

Aylesford Belgic Cemetery - Grog-tempered 'Belgic' Pottery of South-eastern England

AYLESFORD (K)

TQ 727 594

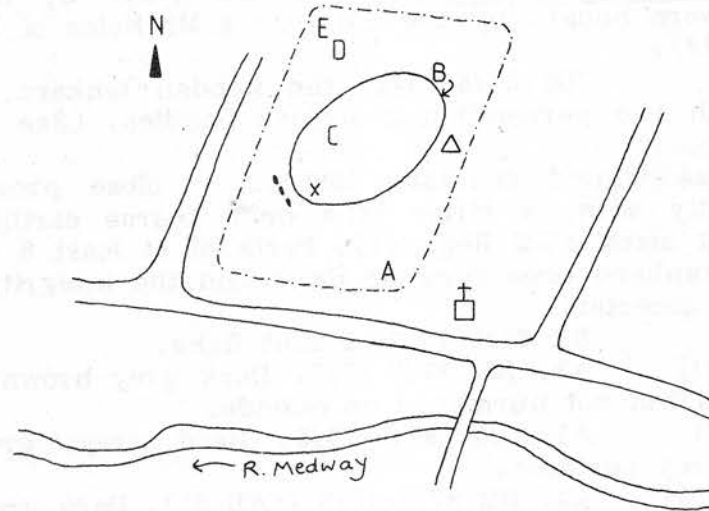
Zone 4

It was in the publication of this cemetery that Evans (1890) first associated the pedestal urns and accompanying pots with 'the Belgae'. It is not ideal as a type-site; the finds were rescued from quarrying, some of the few associations that survive are dubious, and the pottery itself is mixed in fabric and often very poor in technique.

When Arthur Evans and his relations went to Silas Wagon's sand and gravel pit in November 1886 the grave with bronze patella and situla, bucket, and brooches had just been uncovered, in 'a round burial pit', and many other graves had already been found and cleared. Much of the pottery was scattered, and was later gathered from various collections.

A feature which was regular enough to be noted was that the graves, two or three pots to each, in small pits, were clustered in groups of irregular circles (Evans 1890, 320).

Evans provided no plan, and only vague topographical details, but a rough sketch of the site may be recovered from his notes. This should not be taken as anything more than a working model; it is not known, for example, whether A should not be part of the area B.



--- quarry edge  
 x 2 gold staters  
 - - - 3 cist graves  
 Δ Bronze Age sherds  
 The direction of the quarrying seems to have been SE-NW.

Fig.4 - sketch plan of the Aylesford cemetery

A 'Tankard' grave, within a circle of 5 or 6 pots, 200 yds NW of Aylesford church. This would be in the SE corner of the quarry boundary as shown on the 1:50 000 Ordnance Survey map. Birchall's grave Z.

B main cemetery area; no real location. This is where most of the pots collected by Lewis came from, in circles or groups, scattered over the area of the quarry. Associations not kept, except for Birchall's grave X (but see below).

C one larger and several small pits: the large one was 12 to 15 ft deep and full of animal bones, the small ones with charcoal and broken pottery 'such as that used for the urns'. Their function is unclear: Evans considered them, after Lewis, primitive kilns.

D the grave with bronze vessels, found just before Evans visited the site. Birchall's grave Y.

E the 'Family-Circle' graves dug by Evans. He states that these were in the untouched NW margin of the sandpit, 'in immediate juxtaposition to the area where the graves containing the bronze vessels have been discovered'. Nothing came to light beyond (E).

The list of pots given by Evans 'comprises most of the best preserved specimens'. It is full of mistakes in the collation with his figures, and for this reason it is preferable to use Birchall's numbering (see her catalogue for correspondence, where possible, with Evans). The pottery, re-drawn, is here arranged in the order set out above.

A - 'Tankard' grave, Birchall's grave Z, the contents of which were bought by the BM from a Mr Hales of Ightham (Evans 1890, 317).

BM 87/6-10/1: the wooden tankard, bronze plated and with two perpendicular bronze handles. (See Corcoran 1952, Pl.XI).

This was 'Found Oct.15th 1886... in close proximity to, and apparently with, a circle of 5 or 6 coarse earthenware jars of different sizes' (BM Register). Parts of at least 8 vessels as well as the tankard came from Mr Hales and the integrity of the group is very uncertain.

BM 87/6-10/2: a flint flake.

[121] A3. BM 87/6-10/7. Dark grey-brown, coarse grog, smoothed but not burnished on outside.

[67] A1. BM 87/6-10/9. Hard grey, greensand, dark brown-grey surfaces.

[1358] A3. BM 87/6-10/5 (=AB 55). Dark grey, greensand, remains of burnish outside. Falsely restored above what remains; not a thin pot but well made with sharp cordons.

[65] E1-2. BM 87/6-10/8. Brown-grey, grog, surfaces smooth. Now in pieces; associated sherds may be a deep hollow pedestal foot, a Kent version of F3-4.

[1350] B2-4. BM 87/6-10/3 (=AB 54). Brown-grey, greensand, well restored, some dark grey burnish on outside.

[66] B1-1. BM 87/6-10/6. Dark grey, greensand, hard, dark grey surfaces. Possibly the rim of:

[1349] not in series. BM 87/6-10/4 (=AB 53). Dark grey, greensand, smoothed; once had groove around top but now restored and groove not visible.

BM 87/6-10/10 represents grey ware fragments 'with cinders etc.'

B - Lewis Collection and others. The majority of the graves; mostly collected by Mr Lewis of Camberwell.

1 - 'Bucket grave', Birchall's grave X: Mr Lewis noted the iron ring-handles and part of the iron hoop of a wooden bucket (88/10-21/26-28), and that 'several urns were found within the area originally enclosed by the rim of the bucket' (Birchall 1965, 301). Birchall provided a reconstruction of the burial group (her nos .44-48); the BM Register notes that AB 45-48 were found with the remains of the bucket, and one other pot, AB 44, is pinpointed by Evans as one of those inside the bucket, although not described as such in the BM Register. The Register adds that AB 44, 46, and 47 all contained burnt bones, so more than one burial may be represented.

The bucket is discussed by Stead (1971), and Brailsford (1975, 83-89).

[1365] B2-4. BM 88/10-24/13 (=AB 44). Found inside the remains of the wooden bucket. Contains substantial bones. Dark grey, greensand, wheel-made but wobbly rim and cordons, burnished outside, clear tooled decoration, not incised, strong rough horizontal tooling below. Badly restored.

[1359] B1-7. BM 88/10-24/8 (=AB 45). HM, a bit lopsided, restored but substantially complete. Dark grey-brown,

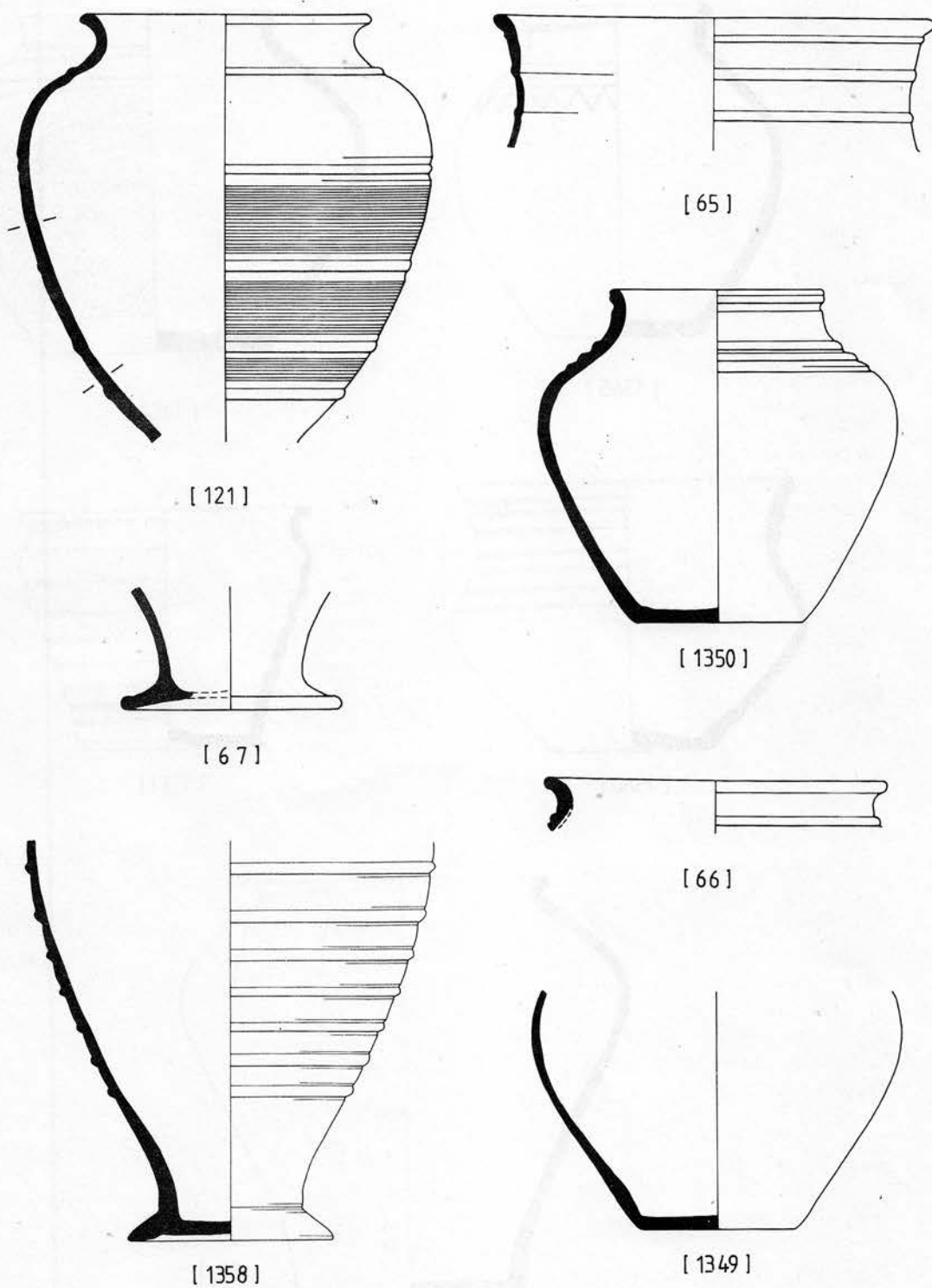
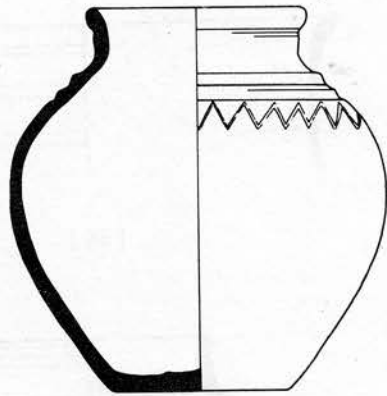
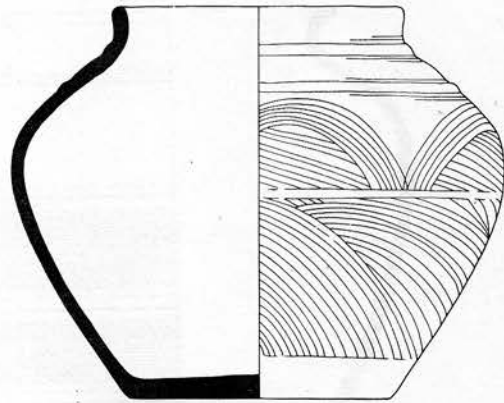


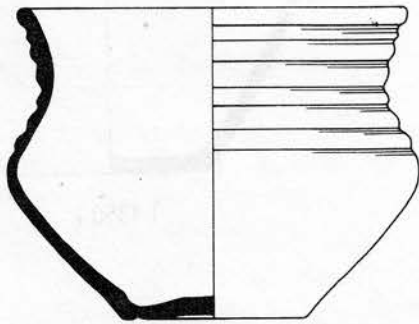
Fig.5: Pottery from Aylesford, grave Z. 1:4



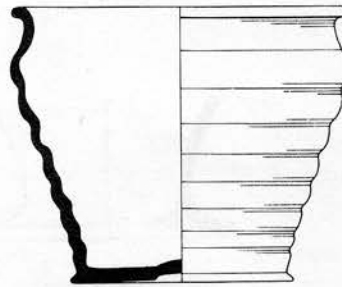
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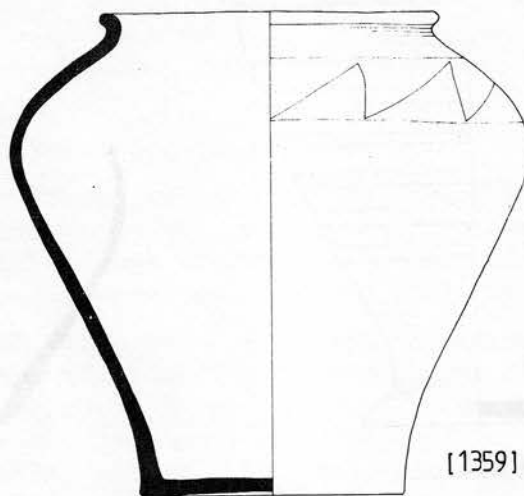
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[1359]

Fig.6: Pottery from Aylesford, grave X. 1:4

grog, pale buff-reddish patchy surfaces, faint shallow incised decoration, rough tooling below. The shape is the result of the coiling technique.

[1352] B2-4. BM 88/10-24/10 (=AB 46). HM dark grey-brown, greensand, shallow multiple combing, badly restored.

[1360] E1-2. BM 88/10-24/9 (=AB 47). Well made, complete but mended; broke at angles and base. Dark grey, greensand, no shine but neat tooled cordons.

[1361] D3-5. BM 88/10-24/11 (=AB 48). Contained pieces of bronze and burnt flakes, according to the Register: BM 88/10-24/38, 39. Originally well made, now much restored and messy. Brown-grey, greensand, once with dark burnish.

The grave was noted as having satellite graves grouped around it: AB 66 and 67 were found in these, presumably each in separate burials (Evans *op.cit.*, 320). See below.

2. The rest of the Lewis Collection has lost its associations, but seems to have consisted of clusters of graves with perhaps two large and one smaller pot in each round pit. The vessel referred to by Birchall but not illustrated (1965, 303) is included here, as are other unassociated vessels from the cemetery.

[1368] A2. BM 88/10-24/1 (=AB 66). Dark grey-brown, grog, grey surfaces, smooth outside. Very well made, good heavy foot to support large top-heavy body, plain, in good condition. This is the only example of the true A2 form in Kent, and a very good one.

[1388] A3. BM 88/10-24/2 (=AB 67). Much restored, grey-brown, grog, darker surfaces, foot plugged with cardboard and plaster and much of inside obscured; the horizontal lines are incised, the diagonals lightly tooled.

[1347] A4. BM 88/10-24/4 (=AB 69). Pink-brown, greensand, much restored. Foot plugged, rim broken off, grey core and orange below smooth surfaces, clean break on foot.

[1403] A3. BM 88/10-24/5. Rather gritty brown-grey, grog, patchy, some external smoothing. Most extant; leans to one side. ('Not available for study' by Birchall.)

[747] A8. AshM 840a.1888 (=AB 70). HM, built up with coils, not well smoothed, uneven shape and rim. Greensand, pale buff with dark grey firing patch. Very rough lines incised unevenly around body.

With the Aylesford pots in AshM was registered 'a mass of decayed large rings of Kimmeridge coal, probably bracelets or armlets'; about half a dozen, found in a lump (843.1888).

[1353] A3. BM 88/10-24/3 (=AB 72). Brown-grey, greensand, very much restored, foot worn, once well tooled outside, mostly horizontal tooling.

[755] A3. AshM 842.1888 (=AB 71). Probably belongs to 'Family-Circle' group D (below), and has some body sherds with shallow cordons; and calcined bones. Dark grey-brown, greensand, once burnished; well made, now worn. Inside rough and brittle.

[1389] A3. BM 88/10-24/25 (=AB 68). Grey-brown, grog, some sandy white grits, grey-brown surfaces, traces of burnish outside, black deposit on foot. Restored, but well made and in good condition.

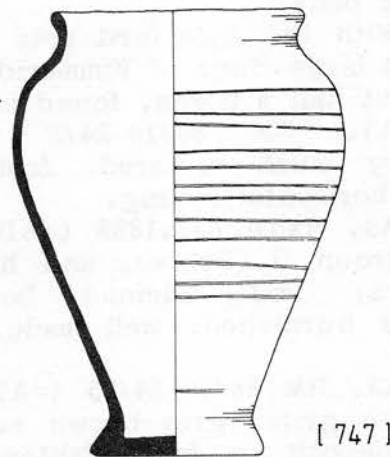
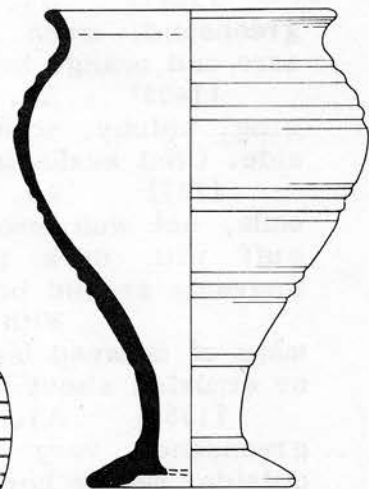
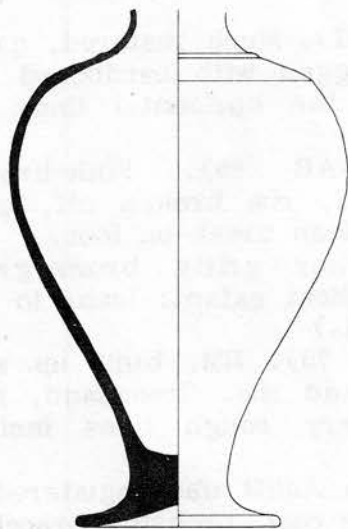
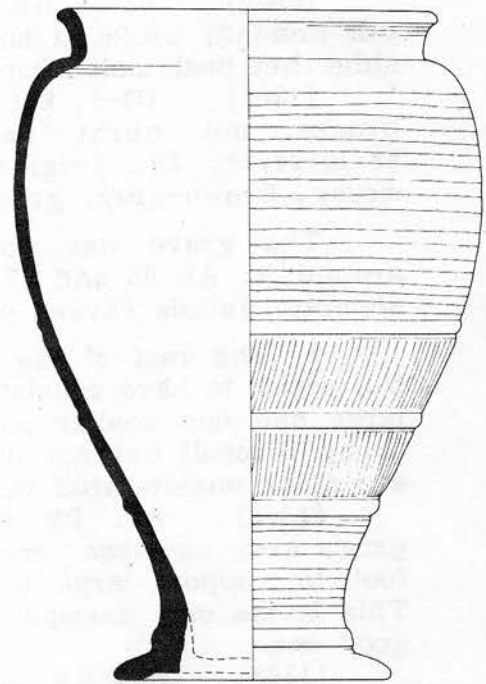
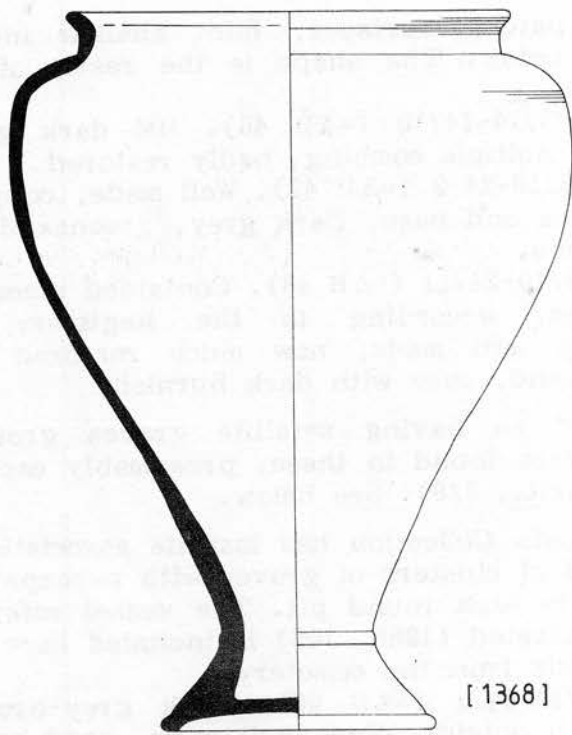


Fig.7a: Pottery from Aylesford, unstratified. 1:4

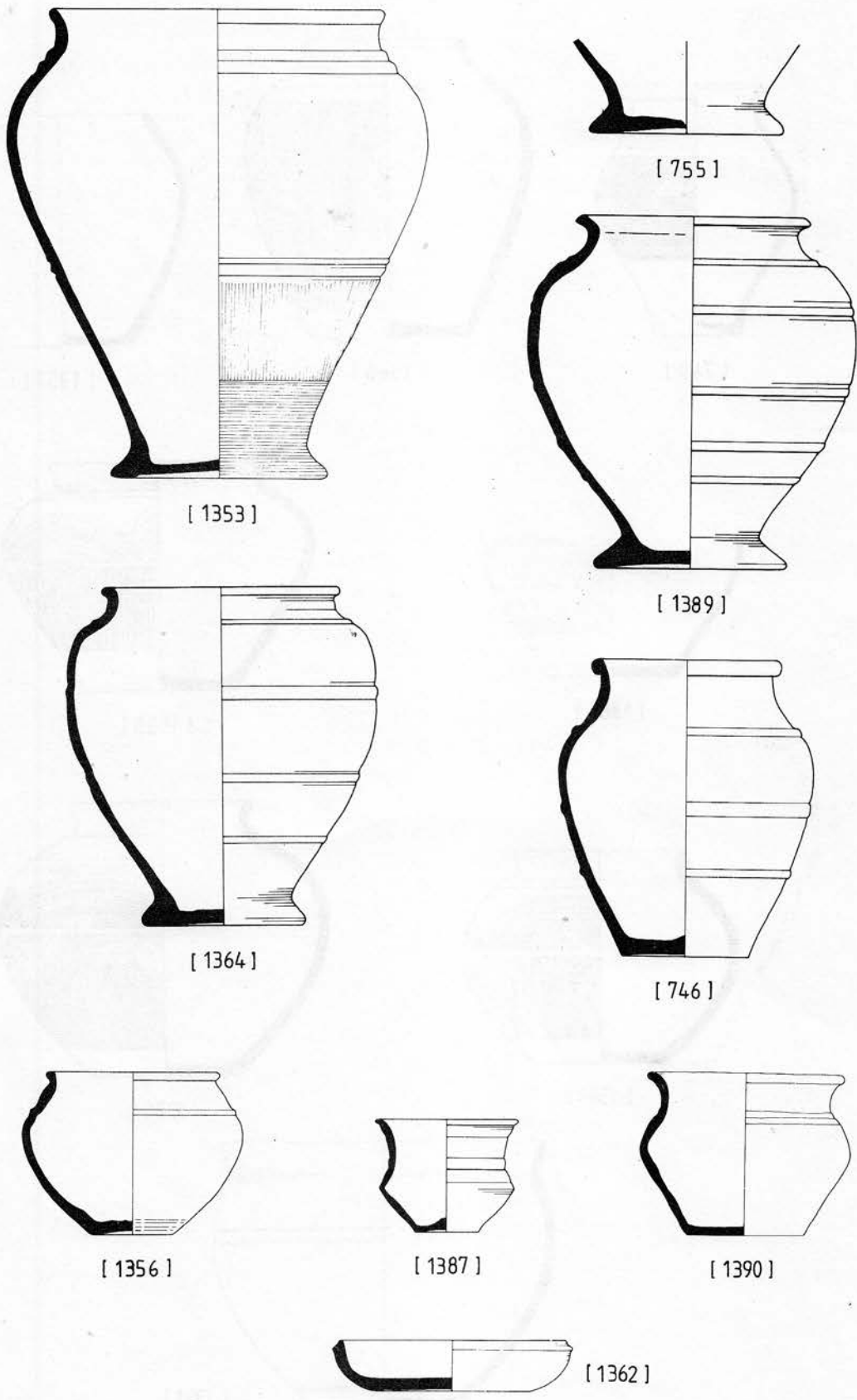


Fig.7b: Pottery from Aylesford, unstratified. 1:4



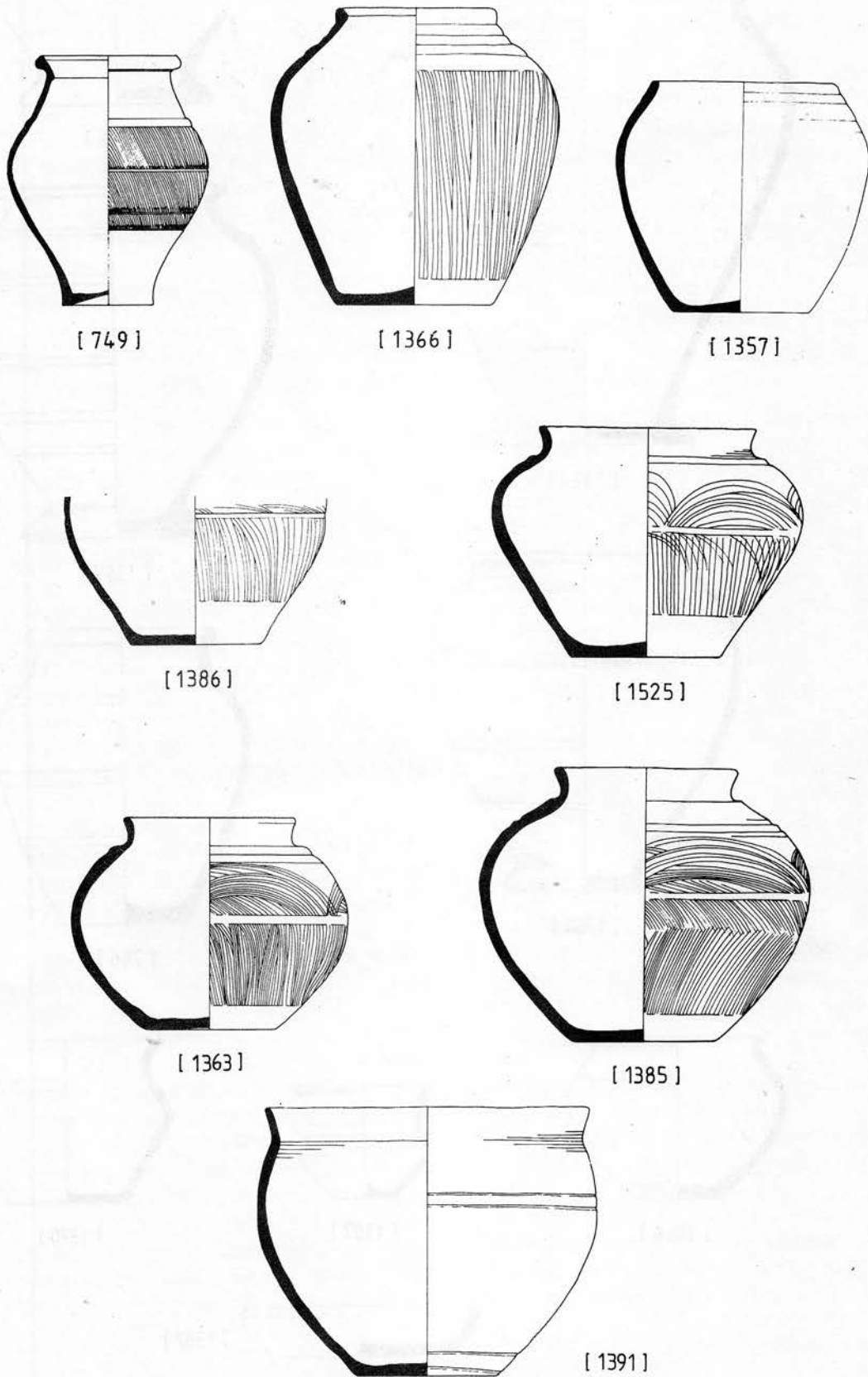


Fig.7c: Pottery from Aylesford, unstratified. 1:4

[1364] A3. BM 88/10-24/18. Not in AB. Grey grog-tempered, complete, mended, dark grey surfaces, burnished and tooled outside with traces of black deposit. Very similar to [1389] above.

[746] (G5-4). AshM 606.1891 (=AB 80). Not completely regular, but very precise, wheel-made, complete, dark grey, greensand; roughly hand tooled all over outside and over rim. The cordons are formed with the same rough hand tooling.

[1356] D1-2. BM 88/10-24/12 OAB 84). Once a neat pot but badly restored. Brown, greensand, shine partly due to restoration. Contains some bones and earth.

[1387] E1-3. BM 88/10-24/23 (=AB 83). Dark grey, hard, greensand, summarily wheel-made and leans to one side; rim is mostly restoration; traces of black on surface.

[1390] E3-1. BM 88/10-24/21 (=AB 86). HM, complete but cracked, dark grey-brown grog, roughly smoothed surfaces, very shallow cordons, traces on cordons & over rim.

[1362] (G1-10). BM 88/10-24/14 (=AB 82). Dark grey-brown, greensand, roughly tooled.

[749] (G5-5). AshM 607.1891 (=AB 81). Buff, finely made, thick matt dark grey core with very fine gritty temper, one small burn on outside, very regular rouletting.

[1366] B2-3. BM " 88/10-24/17 (=AB 74). Dark grey, greensand, HM, coarse combing, no burnish.

[1357] B2-4. BM 88/10-24/7 OAB 79). HM dark grey grog, now much restored and in very poor condition; smoothed dark grey outer surface, rough horizontal tooling. Contains bones.

[1386] not in series. BM 88/10-24/22 (=AB 77). HM, grog, grey-brown, burnish and decoration quite well done like the others; similar, wide incised tool marks made in softish clay with a blunt instrument.

[1525] B1-3. BM 88/10-24/20 OAB 78). Less than half extant; HM, coarse brown, grog, patchy dark grey-brown lumpy surfaces, not well finished; shallow incised decoration. One small joining rim piece survives.

[1363] B1-3. BM 88/10-24/16 OAB 76). Coarse grey-brown, much pale grog, also showing on surface; some smoothing but no burnish, fine strong combing. Complete and unbroken; contains bones in a lump.

[1385] B2-4. BM 88/10-24/19 OAB 73). HM, probably turned to finish, leached grey, grog, pitted grey surfaces; dark burnish around base, and fine combing, not prominent but clear.

AB 75, BM 88/10-24/15: B1-3. This vessel's contents of packed earth were intact; recently examined by BM conservation staff, it contained a large bronze brooch with a two-by-two coil spring, internal cord, long straight flat bow & triangular open catchplate; this is now registered as BM 88/10-24/40. The pot is similar to the others with combing, above.

Two much earlier vessels, AB 85 and 87, do not belong to the late Iron Age cemetery; no.85, being a good pot of its kind, is redrawn here. Despite the occasional incidence of flint-gritted Iron Age pots being found in association with 'Belgic' vessels on

settlement sites in Kent, this does not mean that the two traditions are associated here.

[1391] BM 88/10-24/24 (=AB 85). Iron Age, HM, dark brownish-grey, fine crushed flint temper, smoothed surfaces.

D - 'Situla grave', Birchall's grave Y; discovered just before Evans' visit, and illustrated in Evans *op.cit.* fig.1. The engraving is attractive but misleading, as the pots registered with the metalwork do not on the whole correspond with their portraits. In the circular chalk-lined pit were the bronze-plated bucket, containing bones and brooches, the bronze jug, bronze patella, and 'several earthenware urns, some of which had been used as cineraries' (Evans, 317). Considering the high quality of the metalwork, it is curious that the accompanying pottery, with the notable exception of the superb vessel AB 52, visible in the engraving, should be so ordinary. It is possibly relevant that while Evans notes that the 'tankard' grave, Z, was already in the possession of the BM when the 'situla' grave was found in 1886, the latter was registered at the BM in November 1886, while the former was not registered until the middle of 1887, and yet it is grave Z that has two cordoned pedestal urns similar to those figured in Evans' engraving of grave Y.

[1348] A4. BM 86/11-12/11 (=AB 49). Dark grey, greensand, smoothed outside, tooled under base. Much restored.

[1354] D3-5. BM 86/11-12/14 (=AB 52). Dark grey, greensand, much restored; originally very neat. Rim, base, and most of cordons sufficiently extant. Black traces on outside.

[1351] B3-4. BM 86/11-12/12 (=AB 51). Rough HM soft grey-brown, grog, smoothed outside; distorted in restoration.

[1367] not in series. BM 86/11-12/13 (=AB 50). HM, much restored, only a few sherds at top. Dark grey-brown, lumpy, possibly some grog, fine combing outside. Top half possibly had zig-zag.

E - 'Family-Circle' graves. Evans' fig.4 shows this group, which he excavated, and apparently similar to the arrangement elsewhere in the cemetery.

1 group A: Birchall did not see this, but sherds in the AshM, reconstructed here, are marked 'Found without number, 1969. Probably 1891.615 "Cinerary bowl", Family Circle grave A'.

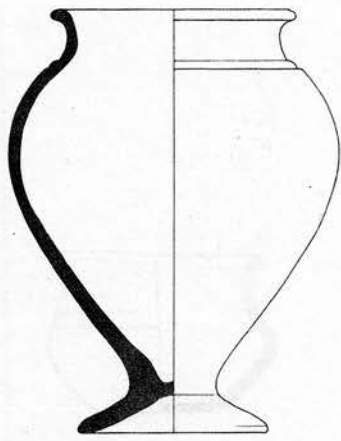
[756] D1-4. Very crude, at least partly HM, in small pieces. Dark grey surfaces, grey-brown core, not greensand and possibly grog. Roughly tooled and burnished.

#### 2 group B:

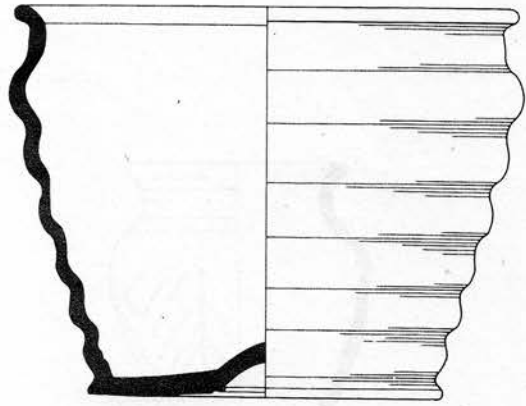
[751] B2-3. AshM 608.1891 (=AB 58). The drawing shows what a horrible pot this is: badly HM, some turning and tooling on neck, all lines irregular. Apparently grog. Blotchy black-buff outside, buff-brown inside. Hurried tooling marks outside form a pattern but only visible in patches and extremely summary. Contains bones.

[753] E2-3. AshM 610.1891 (=AB 56). Very poor HM pot, leans over; apparently gritty. Patchy dark grey, worn tooled outside. Much restored.

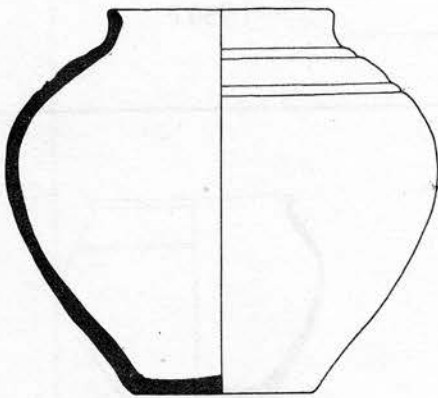
[750] (G1-10). AshM 611.1891 (=AB 57). Greensand, patchy buff underneath, roughly smoothed.



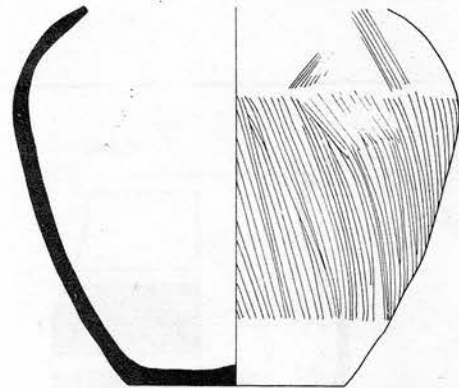
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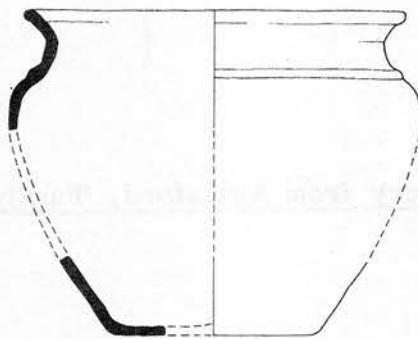
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[ 1367 ]

Y

A



[ 756 ]

Fig.8. Pottery from Aylesford, grave Y and 'Family-Circle' A. 1:4

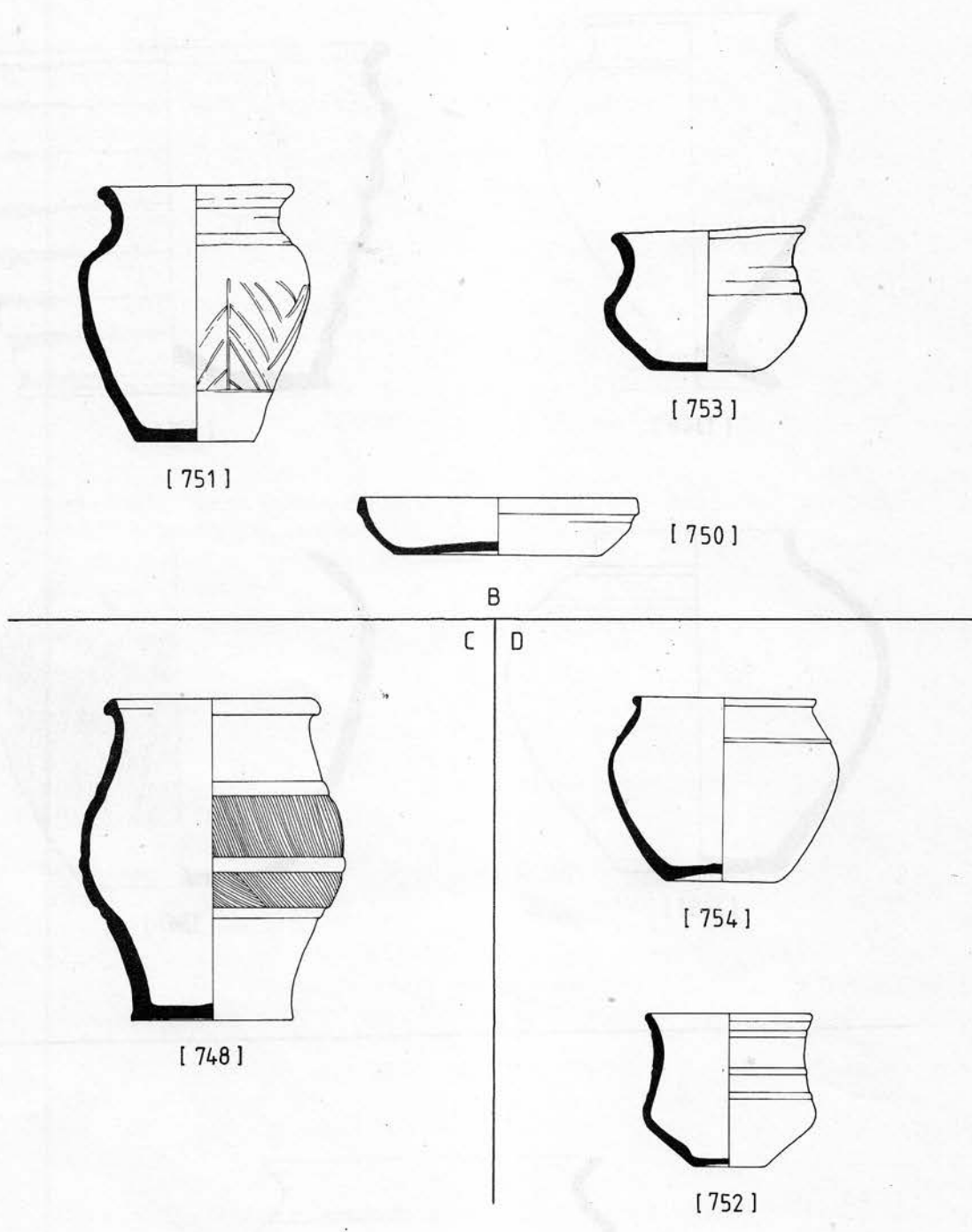


Fig.9: Pottery from Aylesford, 'Family-Circles' B-D. 1:4

3 - group C:

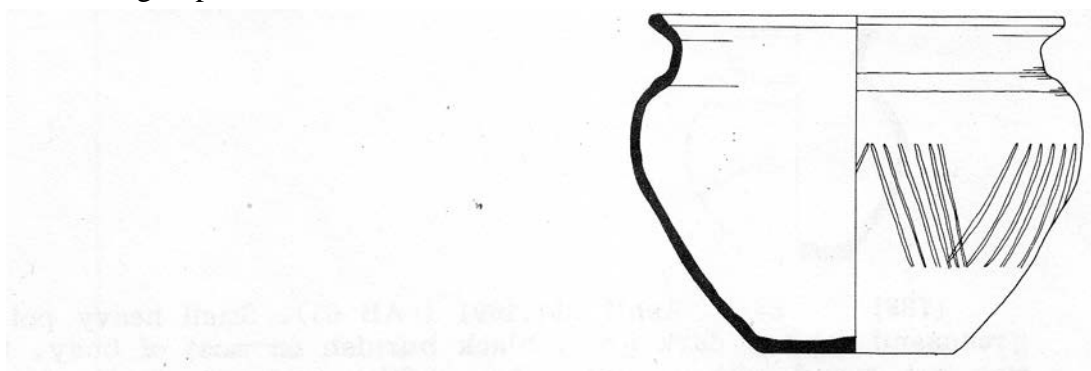
[748] G5-5. AshM 613.1891 (=AB 59). Softish red ware, heavy grog temper in blue-grey core, leans, buff burnt patch on one side. Right-handed faint scoring in panels, showing where the decoration began and then came round to finish at a different angle.

4- group D: with a cordoned pedestal urn, probably [755] above; base and sherds only.

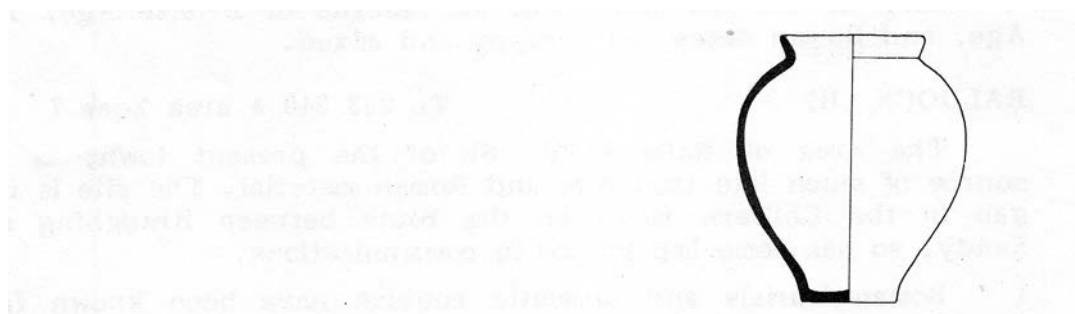
[754] D1-2. AshM 844.1888 (=AB 60). Very gritty, fine black greensand, buff with darker grey patch outside; neatly made, smooth surface now worn. Contains bones.

[752] E1-3. AshM 845.1888 (=AB 61). Grey, greensand, patchy grey brown-buff outside, buff inside. Burnt patches and some black deposit on outside; crude cordoning, in places only thin incised lines and flat surface.

5- group E:

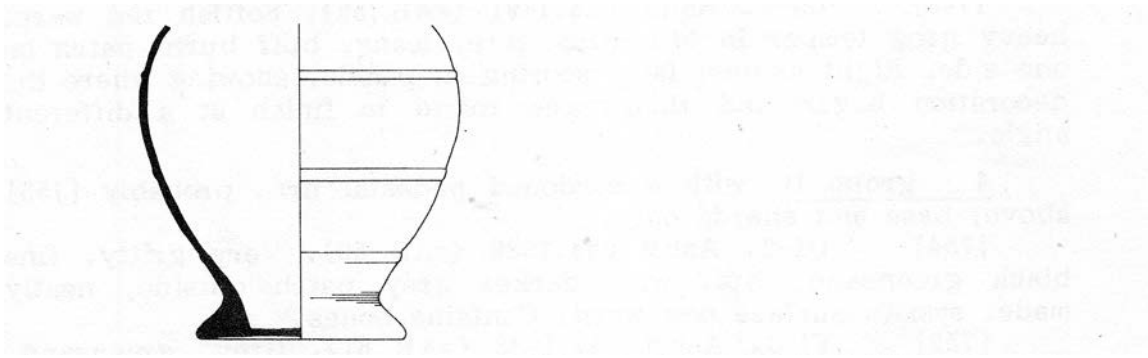


[786] D1-4. AshM 609.1891 (=AB 63). Less than half extant; possibly HM, brownish gritty lumpy fabric with lumpy grey surfaces, no grog. Decoration approximate; roughly tooled, horizontal above shallow incised decoration.



[789] B5-2. AshM 841.1888 (=AB 62). Apparently HM, much restored, reddish-brown gritty fabric, rough untreated surfaces. Leans over but perhaps due to restoration. Rim is not the same height all the way round.

6 - group F: with a flint flake.



[787] A3. AshM 612.1891 OAB 64). Very thin brittle greensand fabric, red-brown; patchy grey-brown surfaces; burnished. Much restored but always a summary pot especially inside.



[788] E3-5. AshM 614.1891 (=AB 65). Small heavy pot in greensand fabric, dark grey, black burnish on most of body. Rim was cut round with a knife when softish and pot stood upside-down so that the rim was flattened, and now asymmetric. Inside estimated; this pot much more complete than others from these last two graves.

Also in the BM and AshM are sherds of Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Roman dates, all scrappy and mixed.