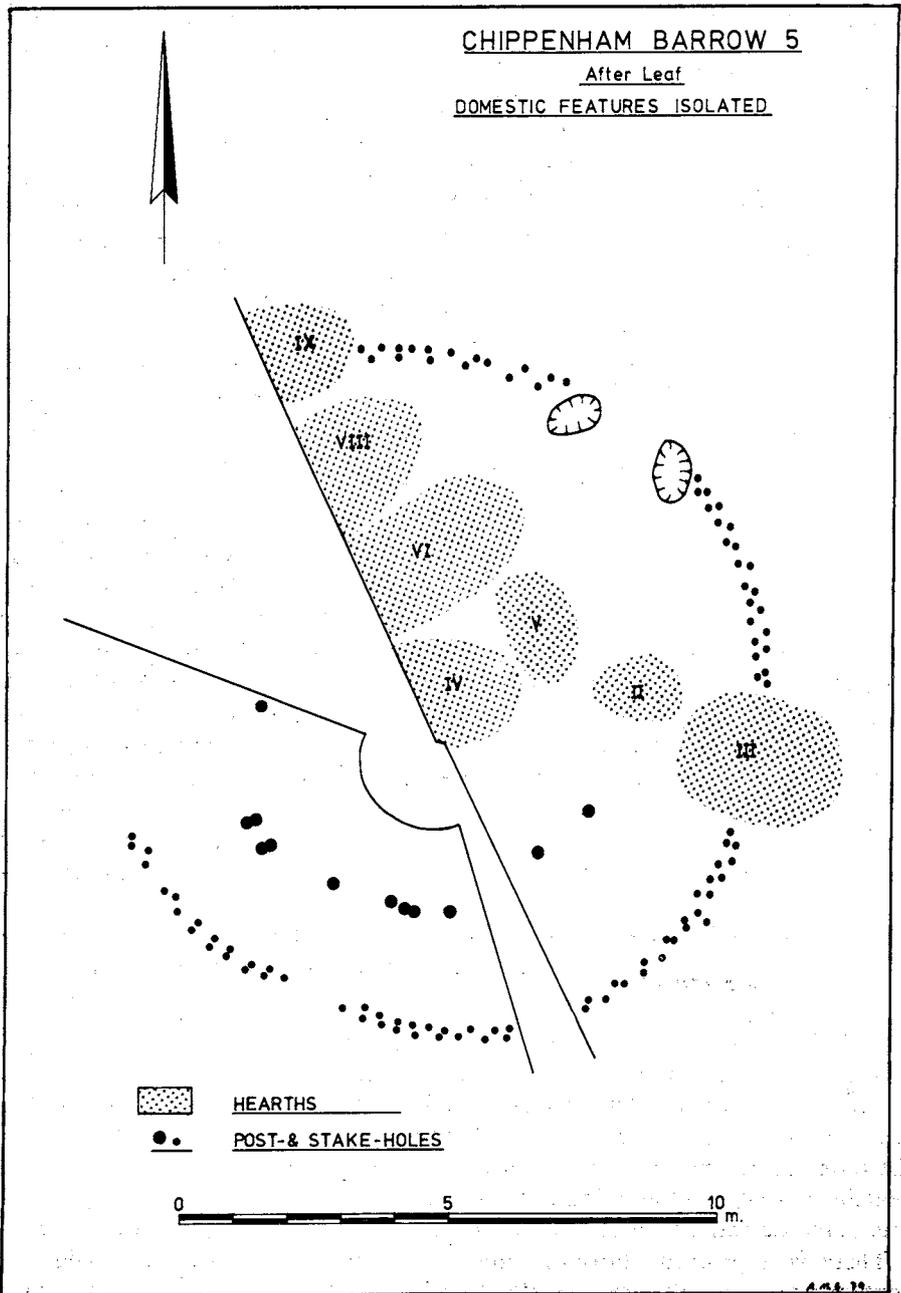


Fig. 2. Chippenham, Barrow 5 (after Leaf). Domestic features isolated.

sherds associated with them, but these fitted sherds from other hearths. Only hearths IV, V, and VII could be contemporary with the hut, assuming that the ring of postholes is, in fact, a true circle.

Daub was found at Chippenham, though in exactly what quantity it is difficult to say; but the outer stakeholes could have supported a wattle and daub wall of considerable strength as the stakes themselves were quite broad, as already mentioned, and they do not appear to have been replaced as do some of the posts of the inner ring, perhaps due to protection afforded by the daub. If this is the case, then the outer wall despite its flimsyness on the ground, may have been in actual fact quite strong, as the posts are about 1 ft. (c. 30cm.) apart according to Mr Leaf's plan. Consequently, the large size does not render the interpretation of the monument as a hut unacceptable. West Brandon houses A and B (Jobey 1962) Little Woodbury houses I and II (Musson 1970), High Knowes A (Jobey and Tait 1966) are all similar in size to, if not larger than, the Chippenham site where the wattle and daub wall would give the same kind of support as offered by the ring groove of some of the other examples quoted. The internal postholes would be sufficient to hold a roof of some light material such as skins and, in any case, Musson has shown (*op. cit.*) that internal posts need not be present in a house, as a light roof could be entirely supported by ring or tie beams. The two may have been combined at Chippenham with the internal supports giving added strength, and need not have even been a complete circle. The large door posts are also paralleled at some of the sites mentioned above, and in the Bronze Age houses at Itford Hill (Burstow and Hollyman 1957). Admittedly, these examples are from later contexts than the Chippenham barrow, but our knowledge of huts of this period is very slight and so the lack of contemporary parallels only represents the state of present knowledge. Also, despite the difference in date, round huts are round huts the world over, as shown by numerous ethnographic parallels, and carpentry in the Early Bronze Age would be similar to that of later prehistory; tools may have changed but there is no evidence to suggest that nails were used in the later huts, so the basic techniques may have been the same.

The hearths present the only problems of interpretation; III and IX are probably earlier than the hut, and II and VII cannot be contemporary with the hut if the circle of roof supports is a complete one. All the pottery is similar and closely dateable so what we must envisage is that some hearths were in existence, and fell into disuse and were used by the same people who built the hut. Certainly, the amount of pottery from barrow 5 and the other barrows in the group suggests that occupation in this area was extensive.

II. THE POTTERY

The pottery discussed here is, in the main, non-Beaker rusticated ware which Mr Leaf intended to publish later when his excavation was complete but which never did see print (Leaf. 1940 p. 60). True Beaker has been omitted from this discussion as adequate drawings, though not of all the material, were published in the 1940 report.

Nos. 30 and 86 are probably true Beaker, but have been included here as No. 30 is semi-rusticated, and the decoration of No. 86 is unusual.

The majority of the pottery is coarse rusticated sherds, very different to the Beaker material in character. Finger pinched cordons are most commonly found as in sherds Nos. 44-49 inclusive, usually only horizontal, but vertical and horizontal ribs may sometimes be combined (Nos. 8, 17, 35). In the case of sherds No. 2 and No. 4, a large horizontal cordon has been applied and covered with finger tip impressions, in such a way that a collar has been formed. The body of No. 2 is probably truncated like urn or Fengate ware, while that of No. 4 is probably hemispherical. These cordons are really quite common on Grooved Ware (Wainwright and Longworth, 1971), and this is also true of the applied knobs on Nos. 39 and 42, which are common to the rinyo style of Grooved Ware. The finger impressed decoration is commonly formed by the whole tip being impressed into the clay as in Nos. 27 and 72 and so a tear-shaped ridge of dislodged clay is often formed on one side of the depression.

Finger nail decoration is also quite common but not quite so frequent as finger tip (Nos. 30-34, 80, 82-3). The fabric of these vessels is also finer and harder than that of the other sherds, so they are probably more nearly related to Beaker ware than the vessels described above. Incision is found on only three sherds, the Beaker ware mentioned above, and the later Neolithic rim sherd No. 77, found beneath the gravel bank of Barrow 5. Cord decoration is present in only one case, No. 85, possibly from a collared urn as the fabric is thick and coarse.

III. CATALOGUE OF THE POTTERY

Barrow 5 Hearth II. (Fig. 3, 1)

1) 2 sherds. Finger tip decor. Brown ext. Pink-brown int. Medium grit. Hard.

Barrow 5 Hearth IV. (Fig. 3, 2-16)

2) 3 sherds. Finger tip decor. Brown ext. Pink int. Med. grit. Hard.

3) 3 sherds. Finger tip decor. Grey throughout. Medium grit. Hard.

4) Five sherds. Finger tip and cordoned decoration. Brown fabric. Med. grit. Crumbly.

5) Finger pinched cordon decor. Grey fabric. Fine grit. Hard.

6) Two sherds. Finger tip decor. Brown fabric. Med. grit. Hard.

7) Four sherds. Finger raised ribs. Reddish ext. Grey-red int. Med. protuding grit. Crumbly fabric.

8) Finger raised horizontal and vertical ribs. Red-brown ext. Black int. Med. grit. Crumbly fabric.

9) Finger nail decor. Light brown ext. Grey int. Med. grit. Hard fabric.

10) Paired Finger nail impressions. Grey fabric. Fine-med. grit. Hard.

11) Fingernail impressions. Dark brown ext. Blank int. Fine grit. Hard.

12) Finger raised ribs. Brown ext. Grey int. Med. grit. Hard.

- 13) Two sherds. Fingernail decor. Brown fabric. Med. grit. Hard.
- 14) Horizontal finger nail decor. Brown ext. Grey int. Fine grit. Hard.
- 15) Finger tip decor. Light brown fabric. Med. grit. Hard.
- 16) Finger tip decor. Grey-brown ext. Brown int. Med. grit. Hard.

Barrow 5 Hearth VI (Fig. 3, 17-33)

- 17) Finger raised vertical and horizontal ribs. Light brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.
- 18) Finger tip and Nail decor. Grey ext. Brown int. Fine-Med. Grit. Hard.
- 19) Finger tip decor. Brown fabric. Med. grit. Hard-crumbly fabric.
- 20) Finger nail decor. Grey ext. Black int. Fine-med. grit. Hard.
- 21) Horizontal finger nail imps. Grey ext. Brown int. Fine-med. grit. Hard.
- 22) Finger nail decor. Grey fabric. Fine grit. Hard.
- 23) Finger nail decor. Brown ext. Grey int. Fine grit. Hard.
- 24) Three sherds. Finger nail decor. Brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.
- 25) Finger nail decor. Grey-brown fabric. Med. grit. Hard.
- 26) Finger tip and nail decor. Brown-light brown fabric. Med. grit. Hard.
- 27) Five sherds. Finger tip decor. Brown Fabric. Med. grit. Hard.
- 28) Three sherds. Finger nail decor. Grey fabric. Fine-med. grit. Hard.
- 29) Three sherds. Fingernail decoration. Grey-brown ext. Black int. Med. grit. Hard.
- 30) Finger nail and incised decor. Pink ext. Grey int. Fine grit. Hard.
- 31) Finger nail decor. Grey-brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.
- 32) Finger nail and cordon decor. Pink fabric. Med. grit. Hard.
- 33) Finger nail decor. Brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.

Barrow 5 Hearth VIII (Fig. 4, 34-69)

- 34) Finger nail decor. Light brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.
- 35) Finger nail and cordon decor. Grey ext. Light brown int. Fine grit. Med. hard.
- 36) Finger nail and cordon decor. Dark brown fabric. Fine grit. Med. hard.
- 37) As above.
- 38) Finger tip decor. Brown-orange surfaces. Med.-coarse grit. Crumbly-hard.
- 39) Finger raised cordon and applied knobs. Dark brown fabric. Med. grit. Med. hard.
- 40) Finger raised cordons. Brown ext. Grey int. Fine-med. grit. Hard.
- 41) Finger tip decor. Light brown ext. Int. missing. Med.-coarse grit. Hard-crumbly.
- 42) Finger raised cordons and applied knobs. Dark brown surfaces. Med. grit. Hard.
- 43) Finger raised vertical and horizontal cordons. Dark brown surfaces. Fine grit. Hard.
- 44) Finger raised cordons. Light brown ext. Dark grey int. Fine grit. Med. hard.
- 45) Finger raised cordons. Brown ext. Dark grey int. Fine-med. grit. Hard.
- 46) Finger raised cordons. Brown ext. Dark grey int. Fine-med. grit. Hard.
- 47) As above.
- 48) Finger raised cordons. Light brown surfaces. Fine grit. Hard.

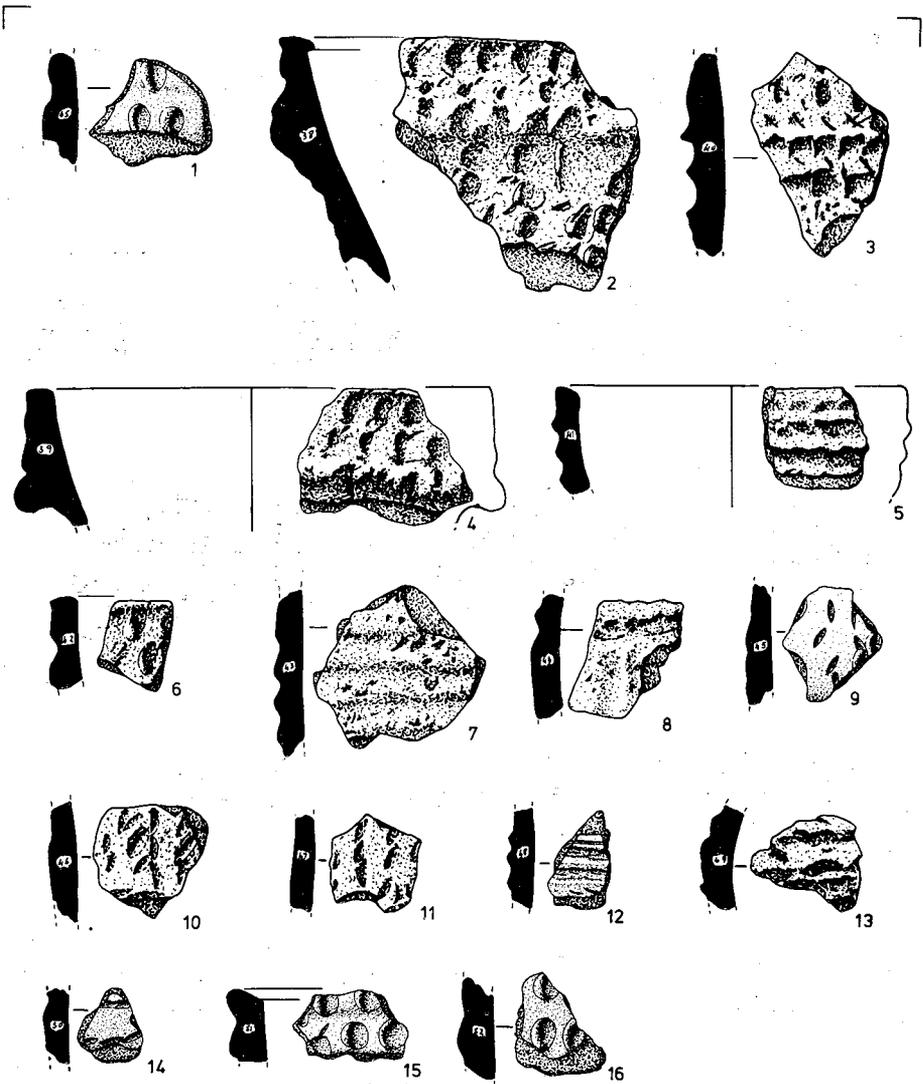


Fig. 3. Pottery from Chippenham, Barrow 5
 1 Hearth II
 2-16 Hearth IV

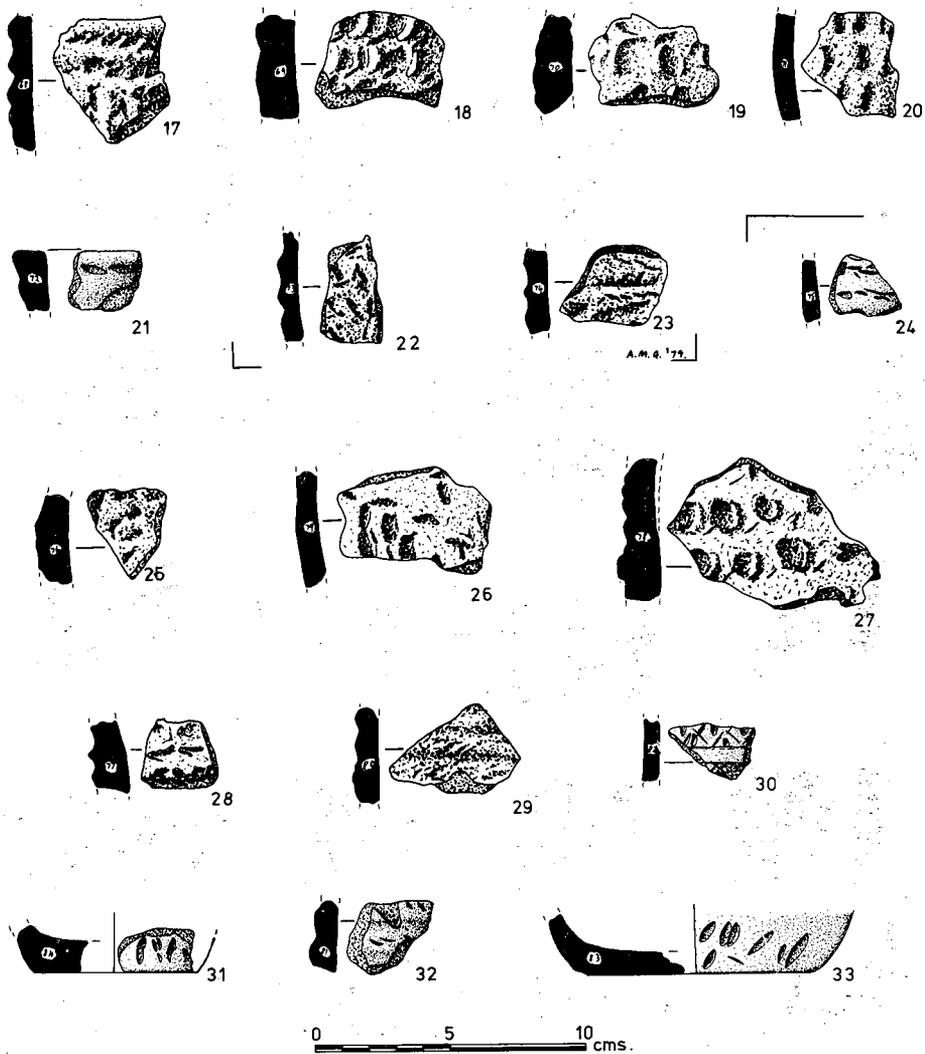


Fig. 3. (continued)
17-33 Hearth VI

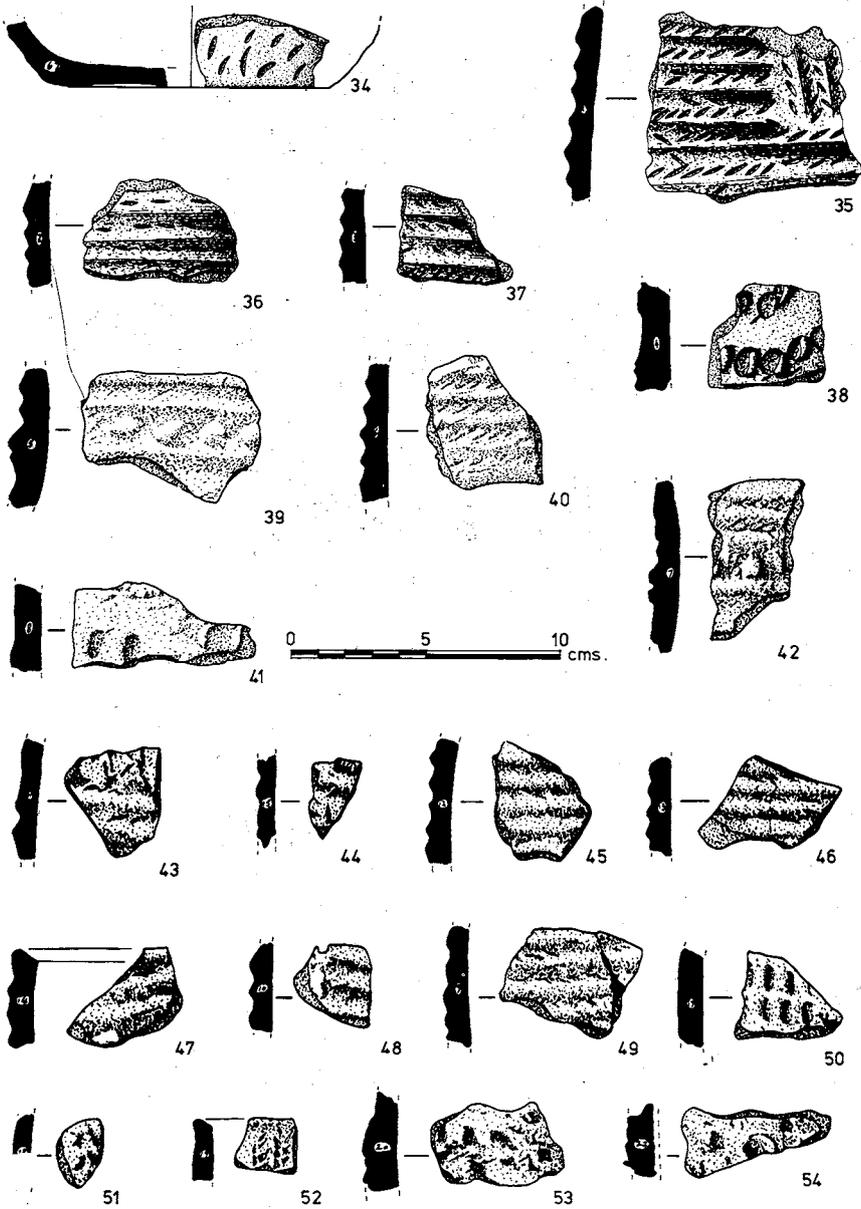


Fig. 4. Pottery from Chippenham, Barrow 5, Hearth VIII

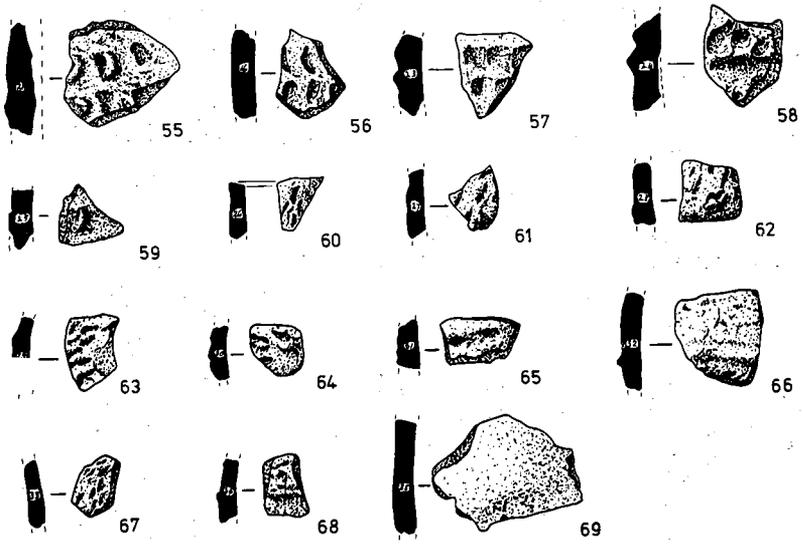


Fig. 4. (continued)
Hearth VIII continued.

- 49) Finger raised cordons. Brown ext. Grey int. Fine-med. grit. Hard.
- 50) Finger nail imps. Orange-brown ext. Dark grey int. Fine grit. Hard.
- 51) Paired finger nail imps. Light brown ext. Brown-grey int. Fine grit. Hard.
- 52) Paired finger nail imps. Dark brown fabric. Fine-med. grit. Hard.
- 53) Finger tip imps. Light brown ext. Orange-light brown int. Fine-med. grit. Med. hard.
- 54) As above.
- 55) As above. Int. missing.
- 56) Finger nail imps. Brown ext. Dark grey int. Fine grit. Hard.
- 57) Finger tip decor. Brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.
- 58) Finger raised cordons. Orange-brown ext. Brown-grey int. Med. grit. Hard.
- 59) As above. Int. missing.
- 60) Finger nail imps. Brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.
- 61) Finger nail imps. Light brown ext. Grey int. Fine grit. Hard.
- 62) Finger nail imps. Grey fabric. Fine grit. Hard.
- 63) Finger nail imps. Dark Brown ext. Brown-dark grey int. Fine grit. Hard.
- 64) Finger nail imps. Brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.
- 65) Finger nail imps. Light brown ext. Dark grey int. Fine-med. grit. Med. hard.
- 66) Finger nail imps. very abraded. Light brown ext. Dark grey-black int. Fine grit. Med-hard.
- 67) Finger nail decor. Brown surfaces. Fine grit. Hard.
- 68) Finger nail decor. Red-brown ext. Brown int. Fine grit. Hard.
- 69) Plain, but possibly faint finger nail imp. towards bottom of sherd. Light brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.

Barrow 5 Hearth IX (Fig. 5, 70-76)

- 70) Finger nail and cordon. Brown fabric. Hard but laminated fabric.
- 71) Finger nail and cordon. Brown ext. Black int. Fine grit. Hard but laminated.
- 72) Finger tip and cordon. Grey-brown ext. Pink-grey int. Coarse grit. Crumbly.
- 73) Two sherds. Paired finger nail and cordon. Grey-brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.
- 74) Random finger nail decor. Light brown ext. Grey int. Med. grit. Hard.
- 75) Finger nail and cordon. Brown ext. Black int. Fine grit. Laminated but hard.
- 76) Finger nail imps. Brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.

Barrow 5 below gravel bank (Fig. 5, 77)

- 77) Incised decoration. Light brown fabric. Med. grit. Crumbly.

Barrow 1 (Fig. 5, 78-82)

- 78) Paired Finger nail decor. Slight moulding below rim. Light brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.
- 79) As above but from smaller vessel. Grey fabric.
- 80) Finger nail imps. Light brown ext. Grey int. Fine grit. Hard.

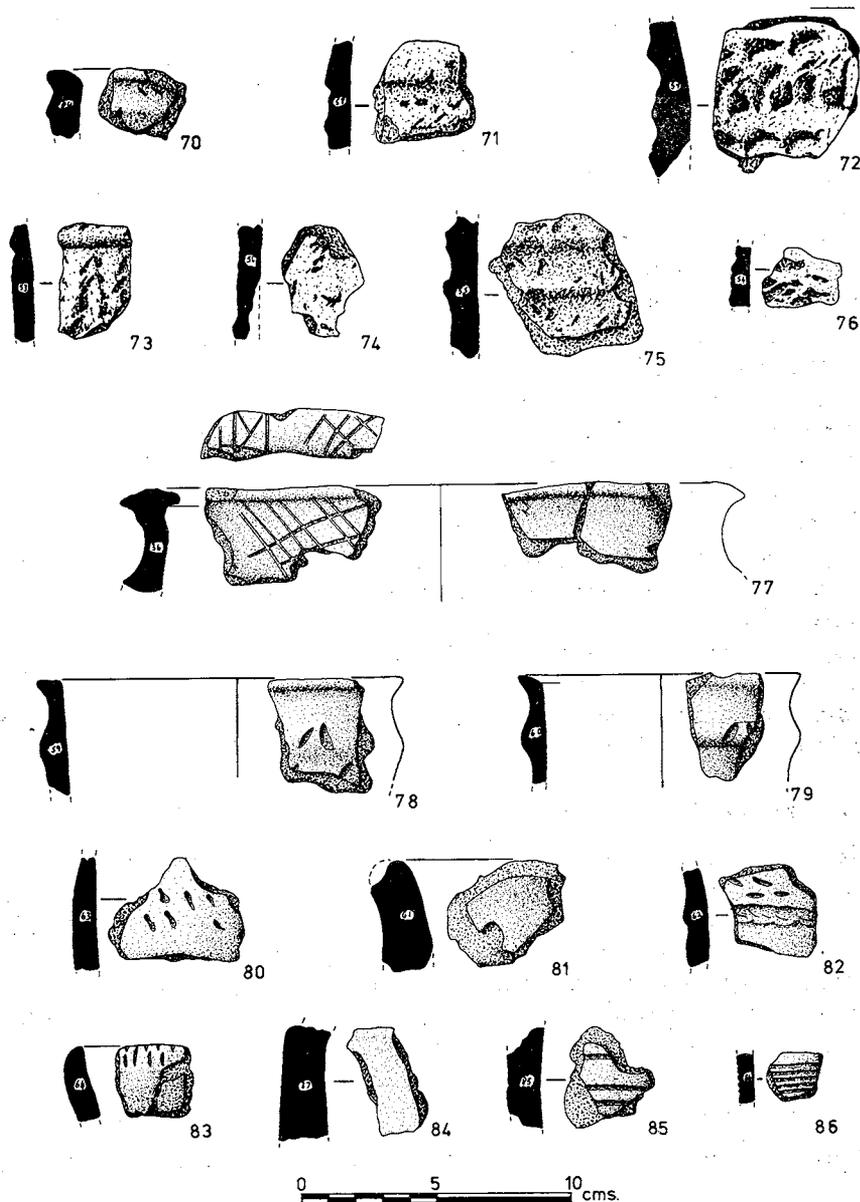


Fig. 5. Pottery from Chippenham Barrows

- | | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------|-------|----------|
| 70-76 | Barrow 5, Hearth IX | 83-84 | Barrow 2 |
| 77 | Barrow 5, below gravel bank | 85 | Barrow 4 |
| 78-82 | Barrow 1 | 86 | Topsoil |

- 81) Plain rim sherd. Light brown fabric. Med. grit. Fairly hard. ?Urn.
 82) Finger nail and slight cordon. Light brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.

Barrow 2 (Fig. 5, 83-84)

- 83) Finger nail imp. on externally rounded rim. Brown fabric. Fine grit. Hard.
 84) From topsoil over the skeleton. Plain. Brown ext. Grey int. Med. grit. Sandy.

Barrow 4 (Fig. 5, 85)

- 85) Horizontal twisted cord decor. Grey fabric. Fine-med. grit. Soft.

Topsoil (Fig. 5, 86)

- 86) Beaker fabric with horizontal incision. Grey fabric. Fine grit. Hard.

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