

Neolithic pottery found at Lechlade, Glos.

By M. U. JONES

TWO finds of Neolithic grooved ware from Lechlade, Glos., the first in this county, are published in advance of reports on the excavations and watching briefs which discovered them. The finds were made at Roughground Farm in O.S. 301 at SP 219008, north of the old railway station, before quarrying for gravel, and in the field called The Loders, O.S. 227 at SU 212996, during road making. Both sites lie on one of the spreads of gravel north of the upper Thames long known as sources of archaeological material.¹ The Roughground Farm site is 500 m. west of the Leach ; The Loders site is 250 m. north of the Thames (FIG. 1).

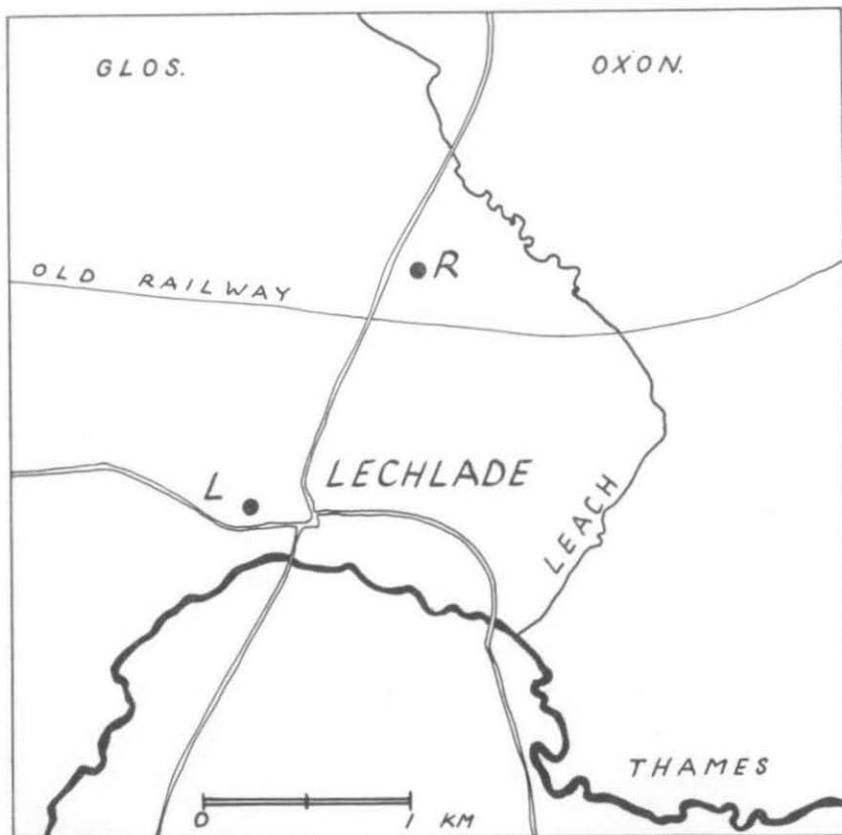


FIG. 1

Location of Neolithic Grooved Ware from Lechlade, Glos. R = Roughground Farm site; L = The Loders site.

¹ Conveniently summarized in D. Benson and D. Miles, *The Upper Thames Valley—an archaeological survey of the river gravels* (1974).

Roughground Farm

This sherd (FIG. 2, 1) came from a pit in a mechanically stripped area of gravel being planned, and, as far as possible, excavated, as part of a rescue project covering

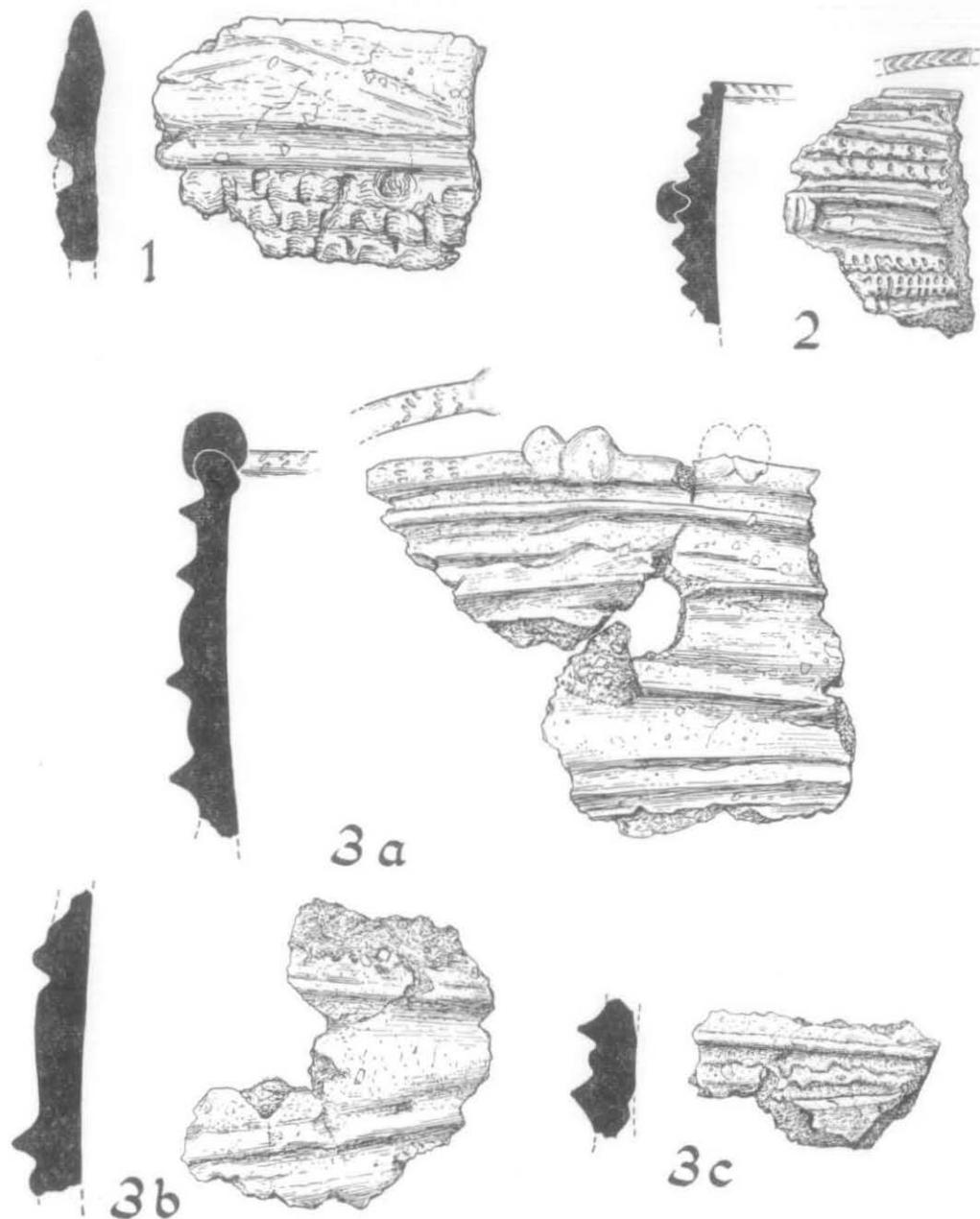


FIG. 2

Neolithic Grooved Ware from Lechlade, Glos. 1—Roughground Farm. 2 and 3 a-c—The Lodgers (†).

some 10 hectares, carried out by the writer for the then Ministry of Works between 1957 and 1965.² On this occasion an area 220 m. × 80 m. (Site I) had been the subject of a watching brief between 4–30 September 1962.³ Stripping by two box scrapers was watched, the area planned, and some features excavated. The density of archaeological features was quite low; Roman villa outfield ditches overlaid by ridge and furrow, three Romano-British burials, and a prehistoric complex.

The pit in question (site reference 241S × 19E) was discovered on a return visit, in which W. T. Jones took part, between 17 November and 3 December. This had been arranged to complete the excavation of the prehistoric complex, which consisted of a 20 m. line of grave-like pits, two parallel lines of post-holes, and nearby pits. The Grooved Ware pit was some 7 m. distant from this complex. It had been obscured by spilt topsoil and had to be excavated in haste at the end. It was the earlier⁴ of two overlapping basin-shaped pits, together over 1 m. in diameter. Their fills were separated by a lens of clean sand, but the contents of the later must have included finds derived from the earlier pit. Since not all the relevant material has been examined, this note on the provenance of the sherd illustrated is provisional.

The contents of the pits had been damaged by the tracks of the box scraper and by subsequent frosting. Finds in association with the sherd suggest domestic rubbish. More than a hundred pieces of stone (surface weathered oolite or brash) about 4 × 4 × 5 cm. with one piece as large as 12 × 10 × 5 cm. were noted. These were grey to red in colour, evidently burnt, and compare with similar finds from prehistoric pits at Lechlade interpreted as hearth stones. One river pebble was recorded. About half of a total of fifty flints came from the Grooved Ware pit. These were mostly waste flakes but included a scraper and a core. Animal bone was badly smashed but seemed to be mostly antlers. Charcoal, soil and shells were taken from the dark fill of the earlier pit, also pieces of orange, laminated clay which might well be disintegrated sherds.⁵

The sherd illustrated (FIG. 2, 1), the only sizable piece, was lifted on a soil block. Its identification as grooved ware will make possible the tentative interpretation by fabric comparison of undecorated sherds from other pits on this site. H. J. Case writes :

Rim sherd of *Grooved Ware* with slight internal bevel, fairly soft fabric with filler including shell (—5 mm.), very dark brown to dark greyish-brown (10 YR/4-2/2) slightly leached.

Decoration : Two shallow presumably zig-zag grooves above a deep zonal groove ; below, zonal finger-nail rustication with a deep pit at its top.

This sherd does not show any exclusive traits of the substyles defined by Longworth.⁶ Ashmolean Museum : 1969.172.

The Lodgers

This discovery is owed to a nearby resident—Mrs. Joan Jerrome—who from her experience at the Roughground Farm excavations was able to rescue features—

² See R. C. H. M., *Iron Age and Roman Gloucestershire* (forthcoming), for an interim plan.

³ *Oxoniensia*, xxviii (1963), 89.

⁴ The Note 3 reference should have read 'earlier' (not 'later') of two overlapping pits.

⁵ Cf. sherds from Cassington described as of 'unbaked grey brown clay,' E. T. Leeds, 'New discoveries of Neolithic Pottery in Oxfordshire,' *Oxoniensia*, v (1940), 5.

⁶ G. J. Wainwright & I. H. Longworth, *Durrington Walls Excavations 1966-68* (1971).

pits and a burial—and finds brought to light by housing development in the south part of The Loders in 1964–6. Hundreds of sherds, mostly of the earlier Iron Age, but including the first ‘grass-tempered’ Saxon pottery to come from Lechlade, suggest a dense occupation on land overlooking the flood plain of the Thames.

The sherds illustrated (FIG. 2, 2, 3a–c ; FIG. 3) came from a pit,⁷ exposed by

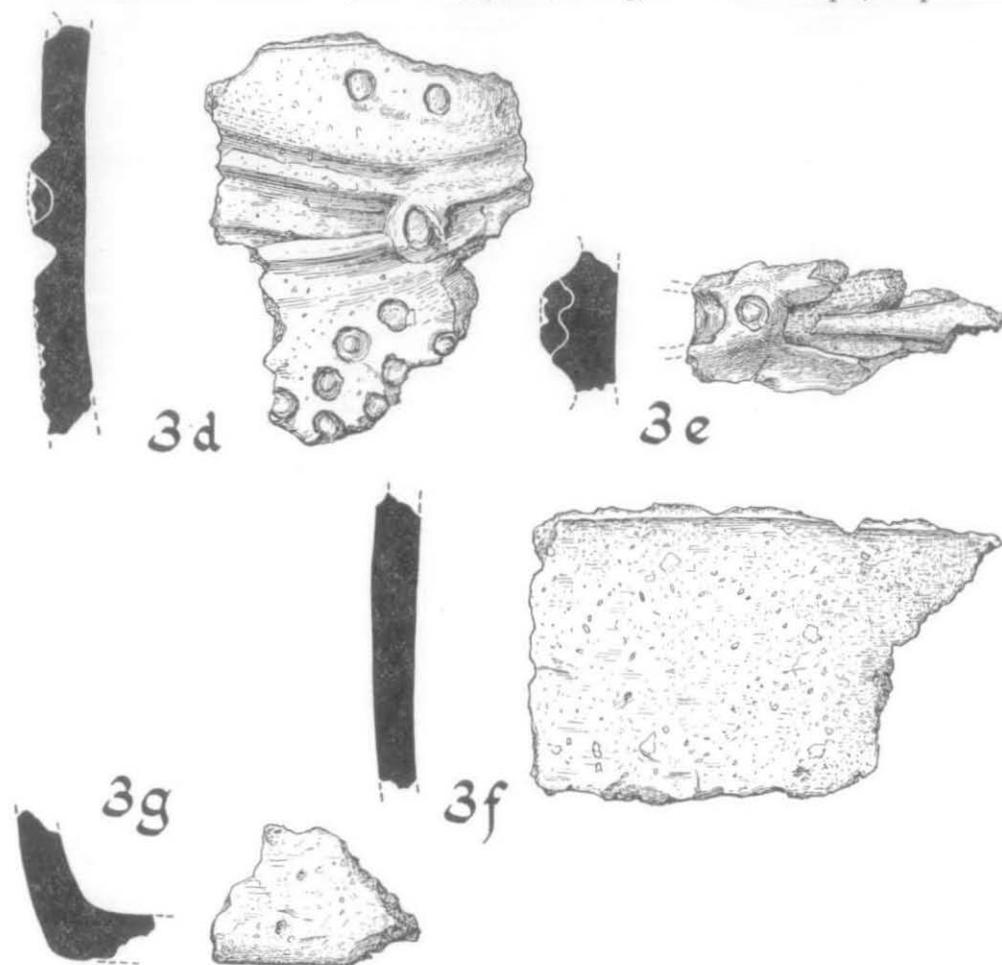


FIG. 3

Neolithic Grooved Ware from Lechlade, Glos. (ctd.) 3 d–g—The Loders (½).

cutting a new road edge, which was notified to the writer. With the assistance of W. T. Jones it was excavated during a watching brief on 10 December 1964, just before the ground was levelled. Also in the pit, which was about 1 m. in diameter and depth, were an end scraper, animal bones and a burnt piece of sarsen about 20 × 15 × 10 cm. Dr. I. H. Longworth writes :

The collection consists of 61 sherds of *Grooved Ware* representing a minimum of two vessels.

⁷ Site reference Pit 5, located 5 m. west of an electricity pole.

FIG. 2, 2 : Rim sherd of fairly compact paste tempered with shell, brown both faces.

Decoration : On the rim, finely incised herringbone. On the external surface, a series of plain and decorated small angular cordons with intervening grooves, the decoration consisting of deeply impressed jabs. One imperforate stop decorated with vertical groove.

FIG. 2, 3a-c ; FIG. 3, 3d-g : A vessel of rather soft fabric tempered with a large quantity of grit, mainly shell, brown externally, generally grey internally with dark grey core.

Decoration : On the rim, pairs of applied double pellets breaking a pattern of whipped cord herringbone. On the internal surface, a single sharply angular applied horizontal cordon. On the external surface, sharply angular applied cordons and grooves set horizontally and diagonally. Two sherds, 3d-e, carry converging cordons meeting at a stop decorated with a single hollow reed impression, while one sherd, 3d, also carries hollow reed impressions in the triangular areas defined by cordons. A further sherd, 3f, which may also belong to this vessel, carries the remains of a horizontal groove above a deep plain zone. A single sherd, 3g, preserves a base angle.

The vessels belong to the Woodlands Sub-style of the Grooved Ware tradition, representing between them five of the six traits taken to be diagnostic of that style. The series of hollow reed impressions is unusual, but deeply grooved circles are found on a vessel from Rudston.⁸ Their use to fill triangular fields in the decorative scheme suggests some convergence with a trait more usually found in the Clacton Sub-style.⁹

The sherds are in the British Museum, registration numbers P1974, 10-1, 1-25.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the site owners (Amey's Aggregates Ltd. at Roughground Farm ; Mr. F. C. Innocent and The Highworth Building Co. Ltd. at The Lodgers) for permitting investigation and giving these finds to the Ashmolean and British Museums respectively. The Roughground Farm site was discovered and notified to the County Correspondent (Mrs. Helen E. O'Neil, M.B.E., F.S.A.) by Mr. A. J. Baxter and Mr. and Mrs. F. C. Innocent. Excavations were then administered by Miss S. A. Butcher of the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate of the then Ministry of Works. Mr. H. J. Case and Dr. I. H. Longworth are thanked for their reports on the sherds. The Roughground Farm sherd was drawn by Mrs. P. Clarke and The Lodgers sherds by Mr. P. C. Compton.

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⁸ T. G. Manby, *Grooved Ware Sites in the North of England* (1974), 22, Fig. 6, No. 16.

⁹ G. J. Wainwright and I. H. Longworth, *Durrington Walls Excavations 1966-68* (1971), 237, Trait 3.