

SOME ANGLO-SAXON FINDS FROM LAKENHEATH AND THEIR PLACE IN THE LARK VALLEY CONTEXT

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THE AREA AT Lakenheath known as No. 1 Field and Sahara (TL/7383) has provided evidence of continuous habitation from Beaker to the Anglo-Saxon period (Briscoe, G., 1949, 92). Both fields carry a scatter of material from all periods with a preponderance of Roman pottery. The area is situated on the marginal land between the Breckland of Lakenheath Heath and the Fen (Fig. 21). A spring feeding a stream, which runs northward into the Little Ouse, rises close to the area under discussion.

An Anglo-Saxon cemetery was presumed by R. A. Smith to have existed from the evidence of finds from the area, now in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge (*V.C.H., Suffolk*, 1, 345; Fox, 1923, 230; Meaney, 1964, 230). This was presumably an inhumation cemetery and would appear to have lain on the high ground 400m to the south-west of the sites, straddling the green road known as Sandy Drove.¹

The material under discussion was picked up from two adjoining sites known locally as No. 1 Field and Sahara by various people, including the writer. The bulk of the material was found by and is in the possession of Mr Ron Morley of Lilac Road, Lakenheath, who has kept a watch over the area. Some sherds with identical stamps have been found on different occasions, by different people and over a considerable period of years.

In 1960, a fragment of bowl (Fig. 22a) was ploughed out on No. 1 Field about 100m from where a late 5th- or early 6th-century brooch of unusual design was found in 1958 (Briscoe, T., 1968, 45). The writer excavated in the hope of finding more of the bowl but, though sherds of brown pottery and bones were found to a depth of 1.25m, no further parts of it were found. It would appear from the nature of the soil that the area represented an inlet of the Fen or a pond into which rubbish was thrown. Mr Ron Morley carried out trial trenches on two sites in the area, which produced patches of grey soil approximately 1.82 × 0.91 × 0.20m.

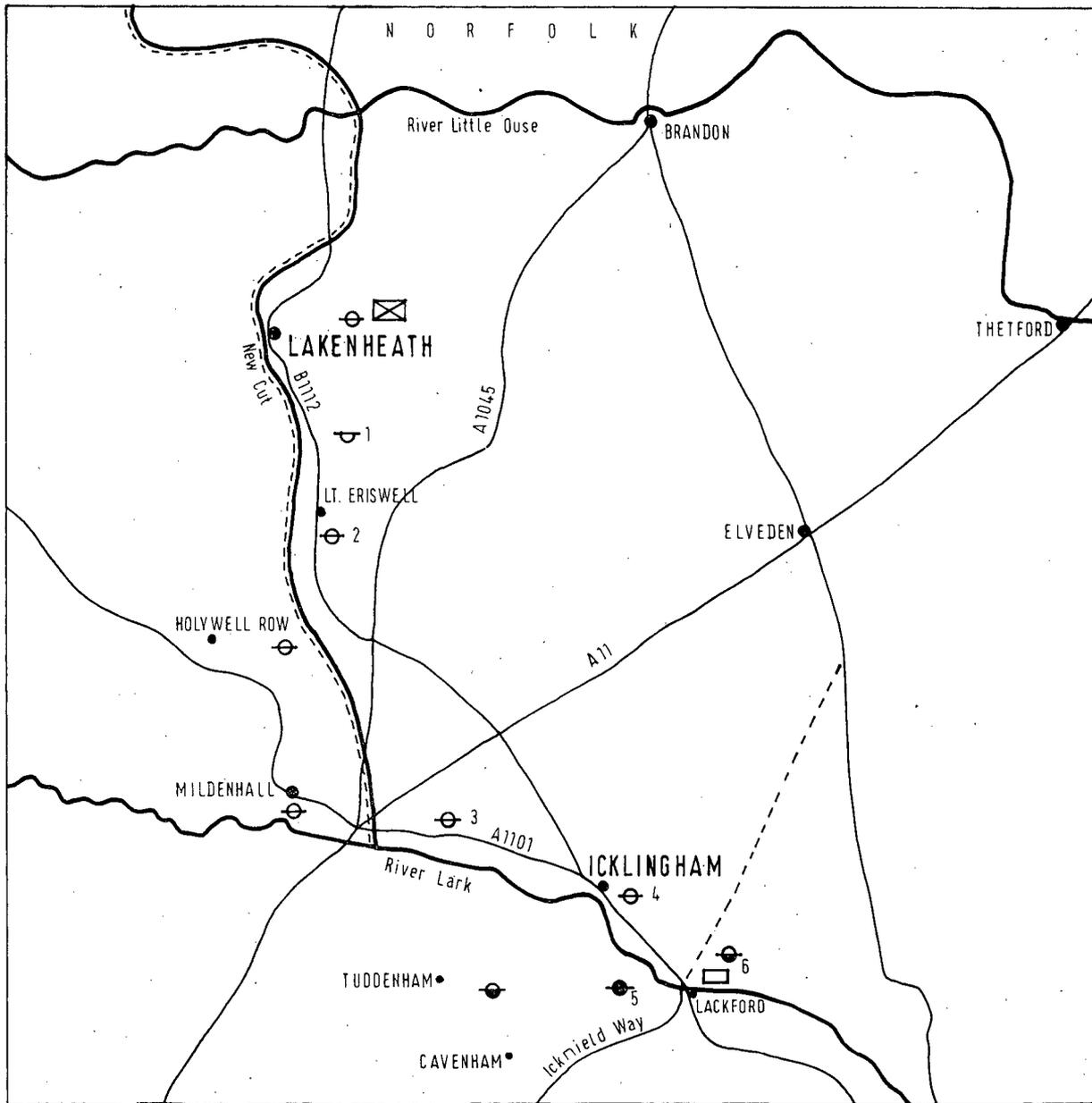
THE POTTERY

The bowl (Fig. 22a) is of good brown paste and still has part of the rim. The rim diameter is 19cm and the shoulder 22.8cm. Dr J. N. L. Myres agrees with the suggestion of a 5th-century date,² which would fit in with the date of the S-shaped brooch referred to above. He points out that this type of bowl with *Stehenden Bogen* is common in East Holstein in the 4th–5th centuries. The dimples on the shoulder form a loose faceting with three line swags (*Hangenden Bogen*) under them. This type of decoration is less usual.

The small, shouldered pot (Fig. 22b), rim diameter 17cm, shoulder 17.5cm, is of good hard paste. The absence of decoration between the band of stamps encircling the rim and the shoulder is unusual. The stamp (6 × 6mm) is a common type in the Lark Valley and occurs many times on the pots from the Lackford cemetery (Lethbridge, 1951). This pot would date from the late 5th century.

The plain pot (Fig. 22c) is of coarse grey ware; the rim is 15.5cm in diameter.

The pot base (Fig. 22d) is from a very small jar. The base is hollow and the paste coarse and grey in colour. Mr S. E. West has found similar pots at West Stow,³ and it would appear to resemble these rather than the drinking vessels from Sutton Courtney in the Ashmolean Museum, which have not so far been reported from the Lark Valley.



KEY

- ⊕ INHUMATION CEMETERY
- CREMATION CEMETERY
- ⊙ MIXED CEMETERY
- ⌒ BURIAL
- HUT SITE
- ⊠ NO 1 FIELD/SAHARA SITES

Scale



OTHER SITES

- 1 CAUDLE HEAD
- 2 LAKENHEATH AERODROME
- 3 WARREN HILL
- 4 MITCHELLS HILL
- 5 LACKFORD
- 6 WEST STOW

FIG. 21—Map of the Lakenheath area showing Anglo-Saxon sites.

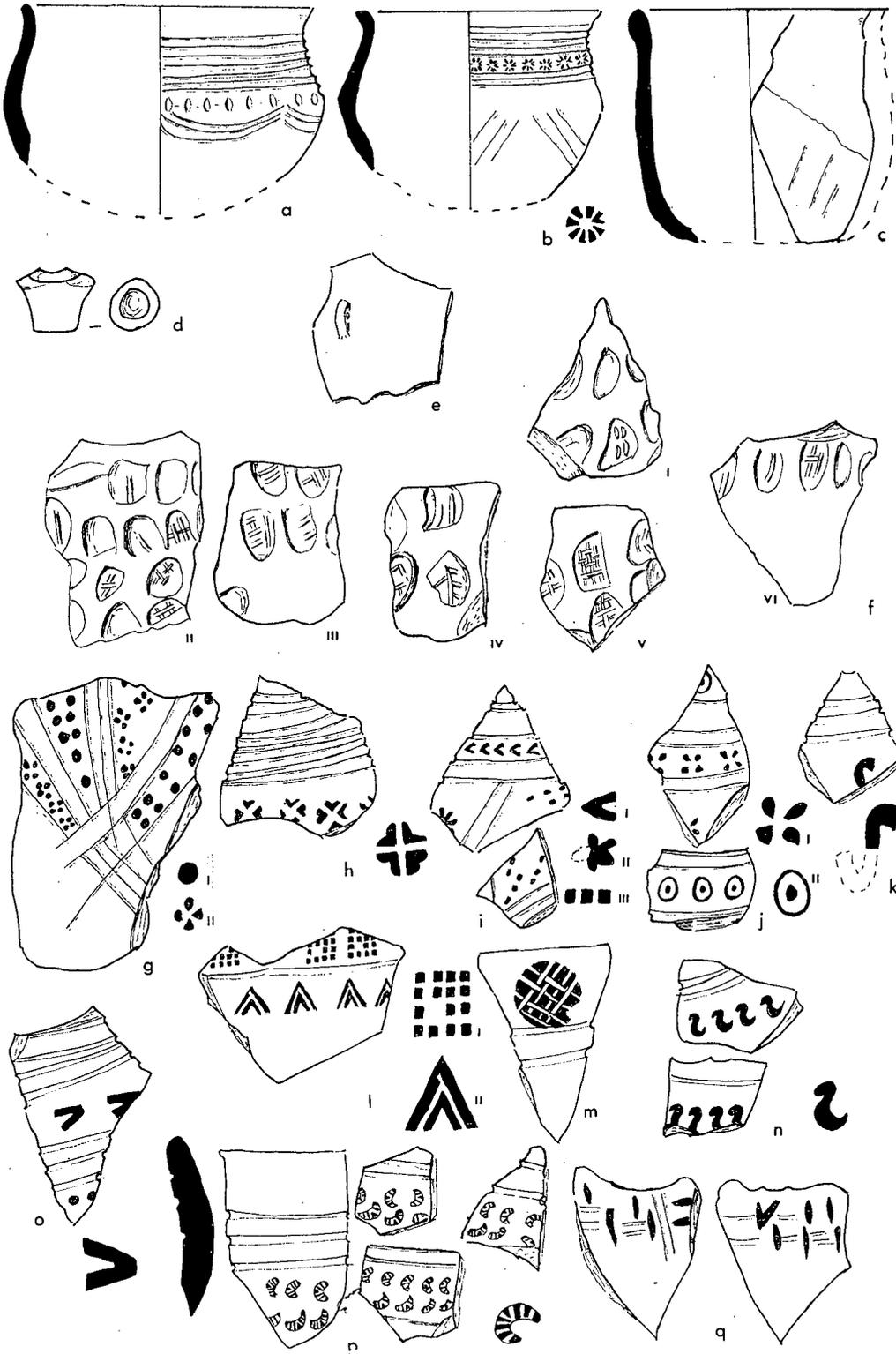


FIG. 22—Pottery (a-e, 1:4; f-l, n-q, 1:2; m and all stamps, 1:1).

Decorated Sherds (Fig. 22g-q)

- Fig. 22g A large sherd of good brown paste with the chevron very lightly and carelessly incised, probably with a knife. Two stamps used: (i) 3 × 3mm, (ii) 5 × 4mm.
- 22h A sherd of reddish brown paste with shallow lines on what was the neck. One stamp used (9 × 9mm), from the Lackford/Illington Potter's workshop (Lethbridge, 1951, 40).
- 22i Two grey-brown sherds. Three stamps used: (i) 5 × 4mm, (ii) 7 × 6mm, (iii) 8 × 2mm.
- 22j Two sherds of good brown paste, found at different times. Two stamps used: (i) 10 × 10mm, (ii) 8 × 8mm.
- 22k A sherd of good brown paste with half an S-shaped stamp. The remaining portion is 5 × 9mm. The stamp closely resembles the one on Lackford pot 49.20 (Lethbridge, 1951, 49) and could come from the workshop of the Lackford 'S' Potter (Lethbridge, 1951, 20).
- 22l Sherd of good brown paste. Two stamps used: (i) 6 × 7mm, (ii) 7 × 7mm.
- 22m Sherd of good hard grey-brown paste. The stamp is atypical of the usual circular, hatched stamps and appears to show a 2 × 2 thread overlap. Miss Elizabeth Crowfoot, who has kindly examined the sherd, is of the opinion that it is not a 'textile' stamp as the weave would have to be extended tabby which has not so far occurred in an Anglo-Saxon context (Pearce, 1966, 217).
- 22n Two sherds found at different times. One S-shaped stamp (4 × 7mm) used as a frieze.
- 22o A sherd of burnished ware of good grey paste. One stamp used (8 × 8mm), which resembles the stamp on Y45 from Caistor-by-Norwich (Myres and Green, 1973, Fig. 36).
- 22p Four sherds of burnished black ware. One stamp (4 × 2mm) used, which could be part of a bead or nut.
- 22q Two sherds of grey-brown ware decorated with stab incisions.

Rusticated Pottery

Twenty sherds of rusticated pottery have come from the area, six of which are illustrated (Fig. 22f, i-vi). These may all have come from the same pot and the indentations show imprints of whatever was used to make them. They were definitely not made by fingernail technique. The late T. C. Lethbridge illustrates (1951, 45) rusticated pots from Lackford with similar markings.⁴ One of the sherds (not illustrated) shows excellent prints of a fingernail without the subsequent indentation; it is of black burnished ware.

Lugged Sherd

Fig. 22e is a sherd of grey ware with a perforated lug. This type of pot occurs both at Lackford and West Stow as well as at other sites.

Pot Stamps (Fig. 23) from sherds too small for inclusion

- Fig. 23a A common type, 10 × 10mm.
- 23b From the Lackford/Illington Potter's workshop, 7 × 7mm (Lethbridge, 1951, 40).
- 23c A segmented stamp of common form, 7 × 7mm, which occurs haphazardly on two sherds of a very coarse and large pot, which shows signs of knife trimming. On one sherd is a boss and it would appear to date from the middle or late 7th century.

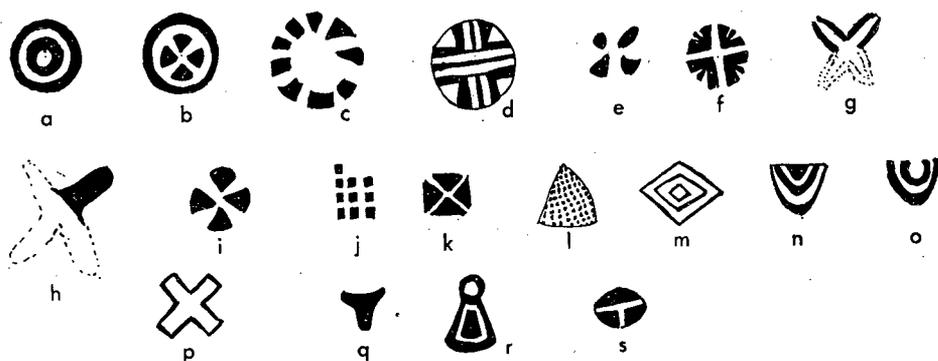


FIG. 23—Pot-stamps (1:1).

- 23d A complex double segmented circular cross, 12 × 12mm. The division of the central cross into two with one arm forming a bar is unusual.
- 23e A common type, 9 × 9mm.
- 23f This stamp resembles the rosette type, but the firm central cross is less usual. The latter occurs on stamps from Caistor-by-Norwich, Lackford, and Bagington, Warwicks (Myres and Green, 1973, Fig. 41; Lethbridge, 1951, 56; Myres, 1969, Fig. 29).
- 23g Part stamp from the Lackford/Illington Potter's workshop, 10 × 10mm (Lethbridge, 1951, 26).
- 23h Part of a large cruciform stamp.
- 23i-k These are all common types of stamp: (i) 10 × 10mm, (j) 5 × 7mm, (k) 7 × 6mm is similar to ones found at Lackford and many other cemeteries.
- 23l A triangular stamp (7 × 7mm) on a sherd of very coarse red-brown ware, with the suggestion of a boss. The stamp was put on after the pot had become too dry. The hatching is very close together and suggestive of a textile, though it could have been made equally well with a tool of the type used for embossing gold-foil or leather.
- 23m A diamond stamp, 8 × 7mm, very similar to that on the Lackford pot 49.583 (Lethbridge, 1951, 49). The true diamond-shaped stamp is a rare form.
- 23n-o Crescent stamps, fairly common in the district: (n) 7 × 7mm, (o) 6 × 7mm.
- 23p An outlined cruciform stamp, similar to that on Lackford 49.177a.
- 23q A triangular stamp, 5 × 5mm, possibly made by a bird's fibula. The same stamp is found at Girton and West Stow.
- 23r A 'key-hole' stamp of a type which is rare in England.
- 23s This is a unique oval stamp, 6 × 5mm.

As Dr Myres has frequently stated, the size of a stamp imprint may vary according to the conditions of the clay, the manner in which the stamp is applied, the depth of the imprint, etc. A stamp of 6 × 6mm cannot, however, produce an impression of, say, 10 × 10mm. The sizes of the stamps illustrated have, therefore, been given to facilitate comparison. As more material comes to light, it is apparent that the Lackford/Illington Potter, for one, produced his highly individual stamps in a variety of sizes.

Discussion

The Lakenheath pottery falls into the period from the 5th to 7th centuries but is mostly 6th-century, dated by the stamps of the Lackford/Illington Potter. In type and decoration it fits into the Lark Valley complex. Most of the paste is of good quality and well fired, containing particles of flint and sometimes of mica. This is unlike the Lackford pots and would suggest a local source for the clay. The surface scatter is reminiscent of West Stow before excavation, so there could be a hut site in this area too.

METAL OBJECTS

The wing of a florid cruciform brooch (Fig. 24a-c) was found by Mr Ron Morley in 1959 (TL/738832) and is now in Moyses's Hall Museum, Bury St Edmunds. It has been recorded previously but not discussed.⁵ It is of bronze and the decoration is Salin Style I. The central panel represents a stylised human face. The top left-hand corner (as shown in Fig. 24a) has been altered in antiquity at its outer edge, possibly to accommodate the outer extremity of a decorated top which fouled the wing at this point. On the basis of this supposition, the fragment is interpreted as the left-hand wing of the cross. The lower corresponding corner terminates in a point. To its right is a semi-circle with splayed ends. To the right of the upper, mutilated corner, the curve of the wing carries a stylised bird-of-prey head. The wing was fitted to the main part of the brooch by two rivets, of which the hole for the lower one is broken. This is of similar construction to another Lakenheath brooch now in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge (Fox, 1923, Pl. XXIX). This has a wing missing, but the one being discussed does not belong to it, and shows a number of differences.

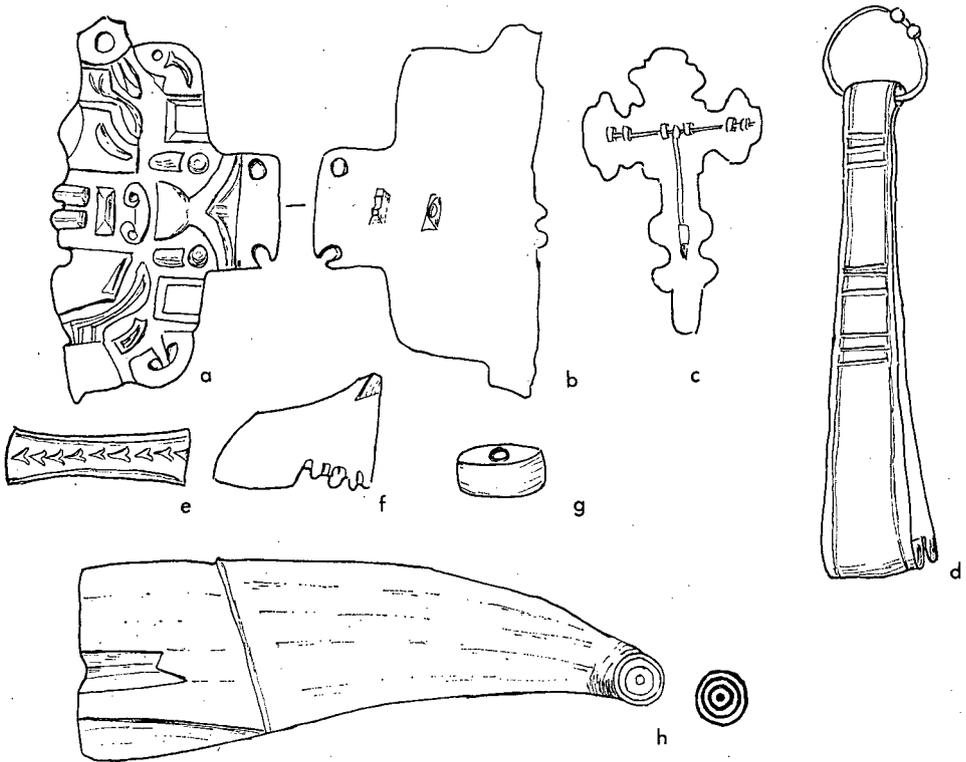


FIG. 24—Metal and other objects (all 1:1, except c, not to scale).

The wing does, however, closely resemble those on the florid cruciform brooch from Grave 17 at Mitchell's Hill, Icklingham, which is now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. It is placed by Leeds and Pollock (1971, 18) in their group V.gi. One difference is that the knobs, which on the Mitchell's Hill brooch are flattened rectangles, have been reduced to two small raised protruberances on the Lakenheath wing. The Mitchell's Hill brooch wings terminate in bird-of-prey heads on all the inner corners, whereas the Lakenheath wing has lost all vestige of both head and 'eye' on the lower one. Another difference is that both the Icklingham brooch and another from the same cemetery, also in the Ashmolean, were cast in one piece.

The loops on the back of the wing (Fig. 24b) would have been repeated on the main part of the brooch and on the right-hand wing. Through all three would have passed a long bar, possibly to increase rigidity, to which a fastening pin would have been secured by the bar passing through its eye and the loops on the centre part of the brooch. This type of fastening is represented in Fig. 24c, taken from the second Icklingham brooch in the Ashmolean Museum mentioned above.

Because of the complete loss of the bird-of-prey head in one corner and the reduction to a vestige of the original knob, the Lakenheath wing would appear to be stylistically late, perhaps dating from the end of the 6th century. On the other hand, the attaching of the wing by rivets would seem to be anachronistic, though this method of attachment also occurs on the other Lakenheath brooch referred to above, and these brooches may represent experimentation on the part of the jeweller.

All the brooches from Icklingham and Lakenheath under discussion resemble each other closely and Leeds suggests a Lark Valley origin for this type. In view of the close resemblance between the Lakenheath S-shaped brooch and the Mildenhall Swastika brooch (Briscoe, T., 1968, 51) it would seem that there existed somewhere in the district a jewellery workshop in addition to a pottery industry.

The Tweezers (Fig. 24d), which are bent, were also found by Mr Ron Morley on No. 1 Field. They are decorated with three groups of transverse lines and a line running parallel with the edges. The wire ring which still remains is twisted around itself as fastening.

A small fragment of bronze (Fig. 24e), probably from a bracelet, is decorated with small punched triangles resembling the stamp shown at Fig. 23q and described above.

OTHER OBJECTS

A piece of bone comb (Fig. 24f).

A blue glass bead (Fig. 24g).

TWO ANGLO-SAXON POT STAMPS

The first pot-stamp (Pl. XVI), now in Moyses's Hall Museum⁶, is of unusual form. It gives a dot-in-circle imprint of 12 × 12mm. It is made of a rounded hollow bone which has been split and another small piece of bone with central depression inserted. The imprint made would have resembled that in Fig. 23a. The bone tube has a waist, carved out 2cm from the top, and the tool is decorated with three incised rings below it and two above. It is suggested that the waist may have been used to hold a string or thong, bringing the edges of the split together and gripping the insertion. The stamp made resembles that on pot LXXXII from Markshall, Norfolk (Myres and Green, 1973, Fig. 71).⁷ As a result of the split being open the insert is lower than it would have been in use. This type of pot-stamp could have provided an assortment of designs, with insertions being changed at will. The rectangular pot-stamp

from Lackford (Lethbridge, 1951, 9, 19, 38) may well have been used in the same way, and some of the complicated pot-stamps would have been simple to make by building up the insertions.

The Red Deer Horn Stamp (Fig. 24h), a surface find by Mr Reg Morley of Wings Road, Lakenheath, now in the Elveden Estate Museum, comes from Caudle Head on the Lakenheath-Little Eriswell boundary (TL/728809). The site is some 3km from the Lakenheath sites and close to the cemetery on Lakenheath Aerodrome (Hutchinson, 1966, 1; Briscoe, G., 1960, 56). A single Anglo-Saxon burial was found at Caudle Head in 1956 (Wilson, 1958) (see map, Fig. 21). The stamp was broken when found and Mr Morley reports a scatter of 'pottery, glass, teeth, bones, etc.' in association with the pot-stamp, which were not recovered. The stamp consists of three concentric lines with a central dot. These are very accurate and close together. The imprint consequently is shallow and measures 7 × 7mm. It is similar to a pot-stamp illustrated by Dr Myres (1969, Pl. 8). He is of the opinion that the Caudle Head stamp also comes from the workshop of the Lackford/Illington Potter.

CONCLUSION

The Lark Valley has long been recognised as a centre of early Anglo-Saxon settlement. Though Lakenheath lies on the edge of the Fen bordering the Little Ouse, its affinities, from the finds discussed above, seem to be with the Lark Valley settlements. There were, apparently, a series of settlements along the edges of the Fen (Fig. 21) now marked by the B1112 road from Eriswell to Lakenheath, with Holywell Row lying on an island of raised ground the other side of Eriswell Lode—now part of the 'New Cut', but with a footpath still linking it with the Breckland to the east. The old Lode ran parallel with the road for a considerable distance and was navigable in historic times.

Contact with the Lark Valley would have been easy overland, as the country between the two areas is Breckland and traversed by pathways in addition to the Icknield Way. The whole area was open country from prehistoric times.

The two Lakenheath sites show no signs of habitation after the 7th century and presumably were abandoned with the founding of the modern village.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

- ¹ G. Briscoe verbally from accounts of local inhabitants.
- ² In a letter of 3 September 1976 to the writer.
- ³ Mr S. E. West showed me several examples when he was kind enough to let me examine the West Stow material.
- ⁴ Miss Crowfoot kindly examined these sherds and writes: 'It is very tempting to think of the marks as being made by a finger tip, with the nail digging in, and a rag over the end; there is certainly a suggestion of lines that could be threads, but very difficult to see except when the light catches them'.
- ⁵ C.B.A. Group 7 Report, 1958; *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxviii, 1959 and xxxii, 1971. In the latter it has a different, and wrong, grid reference.
- ⁶ The only information attached to the item in the Museum is a note stating that it comes from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Lakenheath.
- ⁷ The manner of use of the stamp was suggested by Mr W. Milligan of the Castle Museum, Norwich, after the pot stamp was compared with the sherds from Markshall pot LXXXII.

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