

PLATE XXII



Urn from Risby

FURTHER EXCAVATIONS ON TUMULI AT RISBY, 1959

By A. R. EDWARDSON

Situated on either side of the road from Risby to Cavenham, and within a few yards of it, are two tumuli, grid map reference being TL 777679. The area was formerly part of Risby Poor Heath but is now under cultivation, with the result that both sites are rapidly being reduced and the one on the western side of the road is now nearly gone, whilst that to the east of the road is only some three feet high. Running approximately south west and north east, immediately to the west of the westerly tumulus, is a feature known as Black Ditches, an earthwork with bank and ditch, the latter being on its western side. Both the tumuli were partially excavated by Canon Greenwell in 1869 and a brief account of the work appears in the *Quarterly Journal* of the Suffolk Institute for that year, page 37.

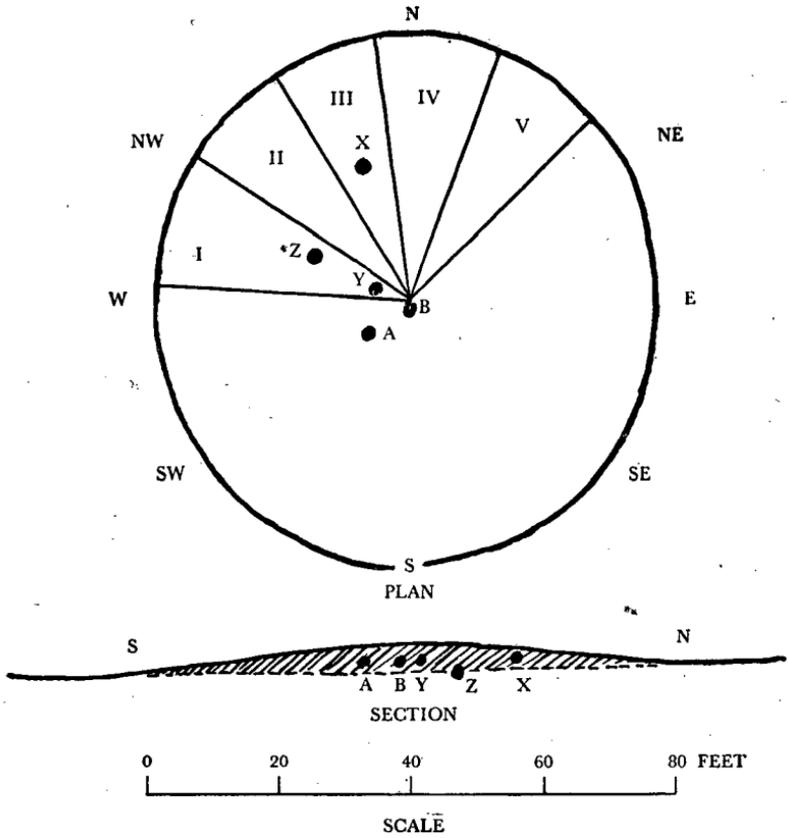
It is clear from the account that the excavations were made in one case from the south east of the feature and the other from the east, and in both cases it is clearly stated that the north western portions were left undisturbed. Therefore an examination of the untouched areas was determined on by the present writer.

The record referred to states that in the case of the tumulus on the west side of the road a cremation in an urn having 'S' shaped decoration was uncovered 7 feet bearing south west from the centre and fragments of an urn 'of similar manufacture' close to the centre, both being above the old base of the tumulus, it is further recorded that no bones were found. (Fig. 24).

The urn bearing the decoration so described is in Moyses Hall Museum and is clearly of Anglo-Saxon date, but of the sherds mentioned there is no trace. (See Plate XXII and Fig. 25).

In the case of the tumulus to the east of the road, the record states that an inhumation burial below the old base, just to the north of the centre, was found and in addition, at four separate points in the southern half of the mound, there lay, on or above the old base, four other inhumations of unspecified age.

Near the south western perimeter a cremation burial in an overhanging rim urn was recovered and two feet above the old base bearing south west from the centre and thirteen feet from it, an empty vessel described as 'Anglo-Saxon' was found.



1869 Excavations

- A. Anglo-Saxon cremation pot with 'S' decoration now in Moyses Hall Museum
- B. Sherds of a pot ?

1959 Excavations

- Z. Cremation of an adult.
- Y. Small sherd of a Bronze Age cinerary urn
- X. Blue Anglo-Saxon bead

FIG. 24.—Risby, west tumulus

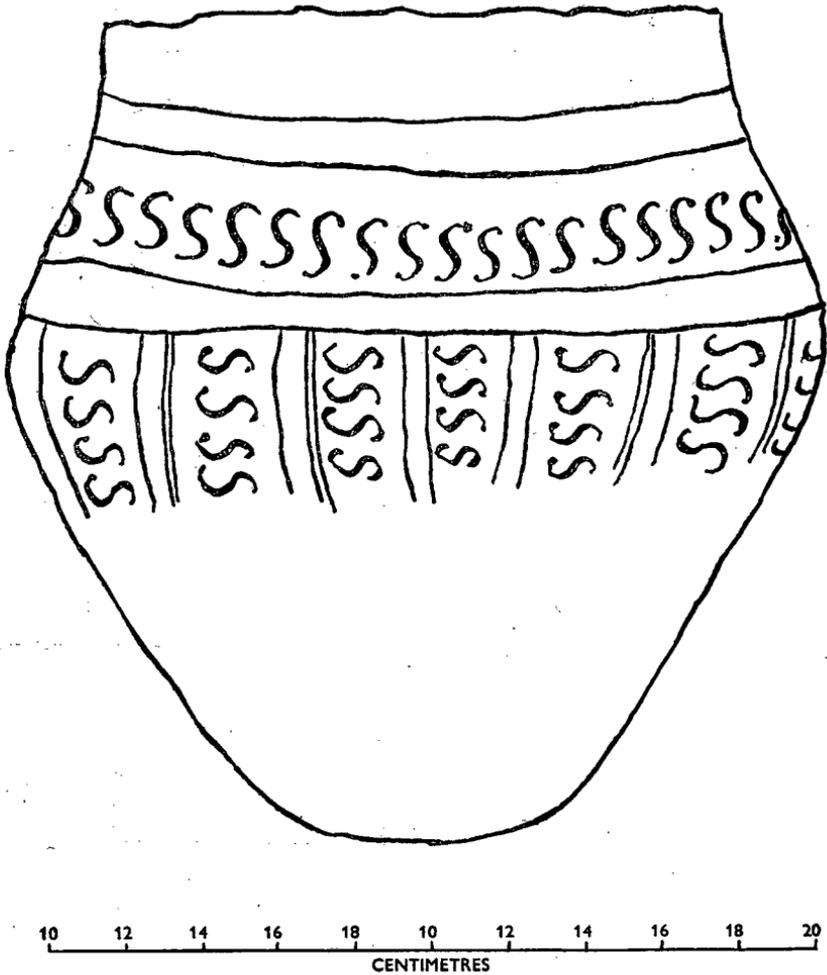
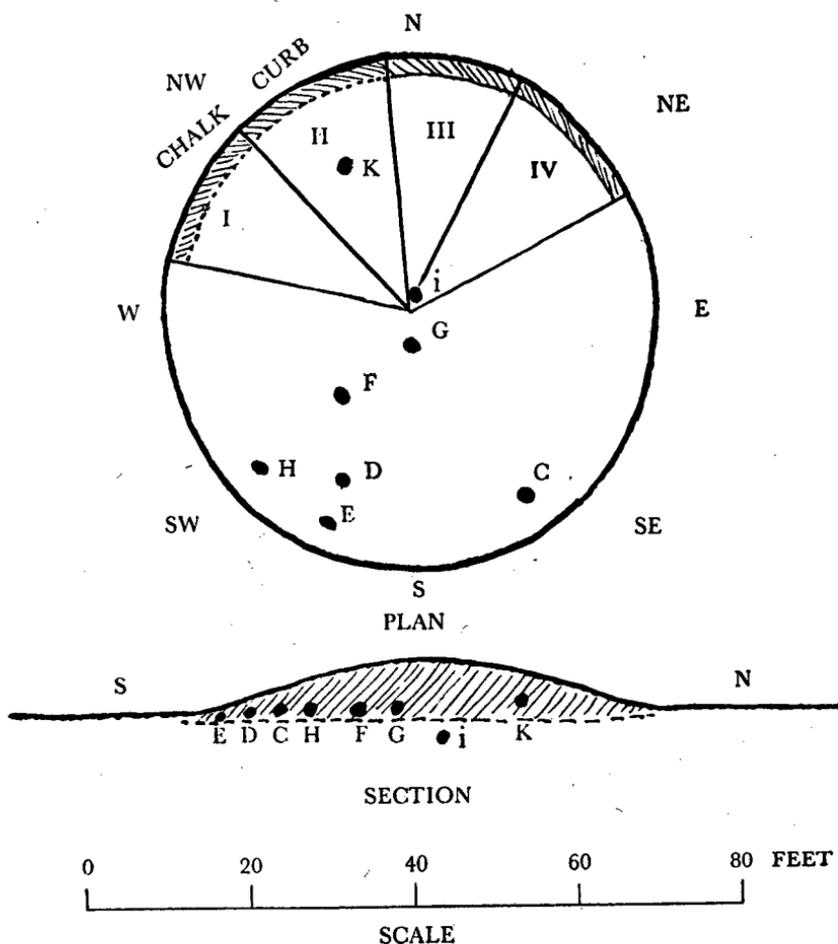


FIG. 25.—Urn from Risby

In *Archaeology of the Cambridge Region*, C. Fox, page 33 and in Appendix III page 327, the excavation on these two tumuli are referred to and on page 77 it is stated that a rude plain vase of polished dark brown ware with well defined foot was found and is now in the British Museum. This information has been verified



1869 Excavations

- C. Inhumation above base
- D. Inhumation above base
- E. Cremation in Bronze Age urn
- F. Empty Anglo-Saxon vessel (?)
- G. Inhumation above base
- H. Inhumation above base
- i. Inhumation below base (Primary)

1959 Excavations

- K. Flint pick resharpener by chipping

Note: It is now confirmed that F was in fact not Anglo-Saxon but La Tène I. (now in British Museum).

FIG. 26.—Risby, east tumulus

with the British Museum, who have the vase; it was identified by Prof. C. Hawkes as a sub-Marnian type, a local product in all probability 3rd century B.C.¹ (See Fig. 26).

Examination of the north western portion of the tumulus to the west of the road was accomplished by means of five triangular excavations separated by narrow baulks, with the apex of each at the centre. In plot I close to the centre in what appeared to be a disturbed area, one sherd of a Bronze Age cinerary urn was recovered and this may well relate to the sherds mentioned in 1869, as being near the centre and 'of similar manufacture', a somewhat vague expression. In the same plot seventeen feet from the centre and bearing north west by west, there lay in a depression in the base of the mound a compact pile of cremated bones lying on a platform of consolidated sand showing signs of heat. (See Appendix).

The absence of charcoal in any form points to the actual cremation having been made elsewhere and the bone residue placed in its position after.

In plot III bearing north west by north from centre, and well above the old base there lay a barrel shaped bead of Anglo-Saxon type of dark blue glass with crude design in light blue (See Figs. 24 and 27).

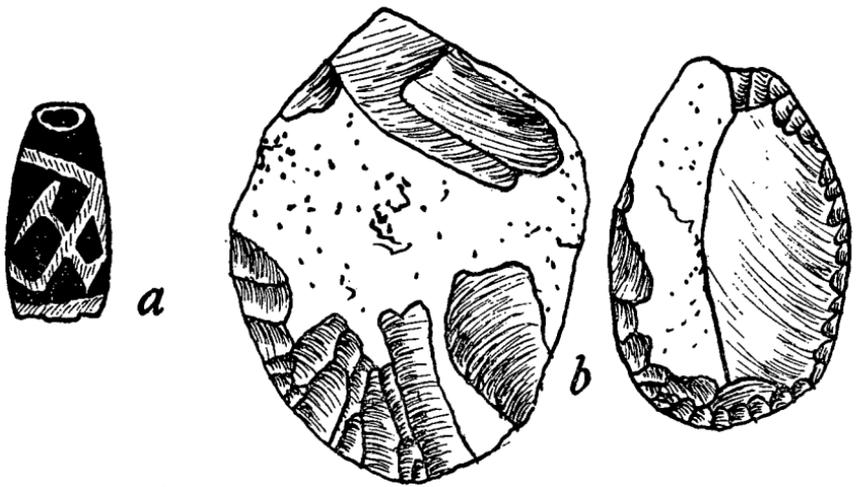
Owing partly to previous excavations, partly to the great reduction by ploughing and partly to the very sandy nature of the site, incorporating angular flints with sand lying on an irregular chalk bed, it was impossible to determine the exact confines of the structure which was recorded in 1869 as being 76 feet in diameter and 3½ feet high, but which now merges imperceptibly with the general field level and is nowhere more than eighteen inches in height.

Two flint scrapers and many struck flint flakes were found in the general area excavated. (See Fig. 27).

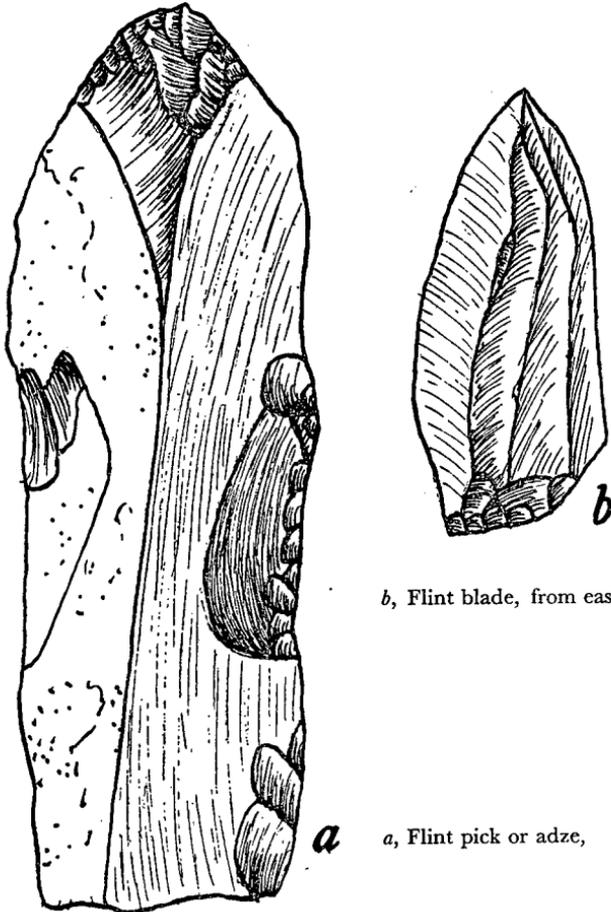
Examination of the tumulus to the east of the road was undertaken on the north and west sides by means of four segments with the apex at the centre of the mound, the only material recovered being a small flint pick which had clearly been resharpened by chipping; this lay at a depth of eighteen inches, twenty feet north west of the centre (Fig. 26), also a flint blade.

Owing to the extensive destruction of the southern and eastern perimeters of the tumulus in the excavations of 1869, the construction and dimensions are now very difficult to determine, but

¹ *Antiquaries Journal*, vol. xx (1940), pages 117, 119, Fig. 14 and *Archaeological Journal*, vol. xcvi (1940) pages 43, 44 and 97 and Plate IV.I.



a, Anglo-Saxon glass bead, *b*, Flint Scrapers, from western tumulus.



b, Flint blade, from eastern tumulus.

a, Flint pick or adze,

FIG. 27.—Risby flints and glass bead.

at the north western perimeters excavated this year there appeared a band of chalk approximately between two and three feet wide and varying from nine inches to two inches thick, at a depth of eighteen inches below the present surface of the soil.

This band of chalk appeared to have been laid as a curb, enclosing the mound and with its inner edge some twenty eight feet from the estimated centre and to have been dug from a ditch on its outer circumference, although the depth and width of the ditch could not be determined in the very sandy nature of the area, already greatly disturbed by deep ploughing and the erosion of centuries.

CONCLUSIONS

From the excavations carried out by Canon Greenwell in 1869 already referred to and to the further investigation made in 1959, it is clear that these two tumuli are of Bronze Age date; the one to the west of the road is considered to have been applicable to the middle Bronze Age since it produced a cremation without an urn but no inhumation interment, it had also had an intrusive Anglo-Saxon secondary interment of a cremation urn with the supporting dating evidence of the glass bead now found.

In view of the report on the 1869 excavation of the eastern tumulus it would appear from the presence of the contracted inhumation interment beneath the old base at the centre that this feature was of early Bronze Age, possibly Beaker, date and had other secondary inhumation interments on or above the old base in its southern portion; it would also appear from the sub-Marnian vase referred to above that intrusive evidence of the Late early Iron Age could be inferred.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should like to express my gratitude to Dr. Calvin Wells for his report on the cremated bones and to Mr. V. D. M. Hall of Bury St. Edmunds and Mr. D. G. Aitkens of Fornham Park for facilities to excavate and to the Trustees of the Risby Poor, the owners of the land, for permission to carry out the work.

I am also much indebted to Mr. R. Rainbird Clarke, M.A., F.S.A., F.M.A. for his valued advice in the preparation of this paper and last but by no means least, to Messrs. Johnson, Rayner, Smith and Standley for the very valuable assistance in the considerable labour occasioned in the completion of the examination of these tumuli started by Canon Greenwell in 1869.