

Later Bronze Age Pottery from Farnham, a reappraisal

By S ELSDON

In 1935 A W G Lowther, A G Wade, K Oakley, W Rankine and other local antiquaries collaborated to produce a detailed study of the wealth of archaeological material found in the Farnham area, mainly from the gravels (Oakley *et al* 1939). The result, which is an outstanding example of local archaeological studies, was published as a special volume of the *Surrey Archaeological Collections* and Lowther himself contributed the section covering the Bronze Age to the Saxon periods. The purpose of this article is to re-examine and publish more fully the Later Bronze Age pottery in the light of discoveries and research since 1939.

There is a group of six sites, three on the Shortheath gravel ridge south of the River Wey and three more north of Farnham, none more than 5½ miles from the other (see fig 1). Four of the six produced pottery of Later Bronze Age type. The most prolific was the site at Green Lane (2), but Patterson's Pit (1), Gardner's Pit (3) and site '507' (4) each had a few sherds of similar pottery while 'a site on the right bank of the Bourne Stream in Farnham Park' (5) and another 'in the north quarry-face at a small chalk pit on the north side of Crondall Lane' (6) had no pottery but occupation material similar to the other sites: fire-crackled flint, charcoal and flint flakes. One further site on the Hog's Back, about four miles from Green Lane, had pottery described as Early Iron Age. The site at the eastern end of the Shortheath ridge, Stoneyfield (7), is a Deverel-Rimbury cemetery with many urns, but is considered here with the other sites for reasons stated below.

Green Lane (SU 834 453, no 2 on fig 1)

The site lies on a gravel terrace south of the River Wey. Deep ploughing, prior to gravel extraction, had removed the occupation surface and only the lower parts of pits and deeper post-holes remained. Lowther and Wade had time for only intermittent visits but managed to recover sherds from 'several hundred vessels' together with cylindrical loomweights with vertical perforations, a saddle quern (Oakley *et al* 1939, pl XIX: 2, 3), a flint sickle, scrapers and a good assemblage of other flints. There was no doubt in Lowther's mind that these artefacts were all associated, although technically unstratified. The post-holes were about 30 cm across, and remained to a depth of 45 cm. Some were filled with charcoal while others contained dark, silty soil, pottery and loomweight fragments. Of the pits some were clearly the lower parts of ovens or hearths, and one contained the lower stone of a saddle quern which acted as a cover to pot no 30. Lowther stresses that it was a habitation site with no burials or cremations and states that none of the pits or post-holes 'contained stratified evidence of more than one period of use'. Yet the marked variation in the quality of the pottery from Green Lane caused Lowther to suggest, against his better instinct, that there were two periods, the later one being represented by the fine wares, although there was no independent evidence for this apart from the reported find of a bee-hive quern. Present knowledge, however, allows for both coarse and fine wares to belong to the same period confirming his instinct that he was dealing with a homogeneous group of pottery. Lowther illustrates 30 vessels. I have identified at least 49 of which about 17

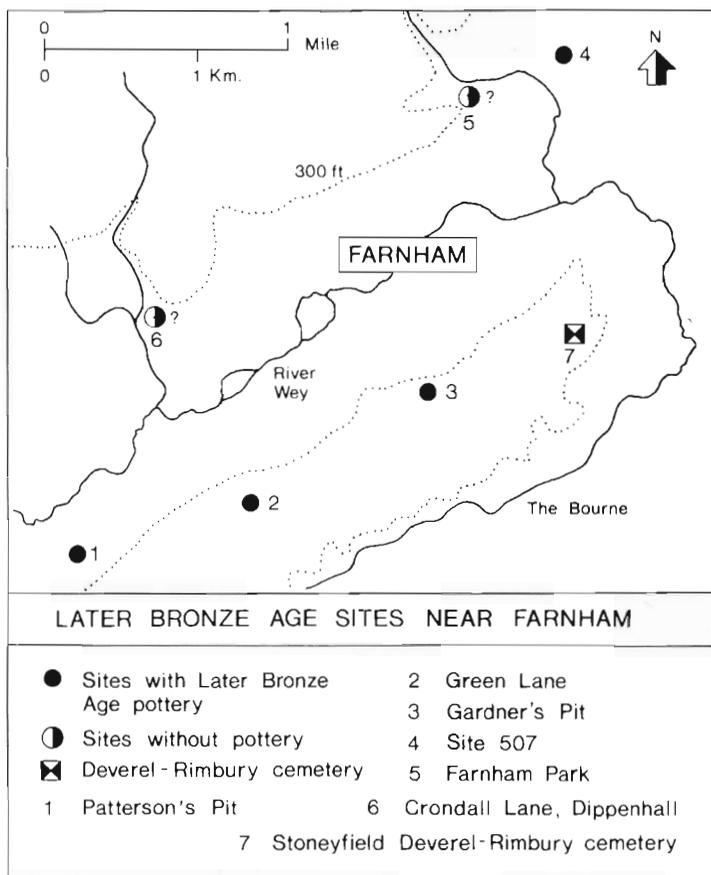


Fig 1 Location Map.

can be related to the original drawings, which are only profiles in some cases. Two vessels drawn as lids I have redrawn as bowls.

FABRIC

This is of two main types: coarse and fine.

The coarse ware is profusely filled with coarsely crushed flint and quartz pebbles and large angular pieces protrude through the surface, which is sometimes cursorily smoothed, perhaps with a slip or slurry, leaving vertical grooves. The pots range in colour from dark brown to red but the normal colour is mid brown, with a darker core. Some vessels have a light grey layer immediately below the exterior surface.

The fine ware has the same filler as the coarse but it is very finely crushed and the exterior is usually burnished but is always smoothed so that no grits break the surface. The colour ranges widely from dark grey to red.

MANUFACTURE

In spite of the usually coarse nature of the fabric the pots are well fired, hard and some have very thin walls. This thinness suggests manufacture by the slab rather than the coil method. The walls would have been smoothed down on to the base causing a slight protuberance as in

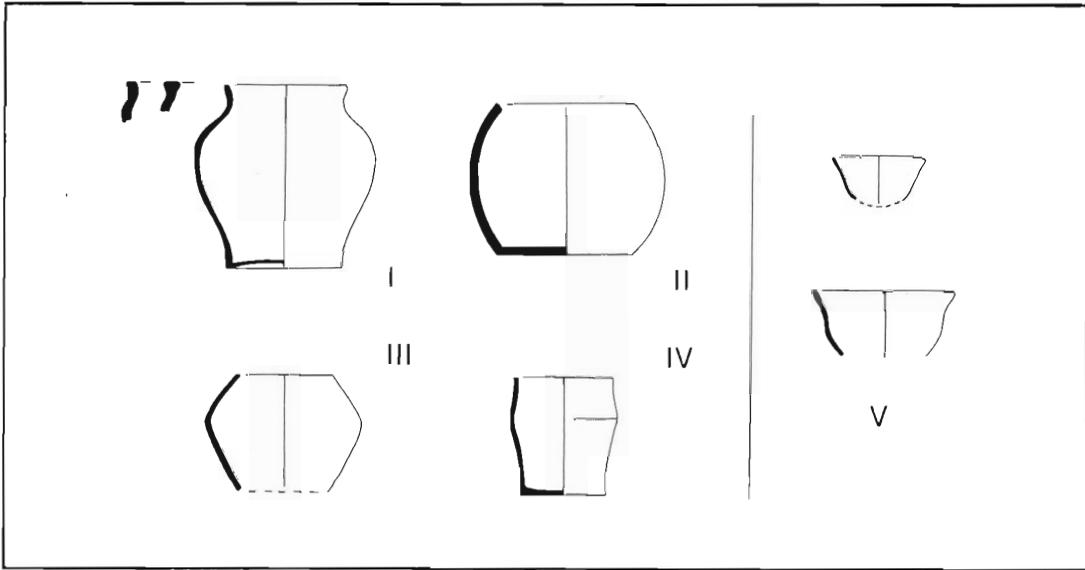


Fig 2 Principal pot forms, Green Lane, Farnham.

nos 1, 12, 31 and 17. The diagonal break in the section of no 7 suggests the junction of two slabs. Flint pot-boilers were common finds on the site and the stone is shattered and lacks lustre as does the flint in the pottery. It is possible that it was these pot-boilers, subsequently crushed and pounded, which were used as filler for the vessels. Some bases are covered in crushed flint suggesting that the pots were stood to dry on a bed of the material and this could be evidence that the pots were being made on domestic sites. Similar flint encrusted bases have been noted at Brooklands, Weybridge, Weston Wood, Ivinghoe Beacon and on the hillfort pottery from Mucking (Hanworth & Tomalin 1977, 24).

FORMS (fig 2)

Amongst the remains of Lowther's 'several hundred vessels' now in Guildford Museum about fifty have recognisable forms and these can be divided into large and medium-sized jars (Forms I–IV) and small and medium-sized bowls (Form V). The large jars (Forms I and II) are all in coarse ware with the exception of no 6 which is semi-fine with a smoothed exterior. Of the medium-sized jars (Forms III and IV) one only, no 29, is in a fine ware, but as the vessel is much restored, the true nature of its finish may be masked. There are five small bowls (Form V) all in fine ware (39, 41, 43–5) and three larger ones, one semi-fine and two in coarse ware (43, 40 and 46).

Form I (nos 1–10, 13–16)

These are large wide-mouthed jars which are fairly squat with wide, rounded shoulders. They have short upright or slightly everted necks and rims which can be rounded (3, 4), tapered (5, 7, 9), flattened (6, 8, 10) or T shaped (13, 15, 16). One extant base is concave (1) while several others are flat and thickly covered with flint. There is finger smoothing towards the protruding base on several vessels and two sherds only have shallow scoring (14). The fabric is coarse but hard. One sherd (7) could be part of a very large vessel as it has virtually no curvature. Another

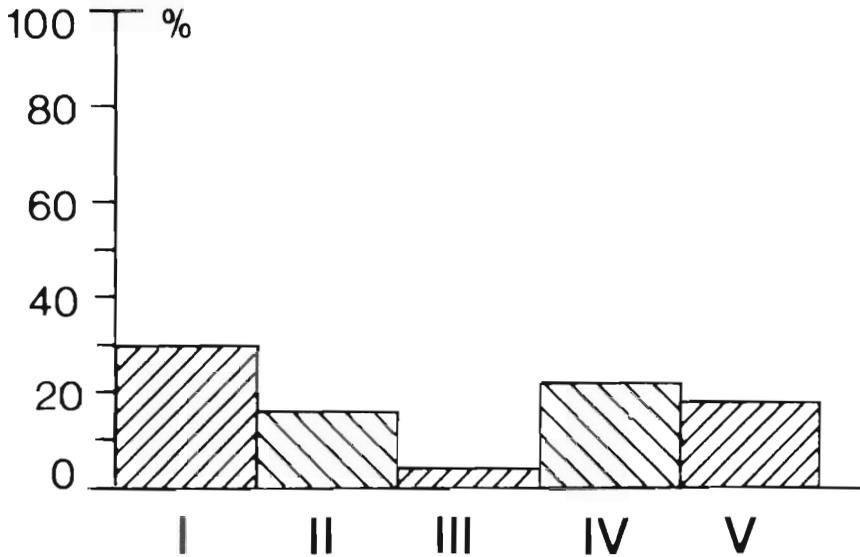


Fig 3 Identifiable pot forms from Green Lane Farnham expressed in percentage.

sherd (3) could be a jar with a hooked rim of Form II as the curvature and external finish are indecisive and perhaps the profile as drawn should be reversed. No 6 has a slight carination and is in semi-fine ware. There are 15 or 16 vessels of this form from a total of about 50 recognisable from the whole site. This form has parallels at Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks (Cotton & Frere 1968); Plumpton Plain, Sussex, B5 (Hawkes 1935); Ram's Hill, Berks (Barrett 1975); Runnymede Bridge Bucks and Surrey sites (see below p. 00); Eldon's Seat, Dorset, Period I (Cunliffe & Phillipson 1968); Mucking, Essex (Jones 1975 and 1979) (some with more angular profile) and Chastleton Camp, Oxon (Leeds 1931).

Form II (nos 17–24)

These are large barrel-shaped jars with hooked or flattened rims. One (23) has a rim diameter of 37 cm although most are apparently smaller than this. Another coarse, thick vessel, has an inwardly tapering hole placed at the junction of the walls and base which could be a bung-hole (22). No 24 has a hole near the rim, bored from both sides and probably made before firing. The likelihood is that this was a hole for suspension rather than a rivet hole for mending which would have been made after firing. One base is slightly concave with a protruding foot (17). There are eight recognisable vessels of this form and there are parallels at Ram's Hill, Eldon's Seat and Chastleton Camp.

Form III (nos 27 & 28)

Medium-sized bi-conical jars. This is not a common form as there are only two examples. The rims are rounded at the top and no 27 has vertical finger smoothing towards the base. Both are in coarse ware. Parallels for this form can be found at Runnymede Bridge, Ram's Hill and Mucking.

Form IV (nos 29–35)

Medium-sized jars with upright rims with shoulders either slack or slightly carinated. No 29 is in semi-fine ware while the rest are in coarse ware. One vessel (31) illustrates well the method of joining walls and base as there are marked thumb indentations on the exterior at the foot.

The angularity of nos 29, 34, 36 and 37 should be noted as this occurs on three more undrawn body sherds. There are ten to eleven vessels of this form and parallels can be found at Wisley, Surrey and Minnis Bay, Kent.

Form V (nos 39–47)

Small and medium-sized bowls, six of which (39, 41, 43–5 and 47) are in fine or semi-fine ware, while two (40 and 46) are in coarse ware. No 45 is very fine and thin and resembles the tri-partite bowls from Long Wittenham, Oxon (Harding, D W 1972, pl 50). No 39 is broken at the point of the carination and is very similar to bowls from Runnymede Bridge, Washingborough Fen (May 1979, fig 3:6), and Maxey, Lincs (Simpson, forthcoming). Nos 39 and 44 have a high, lustrous burnish while other bowls (41, 43, and 47) are well smoothed and have apparently no carination. There are eight bowls in all in this group, which also has parallels at Ivinghoe, Runnymede Bridge and Plumpton Plain B6.

No 25 with its everted rim, is unusual and does not conform with any group mentioned above. It is in a semi-fine ware.

DECORATION

This is scarce and is virtually confined to two body sherds with more or less vertical even scoring (14). These were parts of large vessels of Form I. The only other decorated sherd (26) strikes a discordant note in this assemblage as it has finger tip decoration on the interior bevel of the rim. This sherd could be part of a large bucket urn of the type found at the Stoneyfield cemetery (Oakley *et al* 1939, fig 70: 2) but the fabric is harder and finer.

FUNCTION

It has been noted that the large and medium-sized jars are almost exclusively in a coarse fabric while the bowls are in fine ware. Perhaps the large and medium jars were used for storage and cooking while the small fine bowls were reserved as eating utensils.

Patterson's Pit (SU 822 449)

This site is on a low gravel ridge just to the north of the Shortheath ridge on which lie the Green Lane and Stoneyfield sites. It was discovered during gravel working and produced occupation material and the lower parts of two large urns (Oakley *et al* 1939, 181). Only one base and a body sherd of a second vessel are now in Guildford Museum (50 and 51). In both shape and form these vessels resemble the cremation urns from the Stoneyfield site, one showing the traces of a body cordon, but Lowther was adamant that they contained no cremated bone and that one contained about twenty calcined flint "pot-boilers" in situ indicating domestic use. The second vessel was associated with pieces of ironstone reddened by fire. Both urns were upright in the gravel and had apparently been buried to the rim. A saddle quern was also recovered from a nearby trench.

Site '507' (no 4 on fig 1)

A small amount of pottery very similar to that from Green Lane was found in the topmost levels of this site. These vessels are not now available and the drawings here (52 and 53) are reproduced from Lowther's. They are clearly of Green Lane Form I.

Discussion

Nearly all the pottery forms in this group from Farnham belong to what John Barrett has recognised as 'post Deverel-Rimbury' or Later Bronze Age pottery in southern Britain and dated by him to the 11th to 9th centuries BC. A clear synopsis of this pottery grouping appears

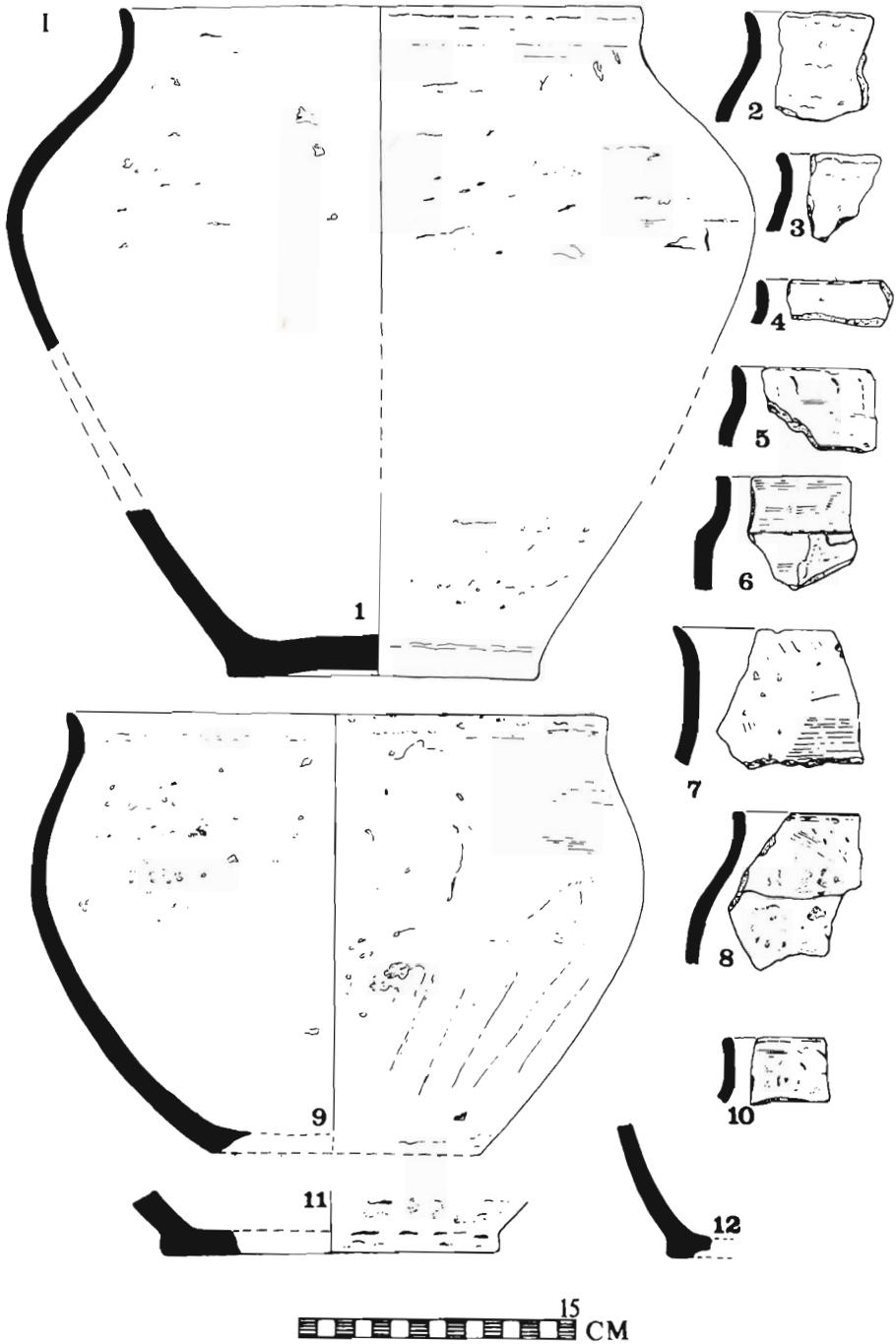


Fig 4 Pottery from Green Lane, Farnham, nos 1-10, Form I.

in *Current Archaeology* (6 (1979) 230 ff) with more detailed consideration in the Ram's Hill report and in a general article discussing the problems of Middle and Late Bronze Age pottery (Barrett 1975 and 1976). The pottery consists of thin-walled, plain jars and bowls which, in some cases, carry distinctive vertical smoothing on the outer surface and, while most are coarse ware, fine burnished wares do appear. They are a distinct and recognisable range of undecorated forms, wide-mouthed with rounded and, less often, carinated shoulders and they differ markedly from the bucket shapes of the earlier Deverel-Rimbury wares. The pot forms are almost precisely those of the Farnham group. A more detailed consideration of Late Bronze, Early Iron Age pottery assemblages from southern Britain can be found in the report on the Orsett causewayed camp, Essex (Barrett 1978). Five classes of jars, bowls and cups are distinguished on the basis of form, fabric and decoration. The Farnham vessels bear a family resemblance to these classes but are possibly ancestral as, with one exception, no 26, they lack decoration. Barrett's Class I embraces my Forms I and II while his Class IV approximates to my Forms III and IV. His Class V represents a series of cups of which there is at least one in my Form V.

On evidence from sites in the middle and lower reaches of the Thames Valley Barrett sees the Deverel-Rimbury period here ending *c* 1000 bc. This is followed by the jars, bowls and cups in 'plain ware' of the post Deverel-Rimbury tradition which lasts through to the 9th century BC. C 14 dates for this material from the South Rings at Mucking, Essex, are 860 ± 110 bc to 820 ± 90 bc with slightly later ones from the North Ring, 740 ± 100 bc to 680 ± 100 bc (Harwell dates) which, when calibrated, fall within the 9th and 8th centuries BC (Jones 1975 and 1979). Further C14 dates to strengthen the Thames Valley sequence have recently been published from two Berkshire sites on the Kennet gravels (Bradley *et al* 1980). At Knight's Farm, subsite 2 this 'plain ware' has a date of 1050 ± 100 bc and from subsite 3 564 ± 250 bc. Although the second of these dates is late, with the large standard deviation it still falls within accepted limits. From Aldermaston Wharf too there are dates for similar pottery of 1050 ± 40 bc and 835 ± 35 bc (Barrett 1980, 306). Runnymede Bridge, Bucks, has similar if somewhat finer pottery than Green Lane associated with Ewart Park bronzes and two antler cheek-pieces for a bridle which can be compared both with Urnfield and Hallstatt C European examples. The excavator now considers the site to be early in the 8th or possibly 9th century BC. His reason is that there is no specifically Hallstatt C metal-work, but a Hallstatt B2 notched razor (Longley 1976 and Longley & Needham 1979). Both fine and coarse wares appear together here as at Green Lane.

More corroborative evidence for the dating of these 'post Deverel-Rimbury' pottery assemblages comes from further afield. At Ram's Hill in Berkshire the C14 dates fall mainly within the 11th and 10th centuries BC; at South Cadbury, Somerset they are 11th to 9th centuries BC and from Milton Keynes, Cotton Valley Ring Ditch, Buckinghamshire, they are 9th century BC (Barrett 1975).

This present evidence now means that we can reconsider the dating of several sites classed as Early Iron Age when published. At Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks, Cotton & Frere (1968, 202, 212) suggested a date of 'around 600 BC' for comparable pottery, although bronzes from the site associated with the pottery were dated by D Britton 'from the late 8th century BC onwards'. At that time this pottery was considered to be of the Iron Age, and consequently an earlier date for the site seemed to be out of the question on *a priori* grounds, but this no longer applies. At Runnymede Bridge a similar Ewart Park type bronze assemblage is associated with pottery comparable to Ivinghoe Beacon which is now firmly dated to 8th century BC or earlier. Plumpton Plain B, Sussex, must also be of this date, which would be in accordance with the median winged axe from the site (Hawkes 1935)¹, and the Eldon's Seat, Dorset, period 1 pottery is likewise of the 8th or possibly 9th century BC date (Cunliffe & Phillipson 1968). Chastleton Camp, Oxfordshire, has wide-mouthed jars with rounded shoulders (Leeds 1931) and Minnis Bay in Kent has this form together with bowls and jars with angular profiles (Worsfold 1943). Both these sites could be of 8th to 7th century date.

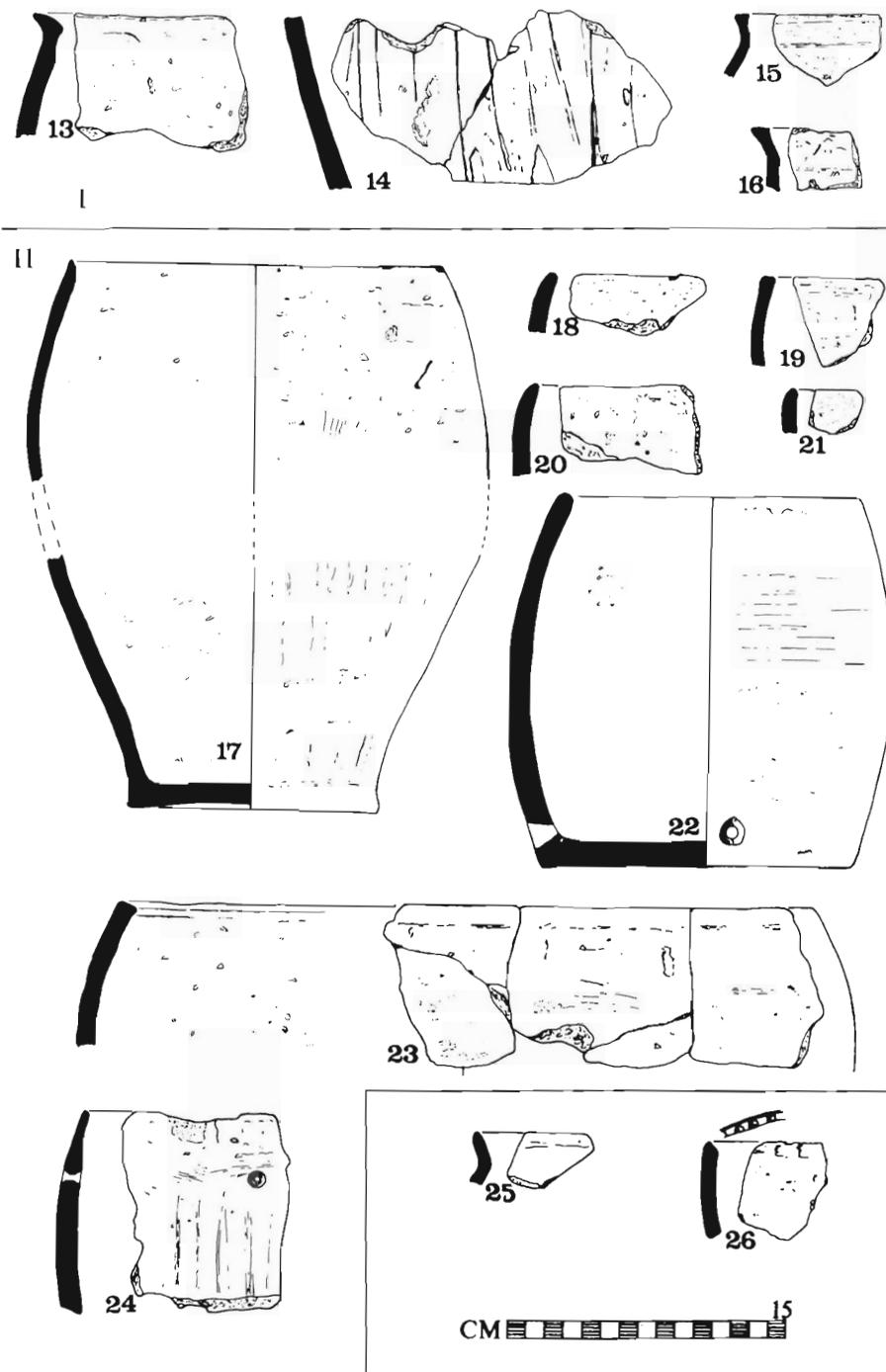


Fig 5 Pottery from Green Lane, Farnham, nos 13-16, Form I; nos 17-24, Form II.

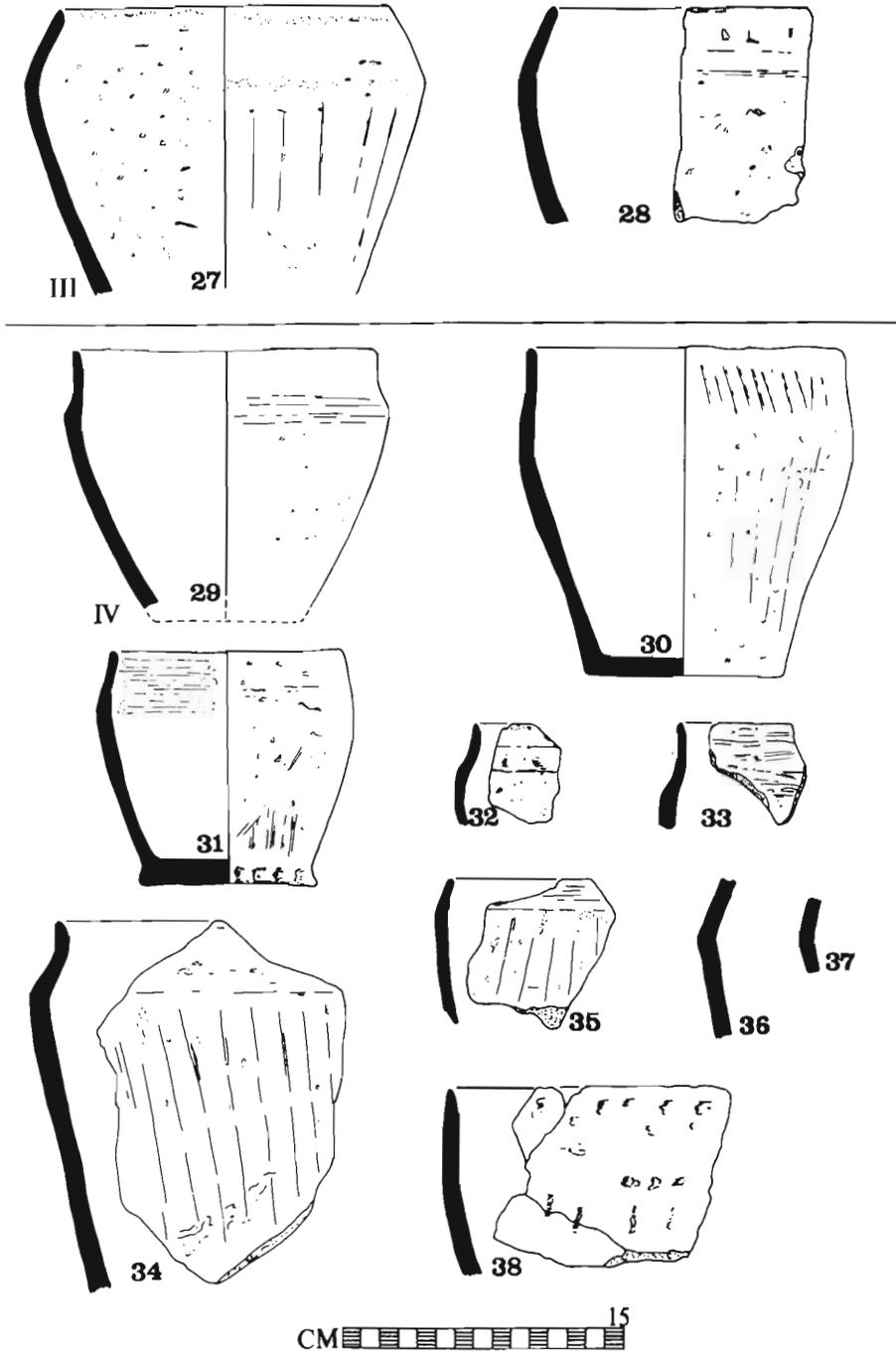


Fig 6 Pottery from Green Lane, Farnham, nos 27-28, Form III; nos 29-38, Form IV

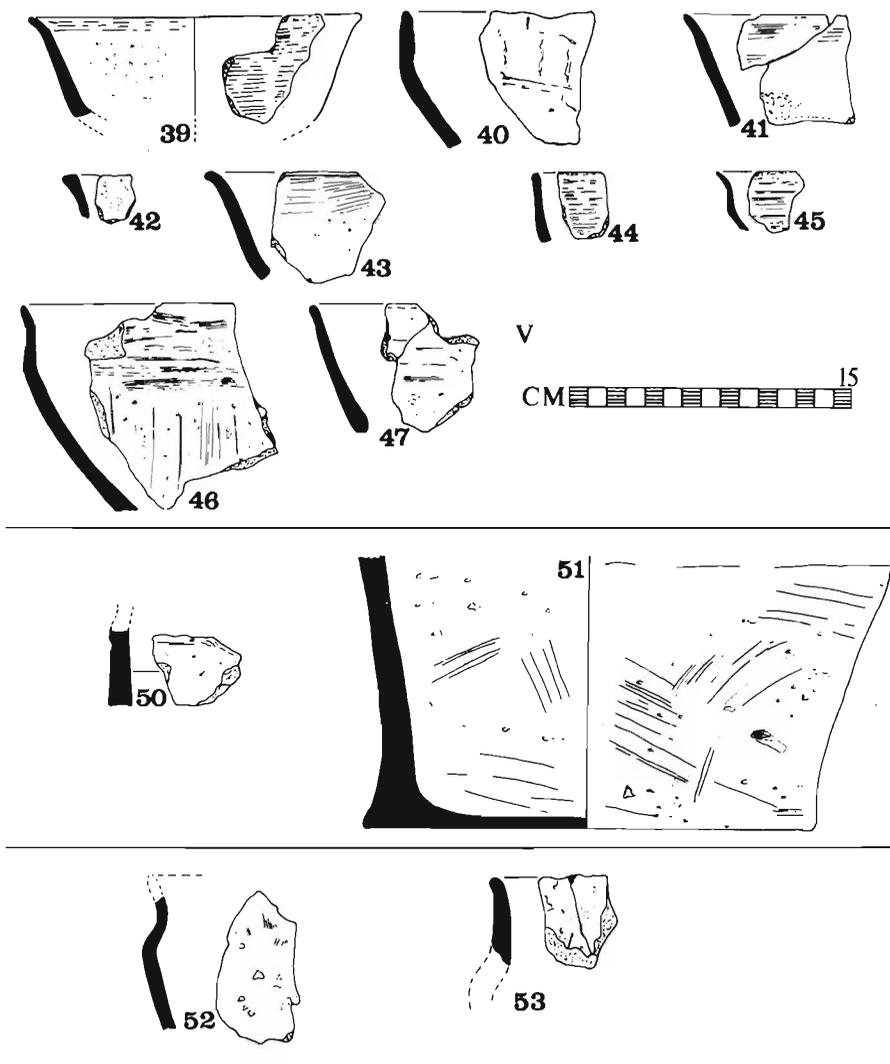


Fig 7 Pottery from Green Lane, Farnham, nos 39-47 Form V. Pottery from Patterson's Pit nos 50-51. Pottery from Site '507'; nos 52-53.

In Surrey both Brooklands A, Weybridge pottery (Hanworth & Tomalin 1977) and that from Wisley (Lowther 1945a) can be included in the broad 11th to 8th century BC bracket, as can most of the material in Bishop's forms 1-4 (Bishop 1971) and the fine bi-conical bowl from Carshalton (Lowther 1945b). The Weston Wood, Albury, settlement site, on the analogies of its shouldered wide-mouthed jars and bowls with concave necks and of its cylindrical loom-weights, could well also be of this period although the C14 date 510 ± 110 bc is a little late (Harding, J M 1964). But small reliance can be placed on a single C14 date and this, when calibrated and corrected to accord with the 5730 half life gives a wide range 800-440 BC, (900-430 BC at the second standard deviation) which is within Barrett's 11th to 9th century bracket.

Looking to the continental Urnfield cultures of the Low Countries we find globular wide-mouthed jars with everted rims, similar to Green Lane Form I and common to most of the above-mentioned sites, in Hallstatt C/D (early Iron Age phases) at the Urnfield at Haps in Southern Holland near the mouths of the Rhine (Verwers 1972). Bi-conical jars with tall cylindrical necks similar to pots at Runnymede Bridge occur in Hallstatt B/C contexts in Desittere's Northwestern Urnfield group which spans the Lower Rhine and Maas areas of Southern Holland extending into Belgium (Desittere 1968).

Barrett considers that it was during the 8th century BC that decoration was applied to the plain vessels. This could be finger tip, incised or stamped as at All Cannings Cross, Wiltshire and Fengate, Peterborough. The implication of this is that the incised and finger tip decoration at Runnymede Bridge and the applied finger tipped cordons and combed decoration at Mucking would fall within the 8th century and this would account for C14 dates later than those from Ram's Hill and South Cadbury.²

The Farnham forms can be well paralleled at most of these Later Bronze Age sites. Form I has parallels at Ivinghoe Beacon, Plumpton Plain (B5), Ram's Hill, Eldon's Seat, Runnymede Bridge, and in Surrey, several sites with Bishop's form 2; Form II is found at Ram's Hill, Brooklands A and Wisley; Form III occurs at Runnymede Bridge; Form IV appears at Runnymede Bridge, Wisley and Minnis Bay and Form V can be found at Runnymede Bridge and also further afield at Washingborough Fen, Lincolnshire (May 1979, fig 3:7), and Maxey in the Welland Valley (Simpson, forthcoming). Staple Howe, Yorkshire has all the forms except form II but has abundant finger tip decoration (Brewster 1963). Willington, a settlement site in south Derbyshire, has plain versions of Forms I and II, but here they are well associated with the pyramidal and cone-shaped loomweights which are later than the cylindrical ones from Green Lane and Weston Wood (Elsdon 1979). It may be that farther north we should be thinking of a slightly later date for the Later Bronze Age pottery assemblages.

In Lowther's view Green Lane was a site of one period and the pottery was associated with saddle querns, cylindrical loomweights (traditionally Middle Bronze Age) and numerous flints. Compared with some other Surrey sites there is a notable lack of any form of decoration and less angularity of profile. The pottery at Runnymede Bridge Bucks however contains a higher proportion of angular forms and is associated with pyramidal loomweights, which are accepted as Late Bronze Age and pre-dating the triangular Iron Age forms. A cursory glance at assorted sherds from the 1976 Runnymede Bridge excavations in Guildford Museum suggests that the fabric is harder, finer and darker than Green Lane, the filler contains occasional grog, more finely pulverised flint and the pots are generally better fired. Given these facts it would seem reasonable to suggest, tentatively, that the Green Lane site pre-dates Runnymede Bridge in the local sequence which would then run in that order, Green Lane, Runnymede Bridge, Petter's Sports Field, which has sixth century BC C14 dates (O'Connell & Needham 1977). The Brooklands A and Wisley pottery could be seen as contemporary with Runnymede Bridge because of its abundance of finger tip decoration and tendency towards angularity of profile, if this can indeed be seen as a later feature.³ And this whole sequence must pre-date the fine tri-partite angular bowls from Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire (Harding, D W, 1972, pl 50).

The pottery from Green Lane and Site '507' at Farnham can thus reasonably be placed within a date range of 1100-700 BC. The association of saddle querns and cylindrical loomweights argues for an earlier rather than a later date within this span, and the absence of decoration would suggest a closing date nearer 800 than 700. If this is correct then an overlap with the Deverel-Rimbury urns of the Stoneyfield cemetery is not out of the question.

Cunliffe has pointed out that in the Eldon's Seat Period I assemblage there are both barrel and bucket-shaped urns with applied finger tip decorated cordons and wide-mouthed angular bowls (Cunliffe & Phillipson 1968, fig 10, p 212). Burgess suggests a possible post sepulchral phase for the Deverel-Rimbury ceramics (1974, 218) and this may help to fill the gap between Middle Bronze Age finger tip decoration and its reintroduction in the 8th century BC. In the

South, where a significant number of C14 dates are available, Barrett demonstrates that while Deverel-Rimbury dates cluster before 1100 BC some continue down to about 500 BC (Barrett 1976, fig 17, p 292). Willington in Derbyshire has a Late Bronze to Early Iron Age assemblage of pottery which includes wide-mouthed, round shouldered jars and a bucket urn with vestigial cordon (Elsdon 1979). Lastly, Patterson's Pit, which Lowther insists was a domestic site as it had no signs of cremated bone, had two pots which were apparently of the bucket urn type (50 and 51), one containing numerous flint pot-boilers normally considered an indicator of domestic occupation.

In 1939 Lowther hinted (Oakley *et al*, 188) that he would like to see an association between the domestic Green Lane and Patterson's Pit sites and the cremation cemetery, Stoneyfield, at the end of the ridge, as he found the pottery from all three sites 'very similar in texture'. Stoneyfield had bucket and knobbed urns as well as those with applied horizontal cordons with finger tip decoration on both cordon and rim of the classic Deverel-Rimbury type (well illustrated in Oakley *et al* 1939, figs 70-73, pls XVII & XVIII). He was inhibited by the prevailing evidence that the Green Lane pottery should be considered part of the Plumpton Plain B Early Iron Age assemblage then dated by Hawkes to 750-500 BC and was thus too late for Deverel-Rimbury associations. But if we can now place the Green Lane pottery in the 11th to 9th century BC the overlap becomes feasible and the one sherd with finger tip decoration (26) could be seen as a late domestic survival of the Deverel-Rimbury tradition, as are apparently the Patterson's Pit urns. It is possible that we have here not only a post sepulchral use of Deverel-Rimbury forms in a domestic context but also deliberate archaism in contemporary burial customs and that these seven sites, which are closely knit geographically, are also chronologically related.

The pottery descriptions will be found in the Microfiche.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the staff at Guildford Museum, especially F Holling, Mrs D Cunningham and Mrs M Alexander, for their help and co-operation; and J May, of Nottingham University and Mrs M U Jones for reading this article in draft form.

For Nick

NOTES

- 1 This identification has recently been made by C Burgess. This median winged axe belongs to the Pennard period and could be at least as early as the 11th century BC (Barrett 1980, 311).
- 2 A provisional palaeomagnetic date for a saltpit at Mucking is c. 600 BC (A J Clark, DoE Ancient Monuments Laboratory). Finds from adjacent pits and material retrieved from dumps after machine stripping from Mucking's largest pit assemblage of pots with applied cordons and pyramidal loomweights.
- 3 Longley thinks that Brooklands A is later than Runnymede Bridge and Petter's Sports Field and that Wisley is later still, firmly within the Iron Age tradition. The Wisley fabric is smoother, with fewer grits than at the other sites and the vessels are generally thick bodied (pers comm).

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