

# Chapter II

## The early prehistoric period

*by Timothy Darvill*

Evidence for early prehistoric activity comprises features attributable to the late Neolithic and Beaker period on the basis of radiocarbon dates and distinctive ceramic assemblages, a group of undated features which contained only prehistoric flintwork, and a collection of residual and unstratified flintwork from Iron Age, Roman and later contexts. The features all occur to the east of the Lechlade-Burford road (A316), but the residual flintwork assemblage derives from the entire site (Fig. 7). All the excavated features were heavily truncated by later ploughing and by topsoil stripping.

### II.A The Grooved Ware occupation

#### II.A.1 Description of the features

Four features, all pits or postholes, can be assigned to the Grooved Ware occupation of the site. These are 784, 785, 962 and 983. They occurred as one group within 40 m of one another (Fig. 7). For dimensions and finds see Table 1. Pit 962, which was cut by pit 983, is illustrated on Fig. 116 on Fiche 1#4.

Context	Length	Breadth/ diameter	Depth	Profile	Pottery	Flint	Animal bones	Stone	Other	C14 dates
<b>Grooved Ware</b>										
784	—	0.90	0.18	Sloping U	P1	×46	×8	—	×2 bone	Table 4
785	—	1.00	0.12	Sloping U	P2-4	×23	×21	Hammerstone	—	—
962	—	1.37	0.20	Sloping U	P5-6	×48	×57	—	—	Table 4
983	0.83	0.73	0.25	Stepped U	—	×18	×8	—	Fired clay	—
<b>Beaker</b>										
552	—	0.68	0.12	Saucer	P7-14	—	—	—	—	—
790	—	0.60	0.25	U	P15	×12	—	Quartzite lump	—	—
794	2.89	0.75	0.25	Irregular	P16	×3	—	—	—	—
1216	—	No details		—	P17-18	×1	—	—	—	—
1260	—	1.00	0.35	Bowl	P19-42	×134	×3	Cushion-stones and hammerstones	×15	Table 6

*Table 1 Grooved Ware and Beaker features and their finds. Dimensions in metres. For a breakdown of the pottery assemblages see Tables 29 on Fiche 1#5 and 32, Fiche 1#12, for the flints see Tables 2 and 7, and for the animal bones see Table 3.*

#### II.A.2 Pottery

##### II.A.2.a Introduction

A total of 54 sherds of Grooved Ware pottery, weighing 438 grams, was recovered. No complete or substantially reconstructable vessels were represented, but macroscopic studies of fabric, decoration, vessel size and colouration allowed portions of six different vessels to be recognized. The incidence of these by context is summarized on Table 29 on Fiche 1#5 in the microfiche report.

##### II.A.2.b Fabrics

Two fabrics were represented (Fabric 1: fossil shell and limestone, and Fabric 2: fine shell and quartzite). Details of these are given in the microfiche.

##### II.A.2.c Forms and decoration

For a full catalogue see microfiche report (Ch. 2.A.2 on Fiche 1#5).

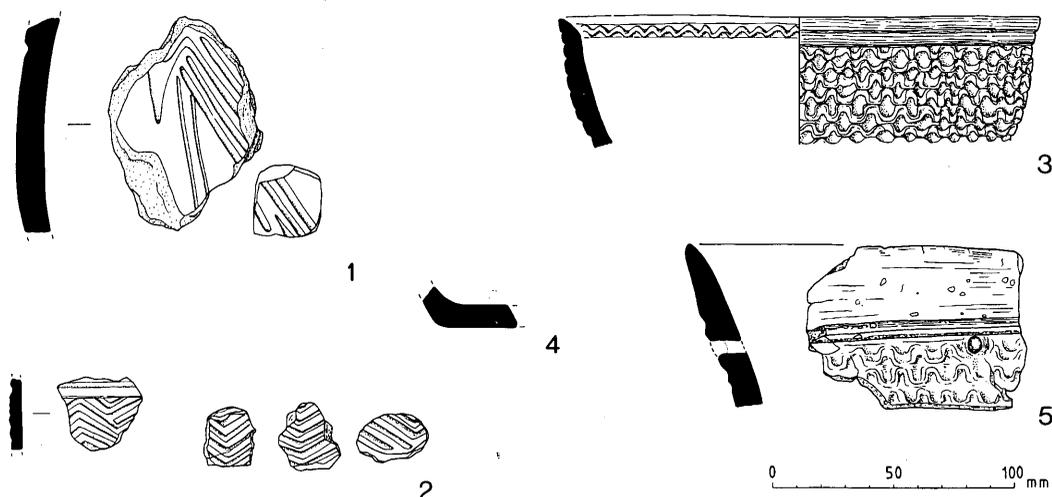


Figure 8 Grooved Ware pottery

- P1 Five sherds in Fabric 1. Interior and exterior pale red-orange, core dark. Fig. 8.1.
- P2 Eight sherds in Fabric 1. Exterior pinkish-red, interior and core dark brown to black. Fig. 8.2.
- P3 Eighteen sherds in Fabric 1. Exterior ranges from pink through to dark brown, interior and core dark brown to black. The rim diameter is about 200 mm. The rim has a pronounced bevel on the inside (like Wainwright & Longworth 1971, type 24). Fig. 8.3.
- P4 Nine sherds in Fabric 1. Possibly the base for P3. Exterior light grey, almost white in places, interior and core black. Not illustrated.
- P5 Ten sherds in Fabric 1. One rim sherd has already been published (Jones 1976, Fig. 2.1). Exterior very dark brown to dark greyish-brown. Fig. 8.5.
- P6 Four small sherds in Fabric 2. Exterior, interior and core dark brown to black; some sherds discoloured and vitrified by refiring. Not illustrated.

As a group, these six putative vessels from Roughground Farm are not easy to place within the scheme of four Grooved Ware sub-styles proposed by Wainwright and Longworth (1971, 236). The nearest match seems to be with the Woodlands sub-style because of such distinctive traits as the presence of thin-walled vessels and simple bevelled rims and the high incidence of incised decoration.

#### II.A.2.d Discussion

The pottery from Roughground Farm is different in its decoration and fabric to the Grooved Ware from The Loders on the east side of Lechlade (Darvill *et al* 1986). Indeed it stands apart from many other Grooved Ware assemblages from the Upper Thames and Cotswold region like Broadway, Hereford and Worcester (Warren *et al* 1936), Purwell

Farm, Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire (Oxford County Museum Service SMR, PRN 3966), Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire, (Leeds 1934, 265) and Dorchester on Thames, Oxfordshire (Atkinson *et al* 1951, 110), in being of generally finer quality. In contrast, the assemblage from Tolley's Pit, Cassington, Oxfordshire, is very similar indeed to the Roughground Farm assemblage. The fabric is limestone shell-tempered, and there is one vessel with a simple upright rim with an internal bevel, and another with rusticated decoration of the same design as that on P3 (Case 1982a, Fig. 69.7 and 8). Whether these similarities and differences in assemblages should be seen as chronological, functional or cultural is not at present clear.

#### II.A.3 Flintwork

An assemblage comprising 135 pieces of flint, weighing approximately 1978 grams in total, was recovered from the features containing Grooved Ware. Table 2 summarizes the composition of the assemblage. In general, the flint is fresh with few signs of post-depositional damage or abrasion. Most pieces are lightly patinated a white or cream colour which is typical of the area. There is no evidence of settlement on the site before Late Neolithic times and it is assumed that the assemblage is a coherent group without residual material.

The raw material is exclusively good quality 'chalkland' type flint which was presumably imported to the site. Especially characteristic is material with a thin blue-grey band between the cortex and the unaltered flint. There is no evidence for the use of drift flint from the Upper Thames area, and only a few flints display the rather thick cream-coloured cortex that is common in the Beaker assemblage (see below Ch. II.B.4).

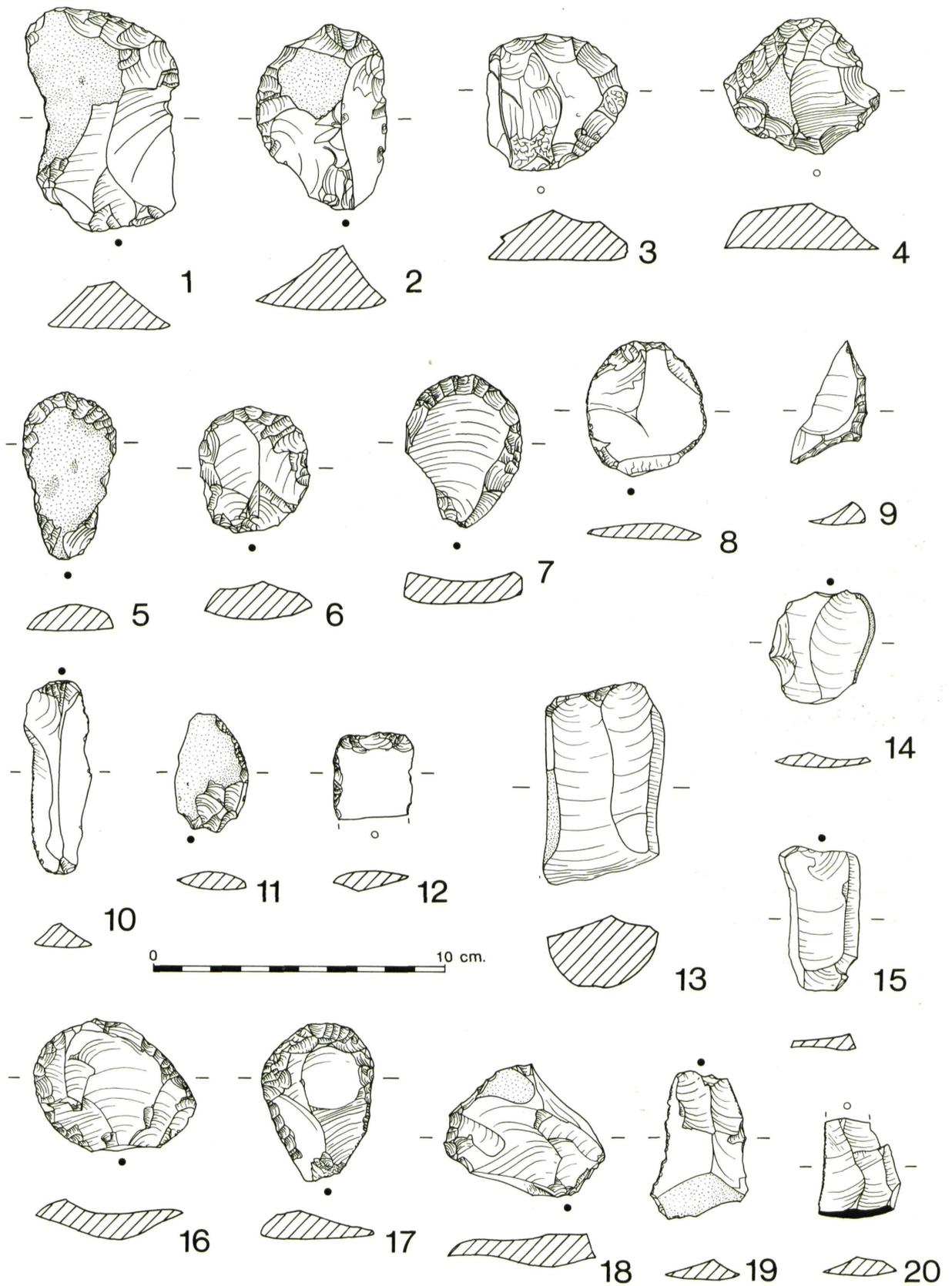


Figure 9 Flints from Grooved Ware features. Scale 1:2. Scrapers: 1-8, 16-18; Serrated flakes: 10, 19-20; Projectile point: 9; Miscellaneous retouched pieces: 11-12; Utilised flakes 14-15; Core: 13. 1-12 from context 784; 13-15 from context 785; 16-20 from context 962.

One flint nodule weighing 330 grams was recovered from 784 and may reflect the manner in which raw material was brought to the site.

Types	Features				Totals
	983	962	784	785	
Scrapers		3	8		11
Serrated flakes		2	1		3
Projectile point			1		1
Misc. retouched			2		2
Utilized flakes		2	4	2	8
Hammerstone	1			*	1
Cores		4	3	1	8
Unmodified flakes	17	36	26	15	94
Calcined lumps		1		5	6
Nodule			1		1
Totals	18	48	46	23	135

\* A quartzite hammerstone was present in this feature (see Ch. II.A.4)

Table 2 Summary of flintwork from Grooved Ware features

- Bulb present & position
- Bulb absent
- ◐ Cortex
- Polished / ground areas
- ( ) Break lines

Figure 10 Drawing conventions used for flintwork

Fig. 9 illustrates a representative selection of the tools and worked pieces. For details of the assemblage see Ch. 2.A.3 on Fiche 1#8.

Overall, the assemblage is dominated by tools, especially scrapers and serrated blades, and by working waste. The presence of cores and hammerstones suggests that working took place nearby; and the contents of pit 785 (Fig. 11) suggest that debris from one episode of flintworking was disposed of as a single group. Implements and utilized pieces represent 20% of the assemblage, which is high even for a site away from naturally abundant supplies of raw materials, where frugal use of raw material might be expected.

Only 3 of the 19 categories of flint implements recurrently found in association with Grooved Ware were present in the Roughground Farm assemblage (cf. Wainwright & Longworth 1971, 254). Particularly notable is the absence of points/awls, knives, and axe fragments. Many of the Grooved Ware pit groups in the upper Thames Valley yield rather little flintwork, as for example at Vicarage Field, Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire (Case 1982c), and in this respect the Roughground Farm collection is an important assemblage. Comparable groups are known from the Thames

valley, as for example at Sutton Courteney, Oxfordshire (Leeds 1934) and Cassington, Oxfordshire (Case 1982a). In both these cases scrapers and serrated blades dominated the assemblages. Little is known of contemporary assemblages from the Cotswolds, but further west at Trelystan in Powys scrapers, knives and points predominate (Healey in Britnell 1982, 175), possibly reflecting slightly different economic and subsistence practices in the uplands (Darvill 1983, 210–11).

## II.A.4 Stone object

A single quartzite hammerstone was recovered from 785. This was an unmodified quartzite pebble crazed and fractured by use at both ends (Figs. 13 and 11). This stone was found associated with a worked-down flint core and at least nine unmodified flakes which probably derived from the core, suggesting that it had been used in flint knapping and discarded along with the other debris.

Hammerstones are relatively rare from sites with Grooved Ware pottery: Wainwright and Longworth list only one example, from Newport, Essex (1971, 262). In addition Pit P at Sutton Courteney, Oxfordshire, contained a quartzite hammerstone and two flint hammerstones associated with Grooved Ware pottery (Leeds 1934, Pl. xxviii.a.)

## II.A.5 Bone objects

A complete bone point/awl (Fig. 12.1) and the tip of another (Fig. 12.2) were recovered from 784. The complete point is made on a portion of long bone, probably a piece of tibia or fibula. Both were ground to shape, and are typical of the range of such artefacts known from Grooved Ware sites in Britain. At least nine awls of comparable form were found at Durrington Walls, Wiltshire, all within the size range 80–124 mm long (Wainwright & Longworth 1971, 181).

## II.A.6 Animal bones

by Gillian Jones

Animal bones were recovered from all four features associated with Grooved Ware. More than half the bones were of pig, and a quarter were bovid. Of the red deer, all except three bones were antlers. Sheep or goat was represented by a single tooth, and a fragmentary atlas vertebra was from a dog or wolf. Table 3 summarises the animal bone assemblage by context.

The composition of the assemblage from the Grooved Ware pits varied, although pig was the most common species by fragment count in all the pits. 962 contained the sheep/goat tooth, the fragment of dog/wolf, and all the fairly complete antlers. It also contained relatively more cattle bones than any of the other pits.



Figure 11 Flints and hammerstone from Grooved Ware pit 785 (photograph by T C Darvill)

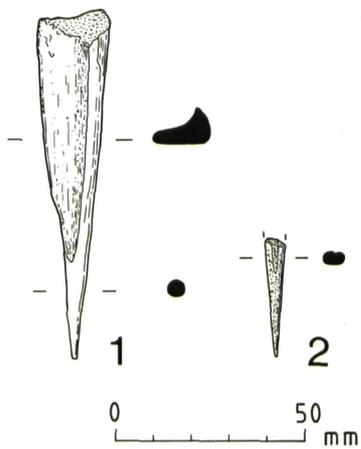


Figure 12 Bone points from pit 784

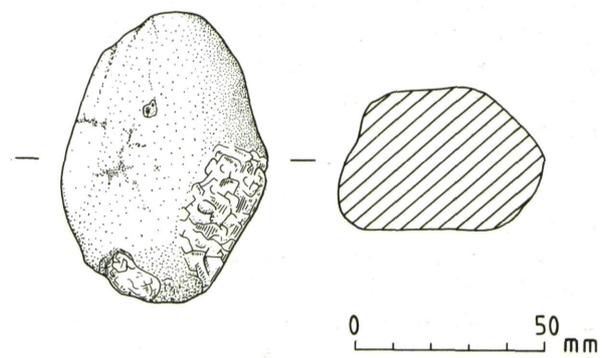


Figure 13 Hammerstone from pit 785

Species	Features				Totals
	784	785	962	983	
Pig	6	16	27	6	55
Cattle	1	1	17	2	21
Red deer	1	4	11		16
Sheep/goat			1		1
Dog			1		1
Totals	8	21	57	8	94

Table 3 Animal bones found in the Grooved Ware pits (by fragment count)

The pig bones are chiefly from domestic animals, with the exception of one male lower canine tooth, which was large and may be from a wild boar. Butchery marks were observed on one pig bone. Evidence of the age at death of the pigs suggests that few reached maturity and that they were killed at a variety of ages.

Most of the red deer remains came from 962, which contained at least four fairly complete shed antlers (Fig. 14). No signs of intentional use or wear were observed. Table 31 on Fiche 1#10 summarises the measurements taken on the antlers. In addition to the antlers in 962, three tines and two fragments were recovered from other pits.

Red deer was also hunted, to judge from the presence of three red deer metapodial bones. One of these bore many fine marks around the condyles, probably caused when skinning the animal. Animal skins would have been important, particularly bearing in mind that wool, if it was used at all, was available only in small quantities.

The cattle bones appear to be from domestic animals,

none being large enough to suggest the presence of aurochs (one scapula neck — SLC 40, after Driesch 1976). A mandible and a few loose teeth indicate three individuals, all less than about five years old.

Some information on the probable season of use of two of the pits may be put forward. Most of the young of wild boar are born in late March or early April (Grigson 1982). If one assumes that Late Neolithic domestic pigs also generally produced only one litter, in the spring, then it is likely that the piglet bones in 785 were deposited some time in the summer. The find of several antlers together in 962 may be interpreted as a store. Red deer drop their antlers in February or March, and these would be collected soon after; antlers left on the ground, apart from being soon covered by plant growth, may be gnawed and damaged by the deer themselves. It is worth noting that no bones of very young pigs were found associated with the antlers. On the basis of this rather tentative argument, it can be suggested that the site was occupied or visited in both late winter and summer.

The bone sample is similar to those from the Late Neolithic sites discussed by Grigson (in Smith *et al* 1981) notably in the predominance of pig. Cattle were, as here, of secondary importance in terms of the number of fragments found, though given their greater size they may have provided the major part of the food output through milk and/or meat. Sheep were present at all sites but in very small numbers. Grigson observed that horse bones were recorded only from henge sites and not at those sites, like Roughground Farm, comprising only groups of pits.



Figure 14 Deposit of antlers in Grooved Ware pit 962

## II.A.7 Freshwater mollusca remains

by Mark Robinson

Fragments of the shell of a freshwater mussel belonging to the Unionidae family (*Andonta/Unio/margaritifera*) were recovered from 962. This is an extremely interesting find and may suggest that mussels were part of the Late Neolithic diet at the site. Alternatively, the shells could have been used as scoops or for the manufacture of personal ornaments.

## II.A.8 Radiocarbon dates

Three radiocarbon dates were determined by the Harwell Radiocarbon laboratory on samples of bone from features containing Grooved Ware. These are shown in Table 4.

Context	Lab. No.	uncal. BP	calibrated BC		
			+1 $\sigma$	(intercepts)	-1 $\sigma$
784	HAR-5498	4100 $\pm$ 100	2880	(2855, 2824, 2657, 2640, 2619)	2498
962	HAR-5500	3940 $\pm$ 80	2573	(2466)	2343
962	HAR-5501	3820 $\pm$ 90	2460	(2288)	2140

Table 4 Radiocarbon dates obtained from bone from features containing Grooved Ware pottery

The two dates from 962 give a weighted average of 3887 $\pm$ 59 uncal. BP which calibrates to 2467 (2455, 2418, 2403) 2294 cal. BC at one sigma. The dates for all the features containing Grooved Ware overlap at one sigma, and probably relate to a single episode of activity. Such a proposition is enhanced by the spatial proximity of the features and the similarities in pottery styles between them. The weighted average for all three dates is 3943 $\pm$ 51 uncal. BP, which calibrates to 2561 (2466) 2405 cal. BC at one sigma.

## II.B Beaker period occupation

### II.B.1 Description of excavated features

Five features contained Beaker pottery, 552, 790, 794, 1216 and 1260. All were apparently pits, and were scattered over an area more than 300 m across (Fig. 7). For dimensions and finds see Table 1. Pit 1260 is illustrated (Fig. 117 on Fiche 1#11).

### II.B.2 Pottery

Fig. 15

#### II.B.2.a Introduction

About 200 sherds of Beaker pottery weighing a total of approximately 1297 grams were recovered from the beaker pits, the majority from 1260. Macroscopic examination of the fabrics, decoration, vessel form and colouration suggests that there are at least 36 individual vessels represented. A catalogue of these will be found in the microfiche report (Table 32 on Fiche 1#12). No complete or nearly complete vessels survive. A few scraps, representing less than 8% of the assemblage by weight, could not be assigned to particular vessel groups, but these do not include any featured sherds.

#### II.B.2.b Fabrics

Three main fabric groups were identified by macroscopic inspection and were subsequently verified in thin-section (see microfiche report: Fabrics 3 Grog, 4 Grog and shell, and 5 Flint). Table 32 on Fiche 1#12 summarizes the composition of the assemblage by context.

Fabric 4, the grog and shell-tempered ware, is by far the most common fabric, and was used for vessels of all types. The flint-tempered fabric (Fabric 5) tended to be used for larger and thicker-walled vessels, the grog-tempered fabric (Fabric 3) is common among the thin-walled finewares (see below). Petrological studies, however, show that these three fabrics are essentially the same clay mixed with slightly different combinations of tempering agents. This may relate to the function of different vessels, but without details of the forms it is difficult to be sure.

#### II.B.2.c Catalogue of illustrated sherds

For the full catalogue see microfiche.

##### Feature 552

P7 One sherd in Fabric 1. Decoration cf. Clarke 1970 motif 32.i. Orange-red colour throughout. Fig. 15.7

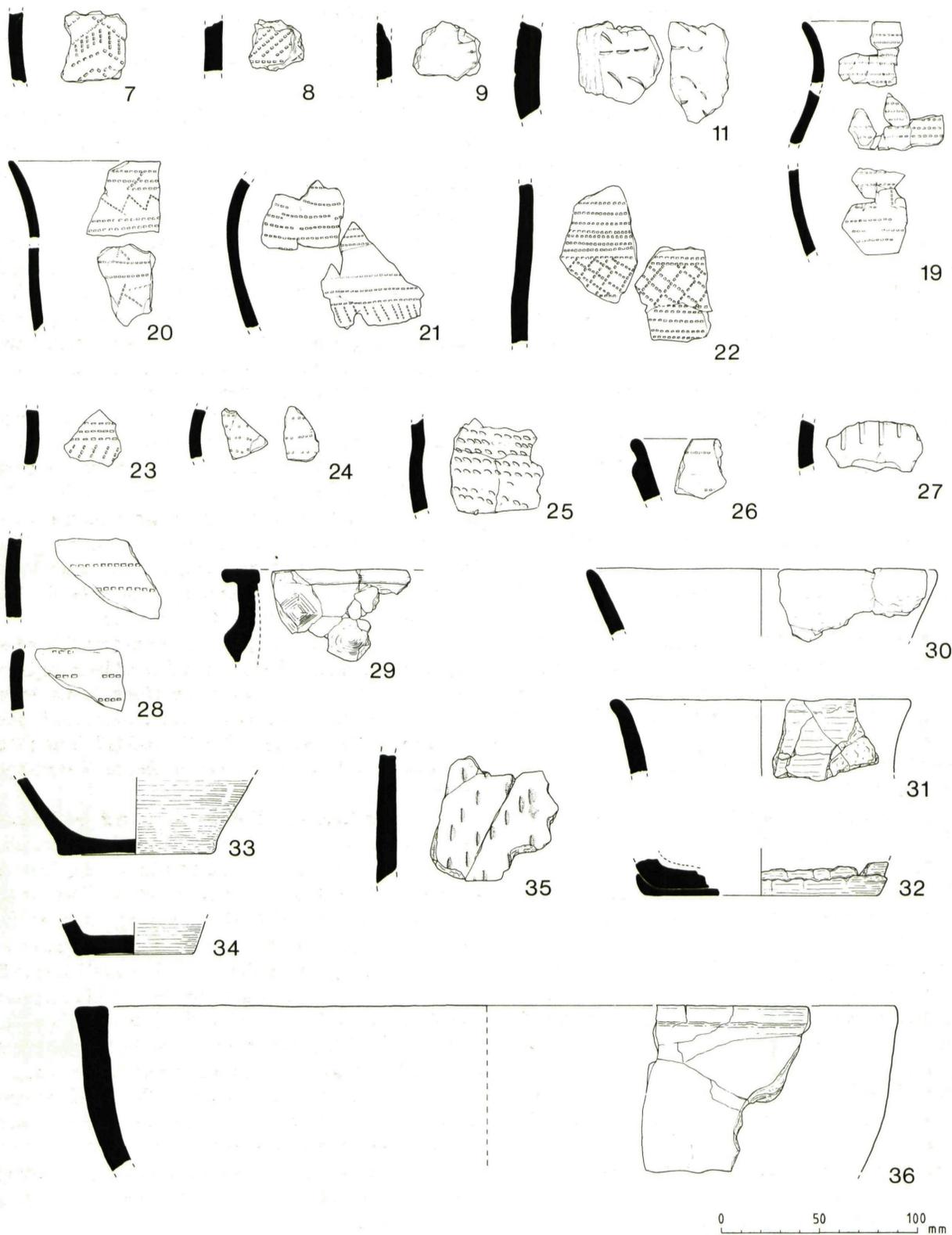
P8 Two sherds in Fabric 2. Decoration cf. Clarke 1970 motif 2 or similar. Pink-red Colour throughout. Fig. 15.8

P9 Two sherds in Fabric 1. Decoration cf. Clarke 1970 motif 1. Orange-red colour throughout. Fig. 15.9

P11 Five sherds in Fabric 2. Dark grey to black colour throughout. Fig. 15.11

##### Feature 1260

P19 Eleven sherds in Fabric 4. Rim and neck cf. Clarke 1970 II/IV. Decoration cf. Clarke 1970 motif 1. Pink-orange surfaces with a dark core. Fig. 15.19



*Figure 15 Beaker pottery*

- P20 Two sherds in Fabric 5. Decoration cf. Clarke 1970 motifs 1 and 7. Orange red surfaces with a dark core. Fig. 15.20
- P21 Three sherds in Fabric 4. Decoration cf. Clarke 1970 motifs 1 and 2/12. Pink-red surfaces with dark core. Fig. 15.21
- P22 Two sherds in Fabric 4. Decoration cf. Clarke 1970 motif 1 and 4. Pink-orange colour throughout. Fig. 15.22
- P23 One sherd in Fabric 4. Decoration cf. Clarke 1970 motifs 1 and 2/12. Orange exterior, pink interior, dark core. Fig. 15.23
- P24 Two sherds in Fabric 3. Decoration possibly barbed-wire style. Orange exterior, pink interior, dark core. Fig. 15.24
- P25 Three sherds in Fabric 3. Exterior brown-red colour, interior and core dark. Fig. 15.25
- P26 Rim sherd in Fabric 4. The rim is rather unusual in being cordoned. Red-orange throughout. Fig. 15.26
- P27 One sherd in Fabric 4. Dark red throughout. Fig. 15.27
- P28 Two sherds in Fabric 4. Decorated with widely spaced, horizontal comb-impressed lines. The knotches of the comb used were unusually large. Exterior and interior pink-red, dark core. Fig. 15.28
- P29 Eighteen sherds in Fabric 4. An unusual vessel, probably some sort of bowl. The T-shaped rim was made by rolling the walls inwards and outwards. The vessel is plain, but has two projecting applied lumps of clay below the rim, and among the bodysherds there are indications of others. Exterior red-orange, core and interior dark. Fig. 15.29
- P30 Two rimsherds in Fabric 3. Estimated rim diameter 175 mm. Interior and exteriors surfaces pink to red, dark core. Fig. 15.30
- P31 Four sherds in Fabric 3. Estimated vessel diameter 150 mm. Exterior red, interior light-brown, dark core. Fig. 15.31
- P32 Three sherds in Fabric 4. Estimated base diameter 120 mm. Coil-built. Dark red throughout. Fig. 15.32
- P33 One sherd in Fabric 4. Estimated base diameter 80 mm. Pink-red exterior, brown-red interior and core. Fig. 15.33
- P34 One sherd in Fabric 3. Estimated base diameter 60 mm. Red-orange exterior, interior and core dark. Fig. 15.34
- P35 Ten sherds in Fabric 5. Pink-red interior and exterior, dark core. Fig. 15.35
- P36 Three sherds from a potbeaker in Fabric 4. The diameter is between 300 mm and 400 mm. Red interior and exterior, dark core. Fig. 15.36

The beaker assemblage is typical of a domestic collection. There is a considerable range of vessel sizes, from small pots with rim diameters of less than 130 mm up to

large vessels over 300 mm in diameter. The basic three-fold division of domestic beaker groups into fineware, everyday ware and heavy duty ware proposed by Clarke (1976) can be easily discerned in this assemblage from the size of vessel, wall thickness and coarseness of fabric. The assemblage breaks down as follows: Fineware 75% (27 vessels), everyday ware 17% (6 vessels) and heavy-duty ware 8% (3 vessels).

Typically the coarser vessels are less well decorated, often with fingernail-impressions rather than comb-impressions, and some of the heavy duty wares, such as P36, are plain. Among the fineware vessels toothed comb decoration is the most widely used, cord-impressed lines occurring only on P25. The decorative motifs and arrangements used are horizontally set parallel lines, with occasional use of zigzag and lattice work.

Very few profiles can be reconstructed, but most seem to fall into the Bell Beaker and short-necked Beaker classes. P29 is very unusual and cannot be easily paralleled among published domestic assemblages or grave deposits. Gibson (1982, 454) illustrates a lugged vessel from the mixed Beaker/Early Bronze Age collection from Mildenhall Fen, Suffolk, and there is another lugged vessel from Newgrange, Co Meath, Ireland (O'Kelly *et al* 1983, 90) but neither vessel shares the form of our example.

Chronologically, the Roughground Farm assemblage belongs to the middle Beaker phase as defined by Humphrey Case (1977, 72), and the decoration and forms fit into Steps 2-4 on the scheme of Lanting & Van der Waals 1971. The radiocarbon date of  $3710 \pm 100$  BP (HAR-5499) from 1260 is consistent with the typology of the Beaker assemblage (see below).

The Upper Thames Valley is fairly rich in Middle Beaker occupation, to judge from the number of burials, cemeteries and possible settlements (Case 1986, 32). A possible settlement is known from pits at Cassington, Oxfordshire (Case *et al* 1964, 59-63), and there is the well known cemetery containing at least four graves at Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire (Case 1963, 21-26), as well as numerous single burials and stray finds. Middle Beaker period activity is also evident on the Cotswolds from the presence of burials such as at Little Rollright, Oxfordshire (Case 1956, 2) and the radiocarbon-dated ditch deposits at Condicote Henge, Gloucestershire (Saville 1983). At this last site only fingernail-decorated coarse Beaker was recovered, but it was similar in both style and fabric to some of the Roughground Farm coarseware Beakers, suggesting a fairly widespread tradition of using limestone and grog for making coarse pots.

### II.B.3 Ceramic objects and daub

Pit 1260 contained 528 grams of fired clay in Fabric 12, including two possible mould fragments. (For details see microfiche Ch. 2.A.2.b on Fiche 1#6).

## II.B.4 Flintwork

Some 150 pieces of flint weighing a total of 777 grams were recovered from the Beaker pits. Over 90% of the assemblage (by fragment count) came from 1260. Table 5 summarises the composition of assemblage by context. Most of the flint was fresh and in good condition with little sign of post-depositional damage. Because the Beaker pits are spatially discrete from the pits with Grooved Ware it is assumed that the Beaker-associated assemblage is relatively uncontaminated by earlier material.

Type	Features					Totals
	552	790	794	1216	1260	
Scrapers		1			20	21
Serrated flakes		1			1	2
Knives					2	2
Polished axe*					1	1
Misc. retouched			1**	1	4	6
Utilized flakes					1	1
Cores					1	1
Unmodified flakes		9	2		36	47
Calcined lumps		1			7	8
Pieces of drift flint					61***	61
Totals	0	12	3	1	134	150

\* Axe reused as a core

\*\* Probably a broken knife

\*\*\* Including some struck and some naturally fractured flakes

Table 5 Flintwork from Beaker features

Two main types of raw material are represented. 1260 contained 62 pieces (weight 69 grams) of local drift flint, mostly small flakes and broken pebbles, but including one very small scraper (see below). This flint was presumably collected from the deposits of high-level gravels in the Thames Valley west of Lechlade, as drift flint is not recorded within the lower-level gravels of the immediate Lechlade area (Richardson 1933, 85). Only 1260 contained this type of flint; it was absent from the pits containing Grooved Ware (see above).

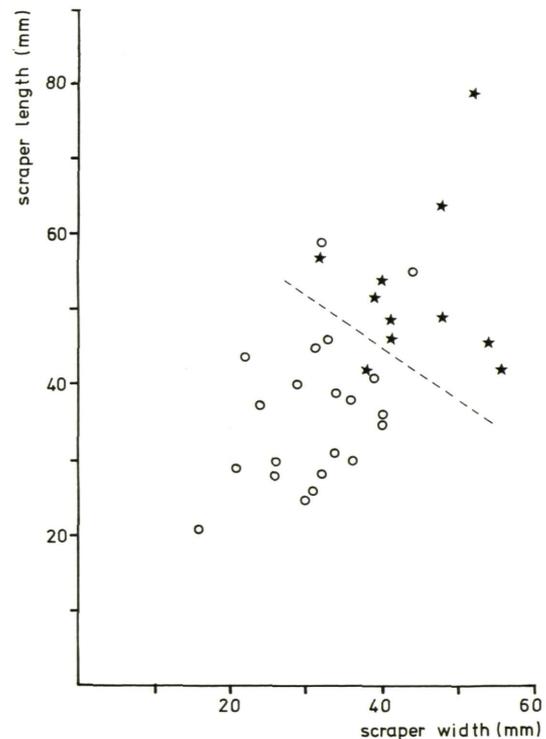
The remaining flint is good quality 'chalkland' type, probably imported and fairly uniformly patinated white. There are two types of cortex, a thin white-grey variety which is rare and a thicker cream-coloured variety which is softer and more porous, and which dominates the assemblage. Fig. 17 illustrates a representative selection of the tools and worked pieces.

Overall, the assemblage is dominated by utilitarian tools, particularly scrapers. In general the Beaker scrapers are smaller and lighter than those associated with Grooved Ware.

Fig. 16 shows a comparative plot of scraper dimensions for the two periods; two clusters can be clearly discerned. Excluding the broken drift flint, which contributed little to tool-making, the assemblage comprises a remarkable 40% worked and utilised pieces to only 60% debitage. This suggests that the contents of the pit derived from an area

where domestic or industrial activities took place rather than an area near to the site of flintworking (see Ch. II.C). Also notable is the absence of projectile points or certain points/awls.

Compared with other flint assemblages of Beaker date from the Cotswolds and Upper Thames Valley this one from Roughground Farm is especially rich. At Tolley's Pit, Cassington, Oxfordshire, for example, Beaker pit 1 contained only seven worked flints (Case *et al* 1964, 59-63). The assemblage from the silting of the inner ditch at Condicote Henge, Gloucestershire, which on the basis of radiocarbon dates is approximately contemporary with the Beaker pits at Roughground Farm, contained only 12 worked flints (Saville 1983, 34). In comparison, pit 1260 at Roughground Farm contained 29 worked pieces.



★ Grooved ware associations

○ Beaker associations

Figure 16 Graph showing the size distribution of Grooved Ware and Beaker scrapers

## II.B.5 Stone objects

Parts of two sandstone cushion stones (S1 and S2) and four quartzite pebble hammerstones (S3-S6) were recovered from 1260, together with six fragments of unutilised pebbles and two roughly spherical lumps of limestone (S7-S14)(Fig. 18). One fragment of sandstone (S15) was also found in feature 790. (For catalogue see Ch. 2.B.5 on Fiche 1#15.)

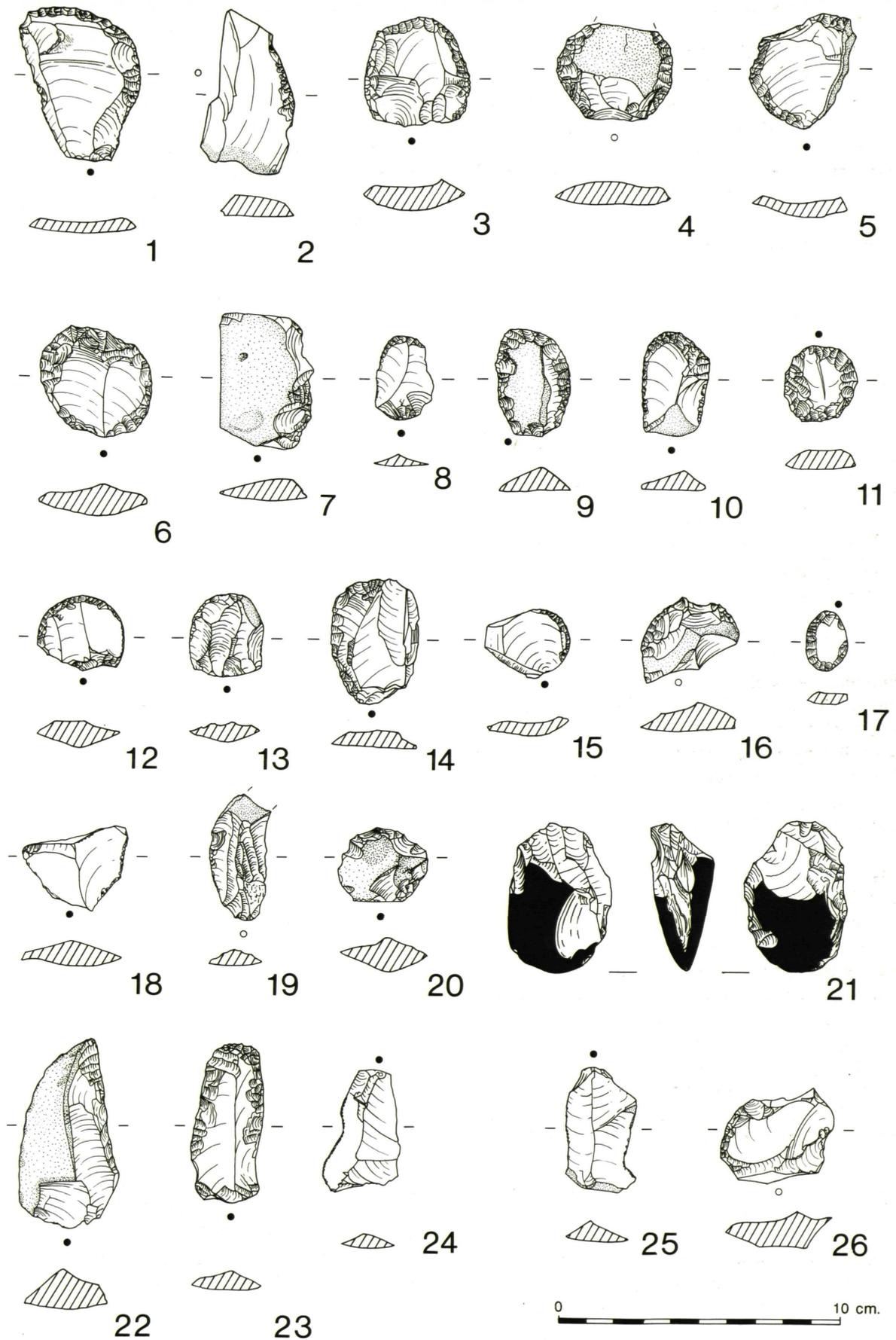
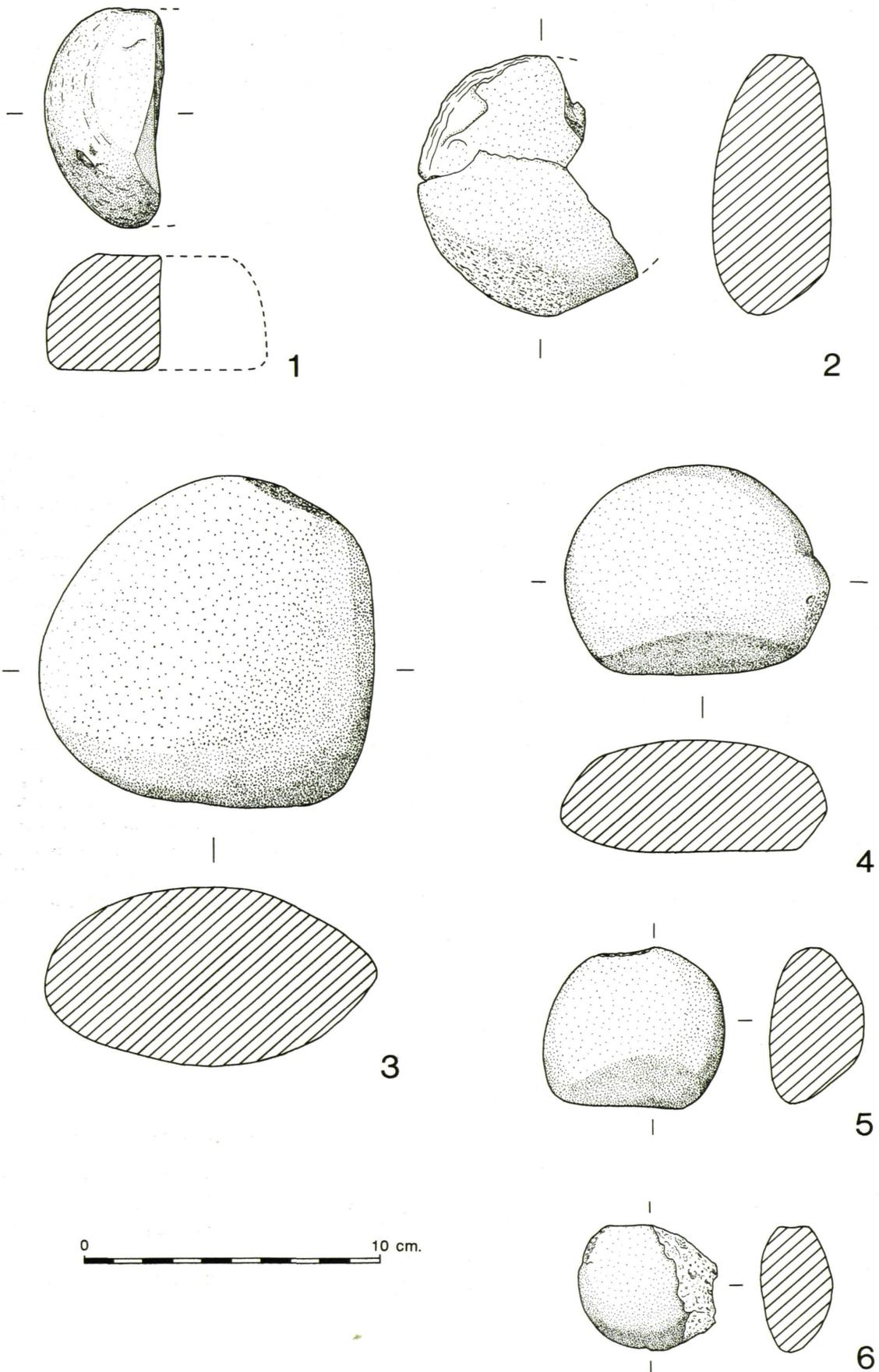


Figure 17 Flints from Beaker features. Scrapers: 1-20, 26; Serrated flakes: 24, 25; Knives: 22, 23; Polished Axe: 21. 1-24 from context 1260; 25 and 26 from context 790.



*Figure 18 Cushion stones and hammerstones from Beaker pit 1260*

The variety of hammerstones and stone objects from 1260 provides an interesting assemblage from a sealed Beaker context. S2 could have been used in grain processing, but it is rather small for a rubber, very fine-grained, and there are no associated fragments of quernstone. More likely is that it was used for some other task, possibly as a cushion stone like S1.

If S1 is a cushion stone then this is an important and unusual find. Both round and rectangular cushion stones have been recognised among Beaker grave goods on the Continent (Butler & Van der Waals 1966, 63), but very rarely in Britain (Clarke 1970, 573) where they seem to be more common as stray finds without any secure context. Examples from the west of England include Okus, Swindon, and Chase Hill, Hereford and Worcester (Darvill 1983, 126). Another possible example, from Whittington Wood, Gloucestershire, was exhibited at the Society of Antiquaries in 1866 (Evans 1897, 244). One interpretation of these cushion stones is that they were simple anvils used by metal workers when hammering copper, bronze and gold, but no metal ores or metal residues were found in 1260. A source to the west or south-west of Lechlade must be envisaged for the sandstones represented by S1 and S2.

The four hammerstones represent a series which although not precisely graduated increase in weight by the following factors from smallest to largest:  $\times 2.8$ ;  $\times 2.0$ ;  $\times 3.3$ . In each case the working face is confined to a small area. Whether these hammers were used for flintworking or were perhaps connected with the use of the cushion stones is uncertain, but it is notable that cores are scarce among the flint assemblage from the Beaker pits, suggesting that if these hammers were for flintworking then any spent cores underwent a different deposition pattern to the hammers. All the hammerstones could have been obtained from the high-level gravels containing 'northern drift' which outcrop to the west of Lechlade. No quartzite or bunter pebbles are recorded in the low-level gravels in the immediate vicinity of Lechlade (Richardson 1933, 85).

## II.B.6 Animal bones

by Gillian Jones

Three fragments of bone were recovered, all from 1260. Two were cattle, the other was pig.

## II.B.7 Radiocarbon date

A single radiocarbon date was determined by the Harwell Radiocarbon Laboratory on a sample of bone from pit 1260. This is shown in Table 6.

This date is significantly younger than the dates obtained for the Late Neolithic Grooved Ware activity at the site, and suggests that the two episodes of occupation were separated by two centuries or more.

Context	Lab. No.	uncal. BP	calibrated BC	
			+1 $\sigma$	-1 $\sigma$
1260	HAR-5499	3710 $\pm$ 100	2280	(intercepts) 2135, 2052, 1970 2050)

Table 6 Radiocarbon date obtained from bone from pit 1260.

## II.C Early Bronze Age

### II.C.1 Pottery

Fig. 19

A single small rimsherd of dark fired pottery was recovered from 1137 (Fig. 19.1). The fabric is grog tempered (see Ch. 2.A.2.b on Fiche 1#6, Fabric 6 for details). The inner face of the rim is bevelled and is decorated with two parallel twisted cord impressed lines. There are traces of a single line of impressed twisted cord on the outer face. Although the sherd is small, it is probably a piece of food vessel or collared urn and as such can be assigned tentatively to the Early Bronze Age. There is little else of similar date from the site, and it may be that the Roman features around 1137 disturbed or destroyed an earlier feature of some sort.

### II.C.2 Discussion

Early Bronze Age activity at Roughground Farm is represented by only one sherd of pottery and perhaps a few stray implements among the residual flint assemblage. That activity of this date was present in the area can hardly be doubted to judge from the number of known ring ditches (Benson & Miles 1974; Leech 1977), but the focus of settlement must have been elsewhere.

## II.D Undated prehistoric features

### II.D.1 Description of the features

Twenty-six features contained flints but no chronologically diagnostic artefacts. 983 also contained only flints, but cut pit 962 and is described above (Ch. II.A.1). Some of these features may have been connected with the later Bronze Age occupation, and are discussed in Ch. III.A.1

## II.D.2 Flintwork

### Fig. 118 on Fiche 1#17

Fifty-nine flints weighing a total of approximately 396 grams were recovered from the undated features. The largest assemblages were from 969 and 1163, with 7 and 10 flints respectively. Ch. 2.D.2 on Fiche 1#16 in the microfiche summarises the composition of the assemblage by context; the composition of the assemblage as a whole is summarised on Table 33 on Fiche 1#16.

Most of the pieces are well preserved and fresh-looking. Chalkland type flint predominates, and most pieces have a light patina. Three pieces are of special interest, a large knife from 1209 (Fig. 118.1 on Fiche 1#17) whose retouched edge has gloss (?sickle gloss) along almost the whole length of both faces, a multi-purpose tool of unclassifiable form from 1165 (Fig. 118.2 on Fiche 1#17) and a bifacially flaked arrowhead of fine workmanship from 1288 (Fig. 118.3 on Fiche 1#17).

All the flintwork from these features could be fitted into the Late Neolithic or Beaker period of activity on the site.

## II.E Flints from later features

### II.E.1 General

Later prehistoric and Roman features contained residual flintwork; flints were also collected from unstratified contexts and are considered together with the residual assemblage.

The flintwork from the Later Bronze Age pits may also be residual, but is described in Ch. III.A.3 as a potentially coherent assemblage.

### II.E.2 Composition

#### Fig. 19

The residual assemblage comprises 416 pieces of flint which weighs a total of approximately 2392 grams. Table 7 summarises the composition of this assemblage and further details of the finds from individual features/layers can be found in the microfiche. Most features contained only single flakes or worked pieces. Fig. 19 illustrates a representative selection.

In general the flints are battered, many are broken or abraded and 'rolled' in appearance. Patination was highly variable and sometimes absent. Good quality 'chalkland' type flint dominates the assemblage and no tools made from drift flint were present. One nodule of imported flint was found in 1141. Approximately 12% of the total assemblage are tools or implements.

Overall, the residual assemblage is mostly of Late Neolithic, Beaker period and Early Bronze Age character.

There is no Palaeolithic or Mesolithic flintwork and no certain examples of Early or Middle Neolithic tools. Accordingly, this collection may be viewed as an extension of material recovered from sealed contexts, and it is interesting to note that the range of arrowheads and points represent types which were virtually absent from the pit groups (see Tables 2 and 5).

Types	Iron Age	Roman	Iron Age or Roman	Unstratified	Totals
Scrapers	11	7		4	22
Serrated flakes	4				4
Arrowheads		2	1	1	4
Points		1	1		2
Knives			1		1
Strike-a-light		1			1
Misc. retouched	1	6		3	10
Utilized flakes	2	4		1	7
Cores	6	7	2	3	18
Flakes	168	80	24	69	341
Nodule	1				1
Calcined lumps	2	1			3
Drift flint nodules				2	2
Totals	195	109	29	83	416

Table 7 Summary of the residual flintwork assemblage

## II.F Discussion

The earliest firm evidence of activity on the Roughground Farm site dates from the Late Neolithic period. Certainly communities were active in the area before this time, as is shown by at least three stone and flint axes from the immediate vicinity of the site (Fig. 20), but on this site no traces were left behind. The absence of earlier occupation on the First and Second Gravel Terraces is borne out at other sites in the area and in the wider region with Late Neolithic activity, notably in the Stanton Harcourt area (Barclay et al forthcoming).

The Late Neolithic expansion of settlement in the Upper Thames area has been described by Case (1986, 31). A similar pattern can be seen in the Severn Valley (Darvill 1984, 100), and there is some evidence to suggest that the changes in these two areas were related to a decrease in settlement density on the Cotswold uplands, where causewayed enclosures and chambered tombs fell out of use at the end of the Middle Neolithic (Darvill 1984, 99).

The Lechlade area emerged as an important focus of activity in the Late Neolithic. Two cursus monuments are known, one on each side of the Thames (Fig. 20). Only the Lechlade cursus, which is 500 m SW of the Grooved Ware settlement at Roughground Farm, has been explored by excavation. Three cuttings through the western ditch in 1965 revealed very little (Vatcher 1965) but more recently excavation by the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit brought

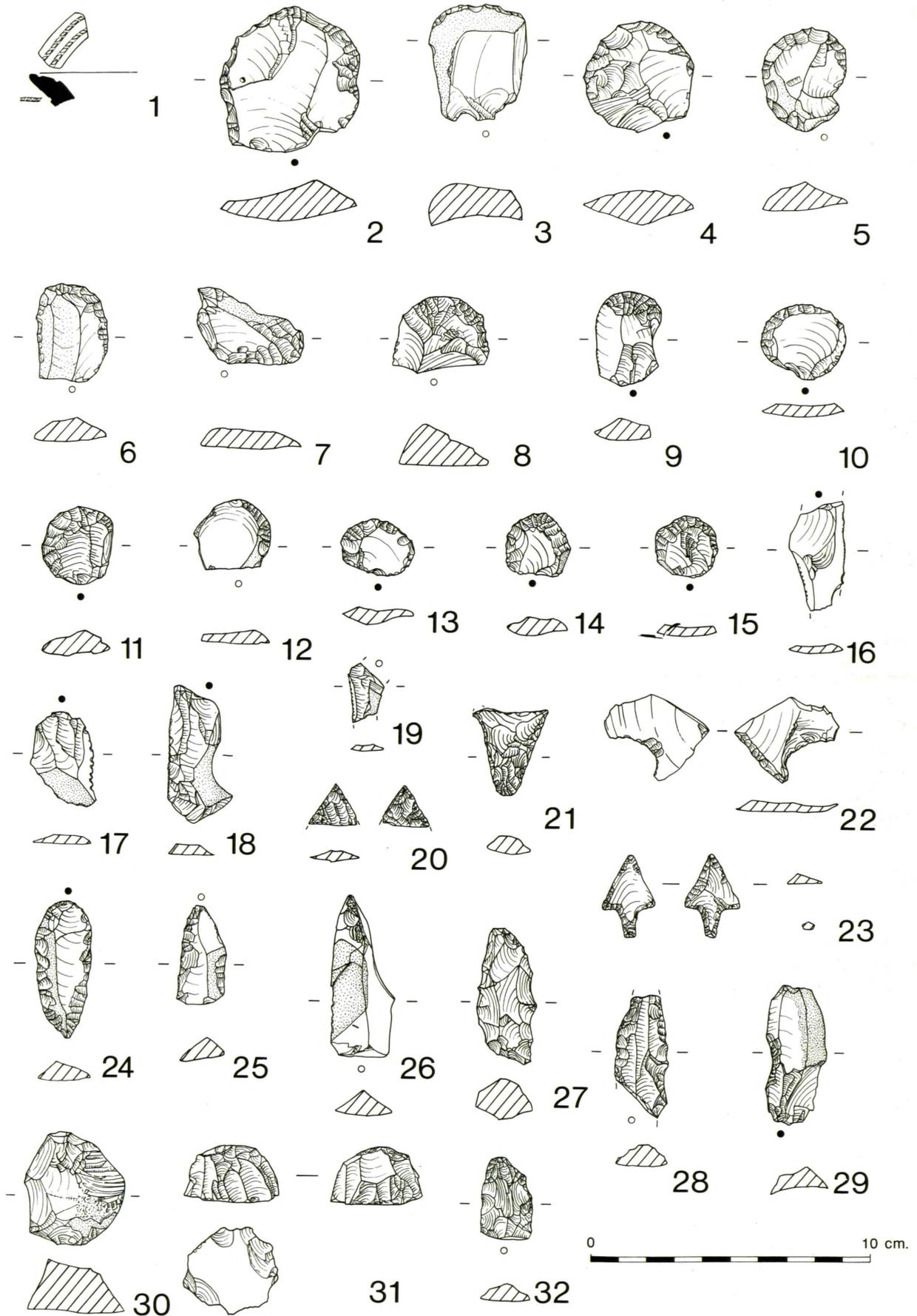
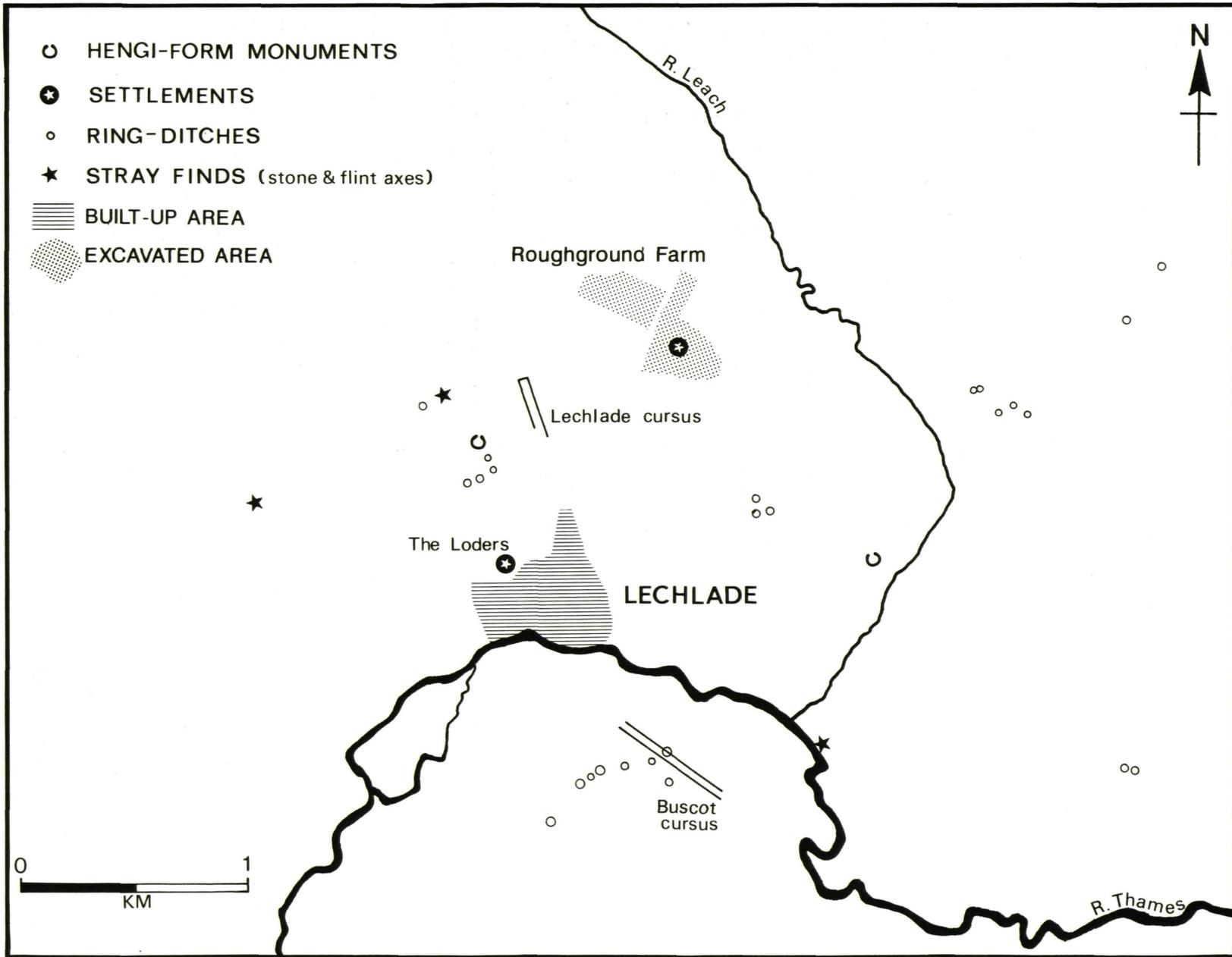


Figure 19 Pottery and flintwork from residual and unstratified contexts. Early Bronze Age sherd: 1; Scrapers: 2-15; Serrated flakes: 16-19; Arrowheads: 20-23; Points: 25 and 26; Knife: 24; Strike-a-light: 27; Miscellaneous retouched flakes: 28, 29, and 32; Cores: 30, 31.



*Figure 20 Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age sites and monuments in the Lechlade area*

to light an almost complete Grooved Ware vessel about one-third of the way down the fill of the eastern ditch (Moore 1985). Some of the ring ditches in the area are probably of the same date, and mention may be made of the two hengiform monuments in the area (Fig. 20; IF Smith 1971; Benson & Miles 1974; Leech 1977).

The Grooved Ware occupation at Roughground Farm is only one of a series of such sites, characterised by pits and pit groups, on both sides of the Thames in Oxfordshire, the nearest example being only 1.2 kilometres to the SW at The Loders (Darvill *et al* 1986). This site was discovered during the groundworks for a housing estate and could not be fully excavated to determine the extent and form of the settlement area. The pottery and the flintwork from The Loders is quite different from that at Roughground Farm, but close parallels for both pottery styles and flintwork have been noted between Roughground Farm and a site at Cassington, Oxfordshire (see above). Here a group of seven pits representing a small occupation site were excavated in the early 1950s (Case 1982a, 121).

The four Grooved Ware pits at Roughground Farm lay close to one another (Fig. 7) and may represent a single phase of occupation. Both features and finds suggest that it might have been a working area. The tools are all fairly intact, which contrasts with the flint tools from The Loders (Darvill *et al* 1986). The considerable number of animal bones and the group of antlers in 962, coupled with the presence of large heavy scrapers and serrated blades may point to an animal carcass processing area; some of the pit and cattle bones showed signs of butchery, and the deer bones display marks appropriate to skinning. The cache of antlers may have been stored for future use. The discarded flintworking debris, which included a core and a hammerstone, may be related to the provision of sharp fresh flakes for use as knives in carcass dismemberment and butchery.

Pig bones were abundant in all the Grooved Ware features, underlining the fact that pigs were important at many different types of site in the Late Neolithic, not just at large henges. As Jones points out above (Ch. II.A.6), however, cattle may have been just as important as pig, if not more so, in the diet of the community at Roughground Farm. No evidence of cereal production or processing was found on the site and it is doubtful whether the pits would have been suitable as grain silos; perhaps they were dug as quarries for gravel or hearth pits.

The presence of a freshwater mollusc shell is unusual; shellfish were exploited by other Late Neolithic communities, as for example at Woodlands, Durrington Walls, Ratfyn, and Woodhenge, all in Wiltshire, (Wainwright & Longworth 1971, 265), but these instances are all of marine mollusca and may simply indicate connections with coastal

communities (see Darvill 1983, 92 for a review of marine exploitation in the Neolithic).

Radiocarbon dates suggest that the Beaker activity at Roughground Farm was slightly later, focused on the last quarter of the 3rd millennium BC. No features contained both Grooved Ware and Beaker pottery and the distribution of features belonging to the two traditions is quite distinct, as were the clay sources used in the manufacture of pottery by the two groups. The Beaker period occupation was spread over a wide area in contrast to the Grooved Ware activity (Fig. 7). Beaker period activity is common on sites in the Upper Thames Valley, and in view of their density further down the Thames it is perhaps surprising that no Beaker burials were located at Roughground Farm.

Beaker activity in the immediate Lechlade area is represented by a sherd of Beaker pottery from a ring ditch at Langford Downs, Little Faringdon (Williams 1947, 63) about 3 kilometres to the N, and by finds from South Lawn, Taynton, about 13 kilometres to the N (Clifford 1937, 162). The Late Neolithic was a period of renewed or continued expansion of settlement in the upper Thames Valley and Cotswolds, and it was at this time that the henge monuments at Condicote, Gloucestershire, and the Devil's Quoits, Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire, were in use.

Excavations at Condicote, some 29 kilometres NW of Lechlade, have demonstrated Beaker associations with the monument and radiocarbon dates of  $3720 \pm 80$  BP (HAR-3064) and  $2670 \pm 100$  BP (HAR-3067) were obtained from the ditch fills (Saville 1983, 46). This makes Condicote Henge contemporary with the activity related to feature 1260 at Roughground Farm, which has a radiocarbon date of  $3710 \pm 100$  BP (HAR-5499). The Devil's Quoits, about 21 kilometres east of Lechlade, has a radiocarbon date of  $4010 \pm 120$  BP (HAR-1887) from the primary ditch silt (Case 198632). Mention may also be made of the undated henge at Westwell only 10 km north of Lechlade (Atkinson 1949).

The nature of the Beaker period occupation at Roughground Farm is difficult to establish. Evidence for subsistence activities is very poor; there is no evidence of crop production or crop processing and animal bones are very few. This paucity of subsistence evidence possibly suggests that some sort of industrial activity rather than food processing was being undertaken, around 1260 at least. The flintwork includes a high percentage of tools, and although flintworking may have been carried out in the area, the virtual absence of spent cores would suggest otherwise. The groups of hammerstone and the cushion stones are probably the most significant clue. Metalworking is one possibility; the burnt stones and heavily burnt daub mould fragments from 1260 might support this, but there was no trace of metal ores, waste products, or partly finished implements. Other possible uses for the hammers and cushion stones include leatherworking.