

POST - EXCAVATION WORK POTTERY FROM HIGHGATE

THE aim of this post-excavation work has been to obtain basic information about the character of the pottery which was produced in Highgate Wood during the late 1st and early 2nd centuries A.D. Primarily, this has involved ascertaining what main types of vessels (in terms of forms and fabrics) were manufactured on the site. This data will be essential for examining variations in the production of Highgate Ware and for investigating the wider problem of its marketing.

The pottery excavated in 1967 and 1968 was found in four types of circumstances:

- (a) on the pottery waster dump.
- (b) in the pits.
- (c) associated with the kilns.
- (d) as a scatter, seemingly disturbed, rolled and unincorporated with archaeological features, but probably derived from the dump.

It was decided to select as priorities for analysis those areas least disturbed and, to date, pottery from the following eight parts of the site has been examined:

1. three base levels of the dump.
2. two pits.
3. the furnace area of Kiln 3 and two external features associated with it.

These eight areas contained approximately 14% of the total amount of pottery excavated in 1967 and 1968. It is assumed that the bulk of this pottery represents wasters resulting from accidents which occurred during the firing process.

Each of the eight layers or features mentioned above was examined separately. The initial stage consisted of dividing the pottery fragments up on the basis of the part of the vessel to which they belonged: essentially these parts were rims, bases, lids and body sherds.

With the pottery separated in this manner, work began on the second stage. The rims, bases and lids were sub-divided into groups, as objectively as possible, according to their shapes. Fabric and colour were treated as secondary characteristics. Decorated body sherds were grouped according to the type of decoration applied and a system of precedence was evolved for where there was more than one type on an individual sherd. Plain sherds were grouped according to colour differences.

It became clear that, related to the range of vessels produced, the most diagnostic groupings

were those based on rim shape.

From inspection and drawing it was demonstrated that each rim group, of which five were noted, could be closely correlated with individual categories of vessels. For this reason, the sections below are based mainly on the evidence derived from the rim analysis supported where necessary by findings from examination of the other groups of sherds.

The rims examined were divided into the following five main groups: lipped everted; unlipped everted; beaded; horizontal grooved; and horizontal without grooves. The table below is based on 2,459 rim sherds: allowance has been made where possible so that vessels represented by more than one rim sherd were counted only once.

(The similar table in Part I of this report—*The London Archaeologist* Spring 1969 44—was based on pottery from only six areas of the site.)

RIM GROUP	FORM CATEGORY	TOTAL	
		No.	%
Lipped Everted	1. Shouldered jars with pronounced necks	969	39
Unlipped Everted	2. Beakers (and beaker like jars)	499	20
Beaded	3. Shouldered jars with restricted necks	221	9
Horizontal Grooved	4. Bowls and dishes with internal lid grooves	513	21
Horizontal without Grooves	5. Bowls and dishes without lid grooves.	257	11

If we assume that the pottery worked on is an accurate sample of the mass of waster pottery resulting from production on the site, we can argue that nearly one-half of the wasters resulted from the manufacture of jars, about one-third from bowls and dishes, and one-fifth from beakers.

It would be tempting to go on to assume that wasters are representative of the production as a whole. This may be so but caution is needed here. More observation, and especially experiment, is

1. Probably no more than 20 other rims fitted into a miscellaneous category. Others were too fragmented and

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By A. E. BROWN
H. L. SHELDON

Without the help of members of Archaeology Classes at the City Literary Institute and Camden Adult Institute the excellent rate of progress on the vast amount of pottery from Highgate could not have been achieved.

An example of a Category 3 jar in grey fabric with a girth groove—rim diameter 8 inches.

(Photo: Bernard Brandham)



required to establish whether there are varying waster rates relating to the manufacture of different forms of pottery.

General descriptions of the form-categories are given below. These are accompanied by some notes on the rim size distribution of the vessels (see Fig. 3) and some comments on forms similar in appearance and found elsewhere, which may relate to their dating. For illustrations of the pottery see Fig 1 and Fig. 2. Other drawings appeared in the last issue of *The London Archaeologist* (Spring, 1969 42-43).

CATEGORY 1: *Shouldered Jars with Pronounced Necks and Everted Rims. See Fig. 1, nos. 1 and 2; Fig. 2, nos. 1, 2, 11, 13 and 14.*

These jars account for approximately two-fifths of the vessels examined and have either round or more angular shoulders. The fabric is normally grey in colour with a slightly sandy feel. Generally there is an external white slip and a cordon with accompanying grooves at the base of the neck. On some of the examples another cordon occurs at the maximum diameter point on the shoulder. A common decoration is of vertical lines incised on the white slip between the base of the neck and the maximum width point of the shoulder.

The rim diameter spread (see Fig. 3, 1) is from 3ins. to 12ins. with a large concentration in the middle ranges. The most popular size for the jars is

between 6ins and 7ins. (28%), but 70% measure between 5ins. and 8ins. Accepting a standardisation that is intentional we may assume that the most popular diameter size was between 6ins. and 7ins. and that sizes became increasingly less popular as they moved away in either direction from the central range.

These jars are of a type fairly common in 1st and 2nd century A.D. contexts in London and the south.² R. E. M. Wheeler suggests that they are "a somewhat weak and flattened variant of the pedestal urn rim" and can be found in London during "the second half of the 1st century A.D."³ Certainly the Highgate jars are reminiscent of some Aylesford-Swarling examples in terms of the everted rim, neck and cordon at the base of the neck: this may give some clue as to their ancestry.⁴

CATEGORY 2: *Beakers. See Fig. 1, nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; Fig. 2, nos. 5, 6, 7 and 8.*

The beaker category, which also includes a few large jars with beaker-like forms, accounts for one-fifth of the vessels examined. The most popular form is of the "Poppy Beaker" type. The fabric is grey in colour with a hard slightly sandy feel. A pronounced cordon is usually found at the base of the neck. The external surface is normally covered with a grey-white slip down to about one and a half inches from the foot. Over the slip, panels of raised studs

2. This type of jar has been recorded in pits dating from A.D. 70-100 at the G.P.O. site, St. Martins-Le-Grand (*Archaeologia* 66 (1914-15) "Recent Discoveries in London"). It also appears in late 1st and early 2nd century pits in Southwark (K. M. Kenyon, *Excavations in Southwark* (1959).

3. R.C.H.M. *Roman London* (1928) 21, fig. 2, 10.

4. *Proc Prehist Soc* (1965) "The Aylesford-Swarling Culture." The Highgate form similarities should not be over-stressed. The Belgic examples are more elaborately adorned with cordons, and the general shape is more slender and graceful.

were applied in horizontal bands starting at the base of the neck and continuing downwards.

As with the jars described above, there was a 9ins. rim diameter spread (see Fig. 3, 2), in this case between 2ins. and 11ins. The most popular range was between 4ins. and 5ins. (24%), with 77% measuring between 3ins. and 7ins. Again we see decreasing frequency in either direction away from the central range. Similar types of Poppy Beakers can be assigned to the late 1st and the 2nd centuries A.D.: they have a wide geographical distribution. Examples are found as far west as Dorset⁵ and as far north

as Scotland⁶. One variant is placed as early as the Claudian period at Margidunum, Notts.⁷ and the latest known appearance of the type occur at Corbridge in deposits dated to the end of the 2nd century A.D.⁸

The first recorded mention of these Beakers in London was made by John Conyers, the apothecary when making notes on pottery found by Wren during the excavations for the new St. Paul's Cathedral in 1675-77. At least two of his sketches related to Poppy Beakers which he described as "curiously laid on the outside with like thornpricks of rose trees in the manner of raised work."⁹

In more recent City excavations they were found in late 1st century contexts as St. Martins-Le-Grand¹⁰ and Wheeler refers to them as being from the last half of the 1st century and continuing into the 2nd century in London.¹¹

5. A poppy beaker in the Dorchester Museum from the villa in the grounds of the County Council Offices is not securely dated, but placed before the end of the 1st century A.D. on the evidence of associated pottery.
6. *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* (1963) "Excavations at Mumrills Fort, 1958-60." The poppy beaker described was found with a "homogenous and undoubtedly Antonine group."
7. *J Roman Stud* (1923) "The Pottery of a Claudian Well at Margidunum." Oswald traced Continental parallels for his beaker with applied dots (Hofheim type 106). According to Webster "the date of this deposit can probably be extended to c. A.D. 75" (*C.B.A. Romano-British Coarse Pottery: A Student's Guide*).

8. *Archaeol Aeliana* 27 (1950) "Excavations on a Roman Site at Corbridge."
9. John Conyers MS, B.M. 958 ff 105-109 "Account of Roman Urns... found in digging the foundations of new St. Paul's." Conyers drew about 20 vessels including beakers, shouldered jars and mortaria.
10. *Archaeologia loc. cit.*

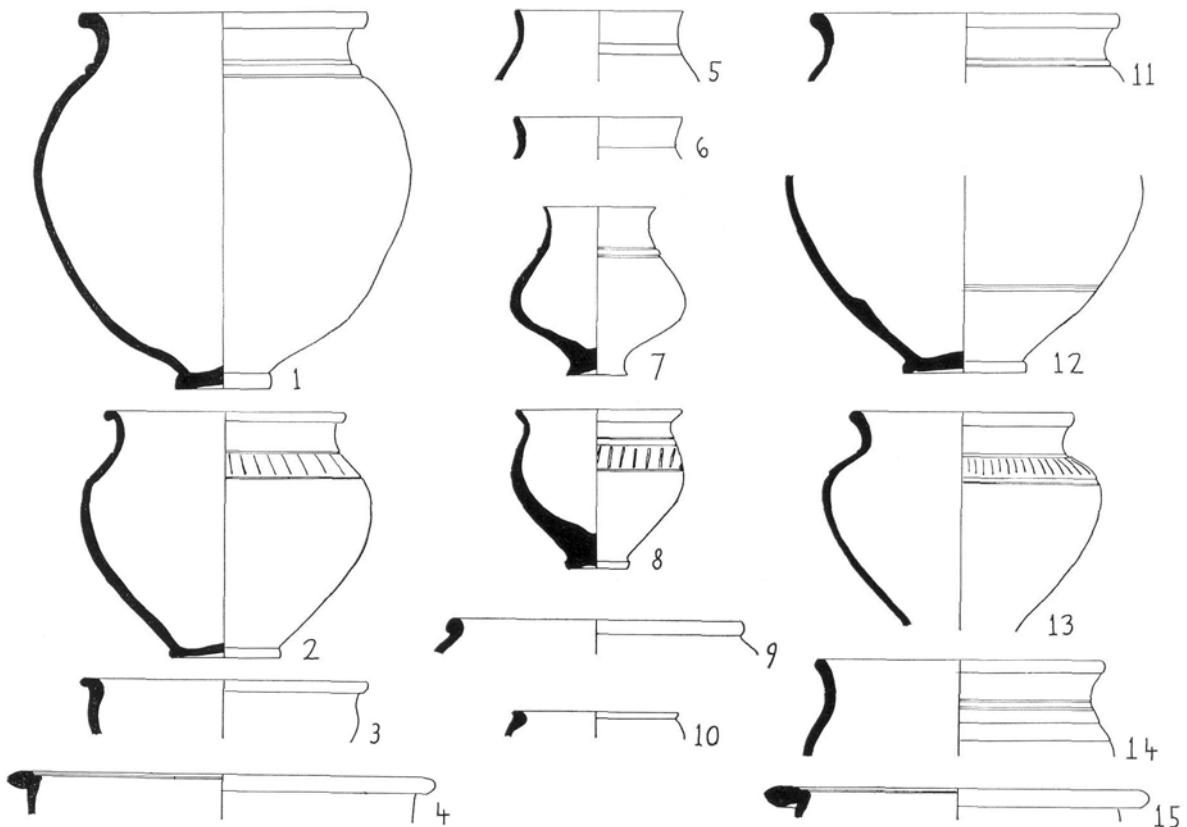


Fig. 1—Pottery from the base of the rubbish dump (1/4).

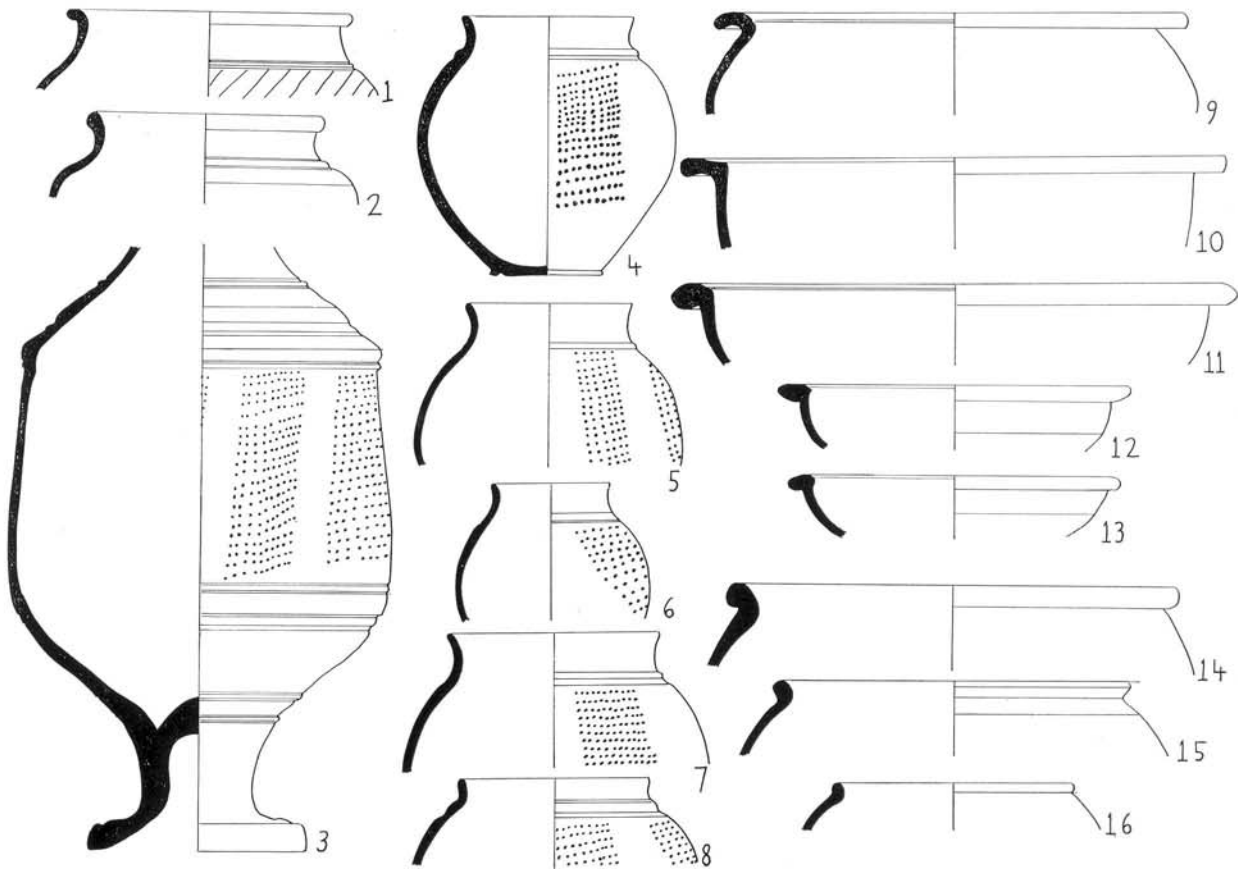


Fig. 2—Pottery from Pit 2 (4).

CATEGORY 3: *Shouldered Jars with Restricted Necks and Bead rims. See Fig. 1, nos. 14, 15 and 16; Fig. 2 nos. 9 and 10.*

This form category represents about 8% of the vessels examined. The majority of examples are crude in appearance with a fabric that, although still greyish in colour, has a very rough, gritty look, is light in weight, and although sometimes pock-marked has a very soapy, clayey feel. Generally there is no decoration to interrupt the smooth profile and the rim is out-turned after only a brief indication of neck.

Two variants within the form category need emphasis here:

(a) Those with a similar profile but with the hard slightly sandy fabric. Occasionally a white slip decoration has been applied and a girth groove appears on the shoulder.

11. R.C.H.M. *Ibid.* 21-24. Poppy beakers from a late 1st century A.D. burial context are described in *Archaeol Cantiana* 62 (1949) "A First Century Urn-field at Cheriton, near Folkestone."

(b) A few "pygmy" examples, sometimes with white or grey-white slip.

This form category relates to the smallest sample and it is too early yet to be very confident about the diameter profile. However, the spread is between 3ins. and 13ins. and the frequency appears to be developing the usual pattern, falling away on either side of a central point. (See Fig. 3, 3).

This type is found in London from the mid-1st century onwards. Hawkes and Dunning, quoting Surrey examples which, they argue, "closely resemble" those found in the City, state that in every case where dating is possible "they are associated with Romano-British pottery of the 1st century A.D."¹² Examples from St. Martins-Le-Grand are placed at between A.D. 50 and 100.¹³

CATEGORY 4: *Bowls and Dishes with Lid Grooves. See Fig. 1, nos. 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13; Fig. 2, nos. 4 and 5.*

These bowls and dishes normally have a fabric

12. *Archaeol J* (1930) "The Belgae of Gaul and Britain."
13. *Archaeologia loc. cit.*

which is grey in colour with a slightly sandy feel. Usually the rims are heavy, sometimes overhanging. Occasionally they have true reeded rims. No decoration is apparent apart from an occasional black burnished line on the side of the vessel. The profile is mainly curved but sometimes the sides are straight.

This category represents some 21% of the total vessels examined. The diagram shows a rim size distribution of between 4ins. and 15ins. with a frequency building steadily up to between 9ins. and 10ins. and then dropping away. There is a heavy concentration in the middle range, 51% of these rims have a diameter of between 8ins. and 11ins. and nearly three-quarters have a diameter of between 7ins. and 12ins. (See Fig. 3, 4).

CATEGORY 5: Bowls and Dishes without Lid Grooves. See Fig. 2, no. 3.

The fabric in the majority of examples is of the type noticed in Category 3: greyish in colour but with a rough, gritty look and a soapy, clayey feel. Again decoration does not normally occur. There are however, some thin-walled dishes in the hard, sandy fabric with a white slip which are of a more delicate appearance than the above.

This form category was represented by 11% of the total vessels examined and here the diameter series ran from 3ins. to 14ins. There was a build up to a central range of from 8ins. to 9ins.¹⁴ As with Category 4, the central three diameters accounted for approximately half the total (49%). (See Fig. 3, 5).

The category 4 and 5 forms are not so easy to parallel as there are fewer published examples. However, examples from St. Martins-Le-Grand and Southwark are again placed in the late 1st and early 2nd centuries A.D.¹⁵

The Pedestal Urn from the Dump

This urn is not typical of the waster vessels generally represented at Highgate. Of the several hundred bases so far examined only one other was of this type. A pedestal urn found in London, and illustrated by Hawkes and Dunning,¹⁶ which had bands of applied dots, was assigned by them "to a late 1st century date."

Preliminary Conclusions

Some general, but tentative, conclusions are sug-

14. Irregularity at the 11-12ins. range may be caused by the small size of the sample. If this is so, future evidence should eliminate it.

15. *Archaeologia Ibid.* and K. M. Kenyon *Ibid.*

16. *Archaeol J Ibid.* 250, fig. 22, 1.

gested by the above.

1. Evidence for the production of five major categories of vessels at Highgate has been obtained. Two-fifths of the sample worked on were shouldered jars with pronounced necks, and about one-tenth were shouldered jars with restricted necks. One-fifth of the sample represented beakers and a similar proportion represented bowls and dishes with internal lid grooves. The remaining one-tenth were bowls and dishes without grooves. It is probable that this sample is generally representative of the mass of pottery found on the dump in the pits and in association with the kilns. These form-categories will be broken down further as more information becomes available.

2. Each form-category had a central popular diameter range and the popularity of other sizes declined steadily as production moved away from this central range (see Fig. 3).

3. The proportion in the central range was fairly constant for each category but probably higher for the jars and beakers (i.e. Categories 1, 2 and 3). Conversely although the diameter spread was fairly constant, it was slightly greater for bowl and dish production (i.e. Categories 4 and 5). See Fig. 3 and table below:

Category	Central Range	Percentage in Central Range	Rim Diameter Spread
1	6" - 7"	28	3" - 12"
2	4" - 5"	24	2" - 11"
3	6" - 7"	23	3" - 13"
4	9" - 10"	20	4" - 15"
5	8" - 9"	20	3" - 14"

4. These form-categories when compared to similarly shaped pottery from London and the south-east suggest a dating between the last half of the 1st century A.D. and the early part of the 2nd century A.D. This is fully congruent with evidence obtained from imported Samian found on the site.¹⁷

5. The normal fabric appears as grey in colour with a hard slightly rough and slightly sandy feel. This "quality" fabric is apparent in virtually all the vessels belonging to Categories 1, 2 and 4, but appears only on a minority of Category 3 and 5 vessels. In the majority of the latter cases, the fabric, although still greyish, has a gritty, rough look, is light in weight and has a soapy, clayey feel.

6. Decoration is essentially confined to vessels with the "quality" fabric. Cordons often occur on Category 1 jars and Category 2 beakers. A white or grey-white slip is also common to both. Category 1

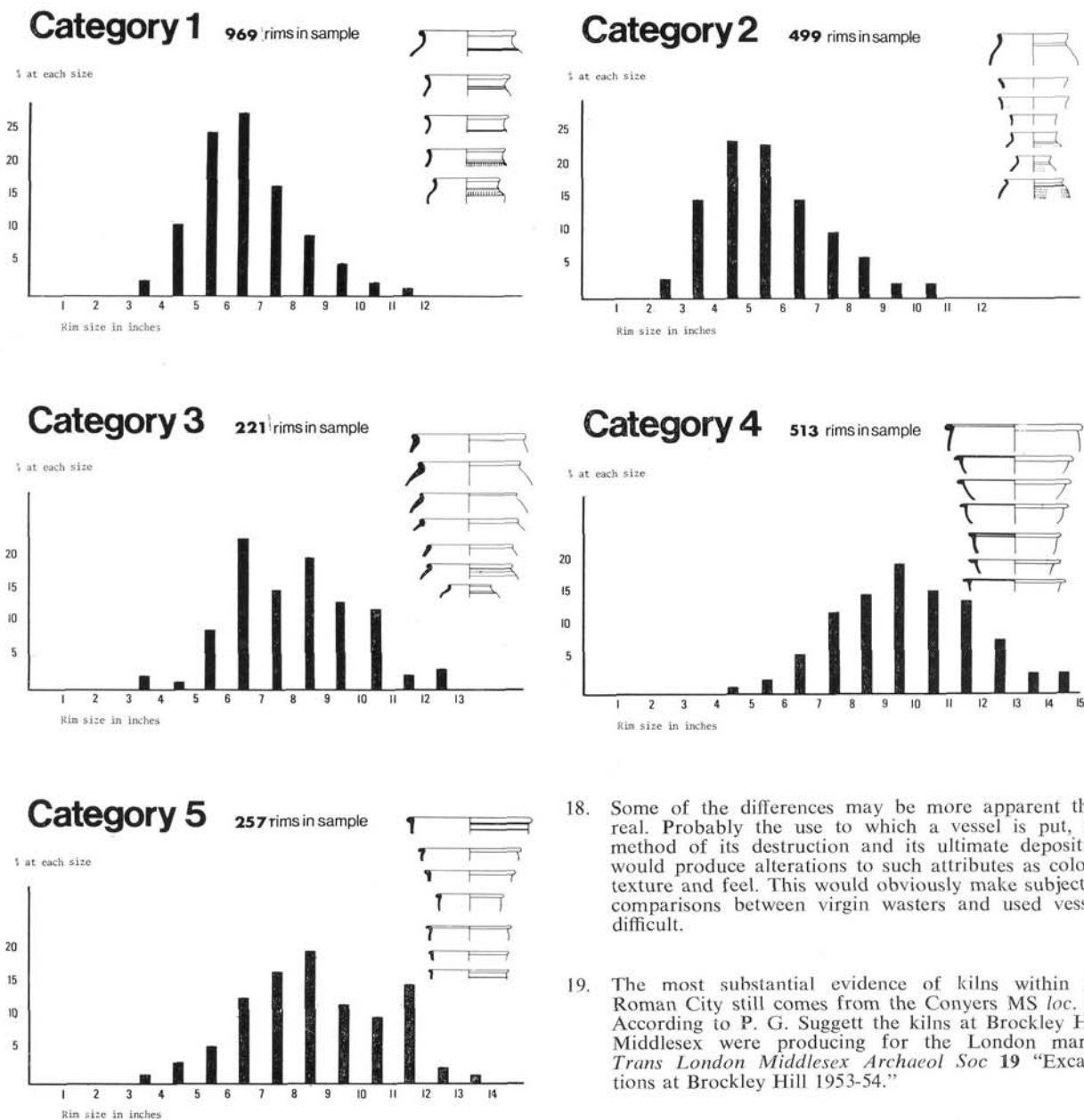
17. *London Archaeologist* Spring 1969 44.

jars sometimes have incised or burnished vertical lines applied between the neck and the maximum width point of the shoulder. Category 2 beakers are usually ornamented with panels of raised dots applied horizontally.

7. Work has begun, to attempt to relate the Highgate material to what is presumed to be its major market, London. Although form similarities are fairly common with contemporary pottery in the Guildhall Museum collections and elsewhere, fabric differences even on the subjective grounds of colour,

texture and feel are often apparent.¹⁸ It is hoped that thin-sectioning of Highgate sherds from the site and of possible Highgate sherds found in London contexts will be helpful in establishing direct relationships between the City and the factory. Although much future effort is involved here, it is tempting to conclude even at this stage that Highgate must have been one of a large number of pottery factories producing its limited share for an expanding home market towards the close of the 1st century and on into the 2nd century.¹⁹

Fig. 3—Rim size distribution of each Category.



18. Some of the differences may be more apparent than real. Probably the use to which a vessel is put, the method of its destruction and its ultimate deposition would produce alterations to such attributes as colour, texture and feel. This would obviously make subjective comparisons between virgin wasters and used vessels difficult.

19. The most substantial evidence of kilns within the Roman City still comes from the Conyers MS *loc. cit.* According to P. G. Suggett the kilns at Brockley Hill, Middlesex were producing for the London market *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 19 "Excavations at Brockley Hill 1953-54."