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Excavation of Roman Material at Hamper Mills, near Watford.

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IT was in the summer of 1930 that Mr. Hugh S. Braun of Harrow first noticed that the mounds of earth thrown up by the gravel diggers, working on the north side of the River Colne at Hamper Mills, $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles to the south-west of Watford Parish Church, contained a large quantity of Roman potsherds. This led him to watch the progress of the excavation during the months that followed, with the result that a considerable amount of pottery was found, including some Samian bowl fragments, badly smashed by the "grab" employed in the process of gaining the gravel.

Fragments of walling in flint and brick coursings were disclosed, about two to three feet in thickness, but these were so badly shattered and dispersed by floods which had inundated the site from time to time that it was impossible to trace the plan of the building of which they had formed a part. All the material recovered was found within about two feet of the surface of the ground, and had been very badly waterworn, the greater portion of it being excavated to the downstream side of the building site, where it had been deposited by floods.

The site, indicated in figure 1, was immediately opposite to, and within a few yards of, the mill-dam. It is thought by some authorities that the present Hamper Mills occupy the site of the Oxhey Mill which was one of the four mills in the Watford district mentioned in *Domesday Survey*. In 1300 the mill is stated to have been known as Hanpole Mill and that in the year 1556 it was referred to as Hamper Mill. Later on two mills are mentioned, and for a considerable number of years, and until comparatively recent times, the mills have been used in the manufacture of hand-made paper.

A view of Hamper Mills, looking south from the

site, is given in figure 2, and shows in the foreground the remains of an ancient and disused track, only recently revealed by the removal of the turf prior to the excavation of the gravel. The track, composed mainly of stones and flints, is approximately eight feet wide, and rests upon the gravel about eighteen inches below the surface of the ground. In figure 3 a view of the track is given looking in a northerly direction, across the gravel pit, and shows a slight curvature in its course in the direction of Brightwell's Farm and Watford. At present there is not sufficient evidence to say how old the track is, but the fact that it ends abruptly at the bank of the river suggests that it at least predates the erection of the dam which bars its course on the south side of the river. It is interesting to note that the track is in alignment with a very old lane leading to Pinner. The track passes within a few feet to the west of the site of the foundations of the Roman building.

A quantity of Roman material has been found, from time to time, to the south of the site, on the other side of the River Colne, on the Sandy Lodge Golf Links, and in Batchworth Lane, where Mr. Braun drew the writer's attention to the existence of Roman building material in the bole of an overturned tree. Since the various sites are in such close proximity, but separated by the river, it would seem reasonable to suppose that the river was fordable at or very near this point, unless, of course, the river only assumed its present course to the south of the site when it was impounded to form the mill stream in post-Roman times. If this were the case, communication between the various sites could be made without crossing the river. There appears to be some justification for this view since the ground level is slightly lower at a point about 200 yards north of the site, than at the site itself.

Through the courtesy of Mr. Gerald A. Cowle of Hamper Mills the writer has been able to examine the material recovered from the site.

Figure 4 shows the best preserved red "Samian" bowl, almost hemispherical (Form 37), with a winding leafy scroll pattern, surmounted by the characteristic

ovolo moulding. No potter's stamp is visible, but the vessel apparently dates from about the middle of the second century.

The vessel shown in figure 5 is interesting in that it shows an apparently successful, though clumsy, attempt at riveting. A hole, about one-eighth of an inch in diameter, had been drilled in each broken piece of the bowl. A shallow mould had then been formed round these holes, possibly with clay, and lead poured in. This bowl (Form 31) is stamped inside the bottom PATERCLINIOF. Paterclinus is stated to have been a Lezoux potter manufacturing between the years A.D. 140-190.¹

Several other fragments of red Samian ware were found. One piece was stamped on the inside of the bottom CARANTIM, written reversewise. Carantius² manufactured at Lezoux, in Central Gaul, during the early part of the second century. Another fragment bears the outline of a gladiator.

A small but almost perfect jug of red ware is shown in figure 6. The neck is understepped with three steps, and the handle, which is rounded as in later types of jug, is double reeded.

In figure 7 typical fragments of the coarser Roman ware are shown, including portions of various forms of domestic pottery, the mouthpiece of a flagon, and part of the rim of a mortar (*mortarium*). Dimensions of some of the coarse red pottery fragments are given in figure 8, and of some of the fragments of *mortaria*; and greyish black ware of Belgic type in figure 9.

A copper coin of Hadrian (A.D. 117-138) was also found.

The writer noticed many fragments of very coarse brownish-black pottery, such as are illustrated in figure 10. These appeared to be of Pre-Roman origin. Typical fragments were examined by Mr. C. F. C. Hawkes, of the Department of British and Mediæval Antiquities at the British Museum, and he assigned them as late Celtic. Such pottery was in general use

¹ *Archæologia*, Vol. 71. 1920-21. p. 186.

² "London in Roman Times"—London Museum Catalogue, No. 3, 1930. p. 168.

60-50 B.C., and was gradually displaced by the superior Roman ware, and finally disappeared about A.D. 80-90.

Mr. Hawkes stated that Dr. Wheeler had found many examples of the same pottery at St. Albans, and that he himself was familiar with many samples from the Colchester area.

The recent finds suggest that the Hamper Mills site has been in almost continuous occupation since Pre-Roman times. It is difficult, however, to account for the erection of a Roman building in such a low-lying position, liable to flooding, but it may be that in Roman times the serious flooding of the site was not so likely as at a subsequent date, when the river was impounded, possibly in Saxon times, to form the mill stream.

[The writer is indebted to Mr. Gerald A. Cowle, who has afforded him every facility for examining the material recovered from the site; to Mr. Hugh S. Braun, who was primarily responsible for the discovery of the site; and to Mr. C. F. C. Hawkes of the British Museum, for information regarding the pottery.]

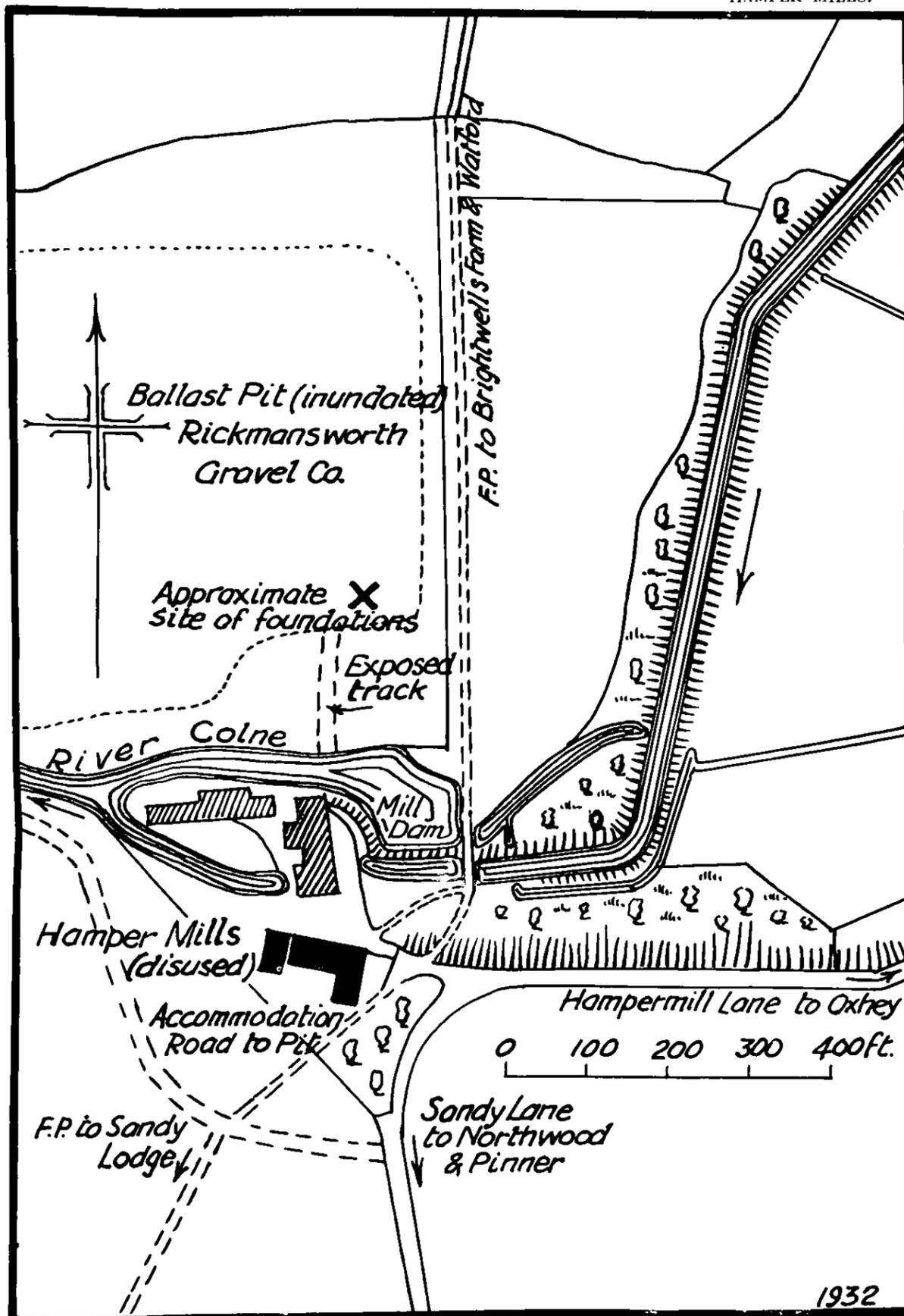


FIG. 1. THE SITE AND ITS ENVIRONS.



FIG. 2. HAMPER MILLS, LOOKING SOUTH, SHOWING

HAMPER MILLS.



THE NEWLY EXPOSED TRACK IN THE FOREGROUND.

HAMPER MILLS.



FIG. 3. LOOKING IN A NORTHERLY DIRECTION ALONG THE TRACK.

HAMPER MILLS.



FIG. 4. SAMIAN BOWL.

HAMPER MILLS.



FIG. 5. RIVETTED "SAMIAN" BOWL.

HAMPER MILLS.



FIG. 6. SMALL JUG OF RED WARE.

HAMPER MILLS.



FIG. 7. TYPICAL FRAGMENTS OF THE COARSER POTTERY.

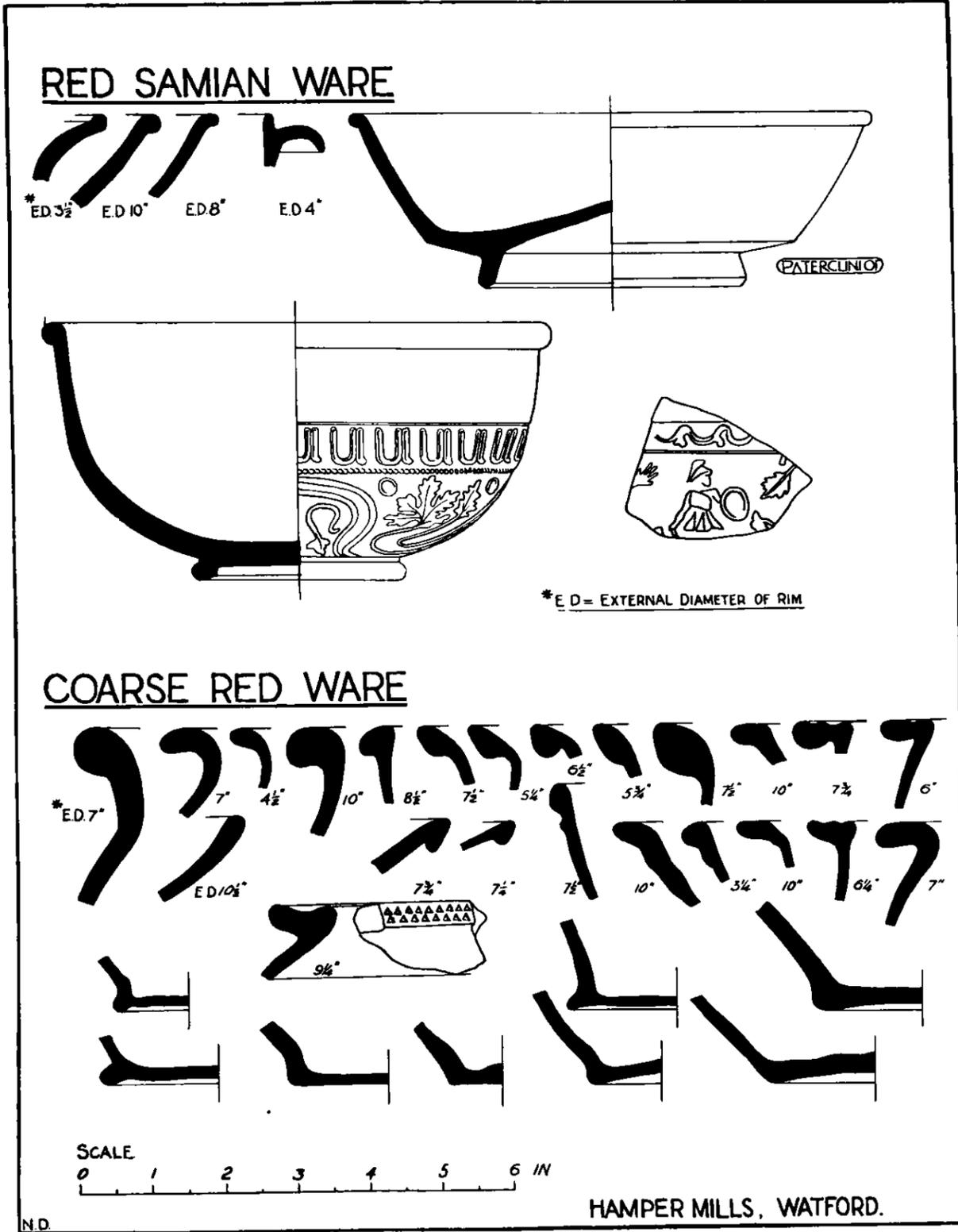
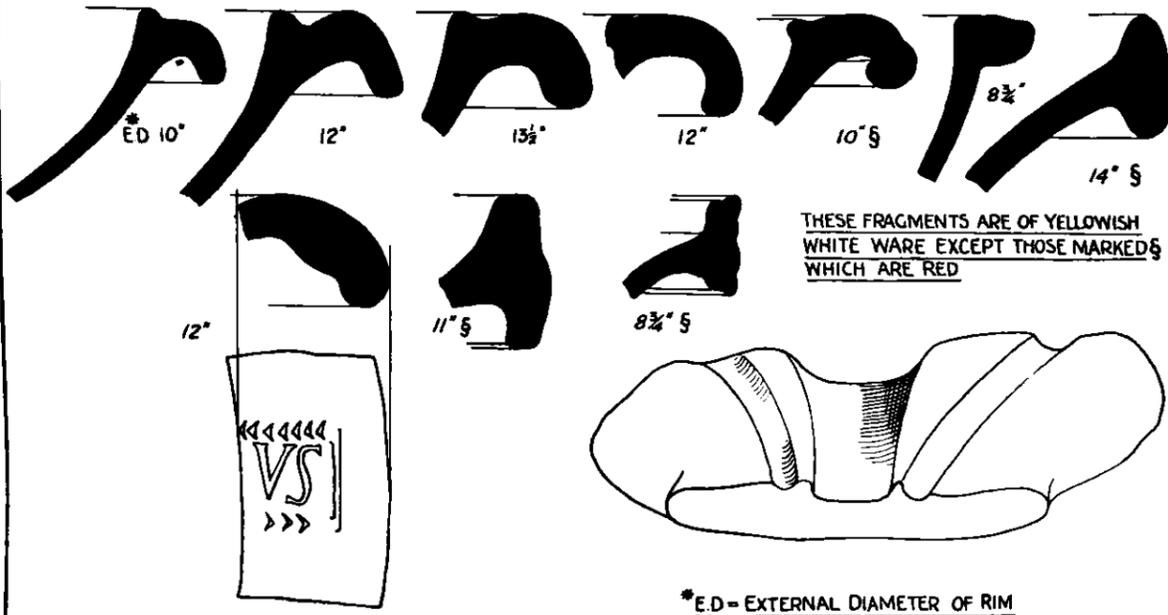
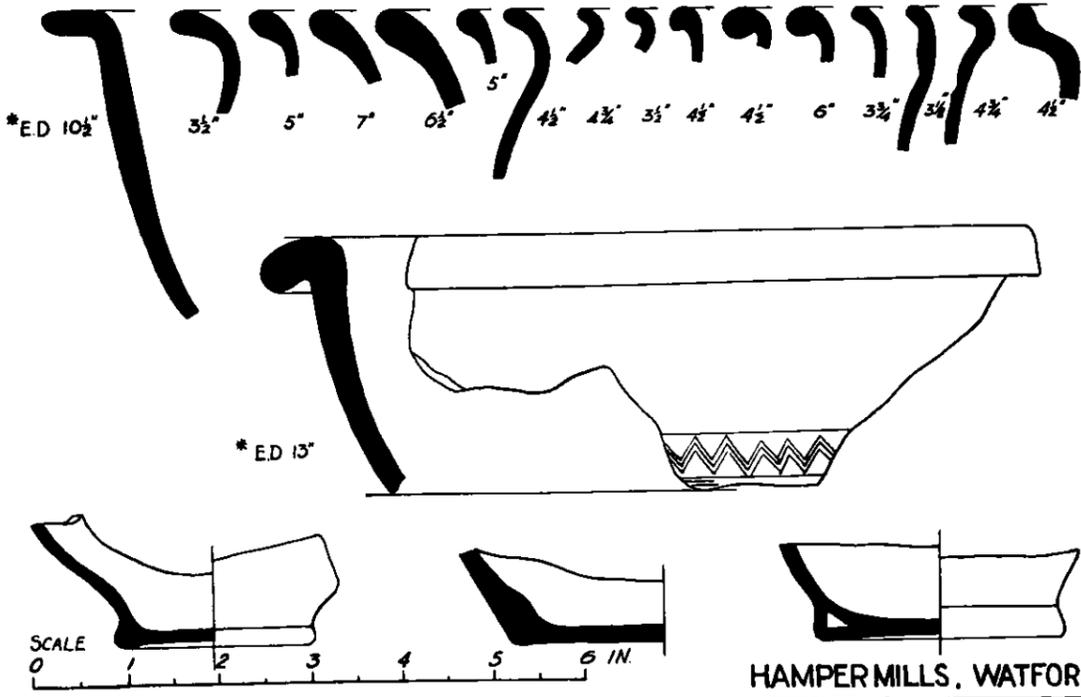


FIG. 8. GAULISH AND COARSE RED WARE.

FRAGMENTS OF MORTARS



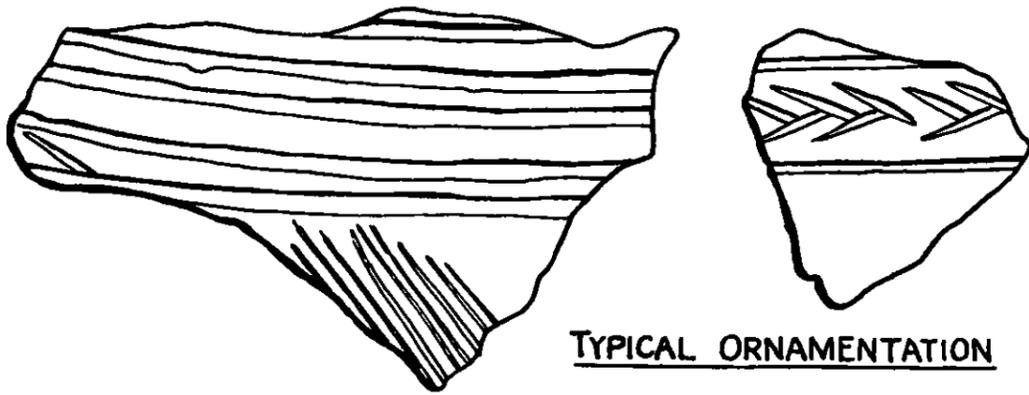
BLACK WARE



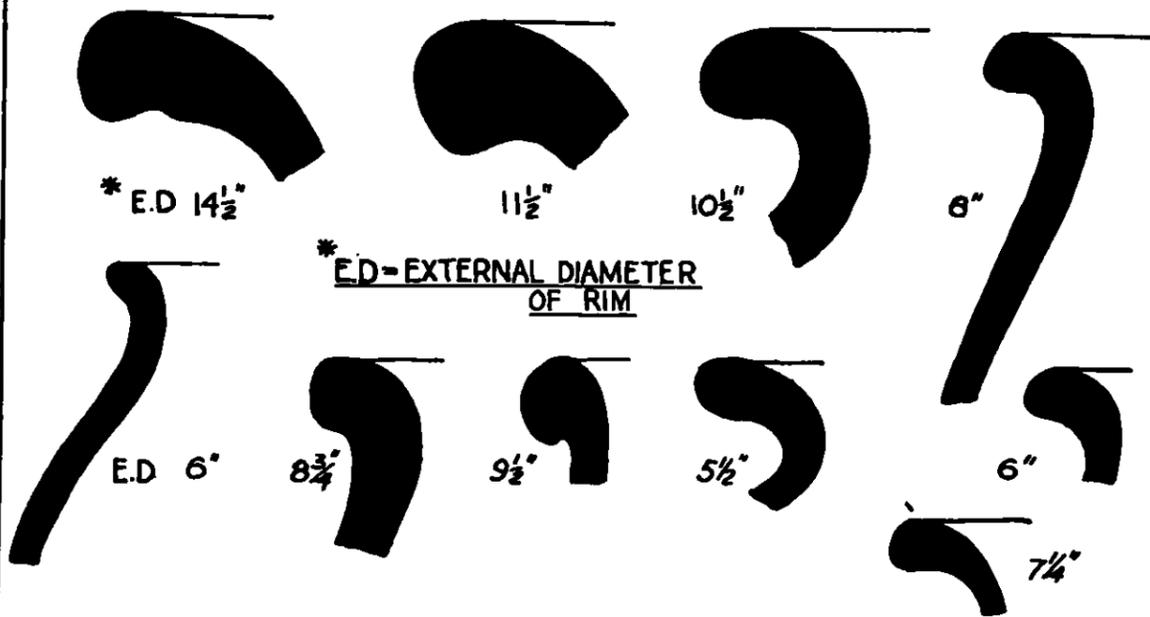
N.O.

FIG. 9. FRAGMENTS OF *Mortaria*, AND BLACK WARE.

LATE CELTIC POTTERY FRAGMENTS FROM HAMPERMILLS, WATFORD.



TYPICAL ORNAMENTATION



* E.D. - EXTERNAL DIAMETER
OF RIM

Scale:

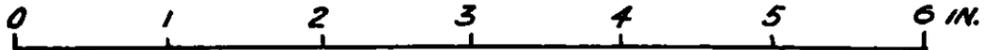


FIG. 10. LATE CELTIC POTTERY.

