

## XII.

EXCAVATIONS AT DUN CUIER, ISLE OF BARRA,  
OUTER HEBRIDES.

BY ALISON YOUNG, F.S.A., F.S.A.Scot.

During the last season of excavation at the Aisled Farmhouse of Tigh Talamhanta, at the head of the Allasdale, trial trenching was undertaken at the adjacent site of Dun Cuier, in the hope of ascertaining the relationship of these structures. The material recovered seemed of sufficient significance to warrant further examination of the Dun and, with the generous support of this Society, two seasons, each of three weeks duration, have been spent in excavation at Dun Cuier. Now, with some problems solved and with many others still awaiting solution, the report is presented.

Thanks are due to the Macneil for permission to excavate the site and to Mr Archibald MacDonald, the tenant, for his ready agreement and co-operation.<sup>1</sup>

## THE ISLAND.

The extreme measurements of the Isle of Barra are eight by six miles, the average, however, is five by five miles, with a central massif rising at the highest peak to 1260 ft. The rock formation of the Atlantic coast, which is of Hebridean Gneiss, rises from the sea in steep cliffs, deeply indented with geos or slochs alternating with long strands edged by dune and machar. The gneiss has a characteristic slab formation and gives the hills a curious glittering appearance after rain, the ground falling in terraces. The east coast presents another picture, with bays and land locked inlets of the sea and a scatter of islets. On the south side of the island, Castlebay, with its sheltered approaches, provides excellent harbourage.

While the Parish of Barra includes many smaller islands, some sparsely inhabited and some now deserted, the distribution map concerns the main

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to all those who helped in the field, especially Miss K. M. Richardson who worked throughout the two seasons, as well as Miss Alison Campbell, Miss Margaret Richmond, Miss H. G. Stirling and Mr Ernest Steel, as also to Mr Neil Galbraith and Mr Michael McLeod who worked with me during four seasons in the Isle of Barra. I should also like to thank those specialists who have examined and reported on material from Dun Cuier: Dr H. J. Plenderleith, Keeper of the Research Department of the British Museum; Hr Hans Helbaek, of the National Museum, Copenhagen; Miss A. Henshall of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland; Mrs Balfour Browne, Department of Botany; Mr S. E. Ellis, Department of Mineralogy; Dr F. C. Fraser, Department of Zoology; Miss P. A. Lawford, Bird Section; Mr A. C. Wheeler, Fish Section, British Museum (Nat. Hist.); and Mr L. Biek, Ancient Monuments Laboratory, Ministry of Works.

island alone and shows sites related to Dun Cuier. To the north, Dun Scurrival,<sup>1</sup> built on a towering cliff above the sea, contours the height with a sub oval outline (Pl. XXVIII, 3). Pottery sherds and bone artefacts have been recovered from this site which date it as cœval with Dun Cuier (fig. 2).

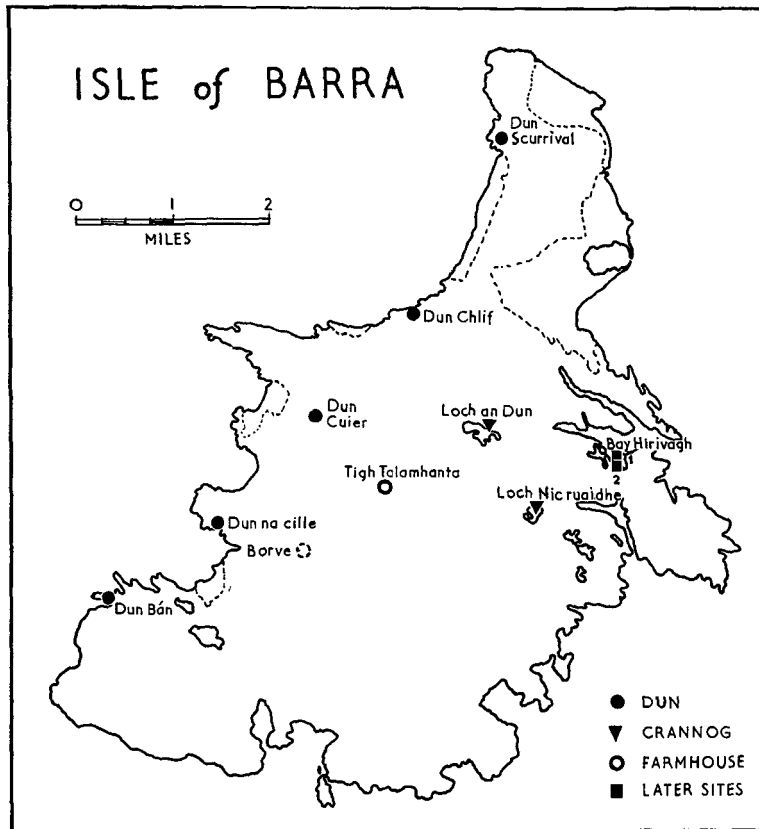


Fig. 1.

The remains of a gallery are said to have been traced and double walling appears to have been used in the construction on the seaward scarp. Massive stone foundations across the neck of land south of the dun suggest a promontory defence. Half way down the cliff to the western shore a cave, now only tenanted by nesting rock pigeons, shows signs of occupation, peat ash and shell debris. The remains of walling cross the low headland on which Dun Chlif<sup>3</sup> is built at the southern end of the long strand of Traigh Esh, the rocky promontory however, drenched by the high seas, is at times a tidal island, and the ruined site offers slight means of identification. Overlooking Seal

<sup>1</sup> *R.C.A.M.*, The Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles (1928), 449.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 448.

Bay, and with an extensive view of the west of the island and the hills of South Uist, as well as of the sea inlets of North Bay on the east, and, in clear weather, the hills of Rum, Dun Cuier<sup>1</sup> lies on the skyline of a long ridge running west to east dominating the Allasdale. A mile to the east at the head of the valley, the Aisled Farmhouse of Tigh Talamhanta<sup>2</sup> stands on a plateau at 400 ft. O.D., divided by the steep slopes of Cora Bheinn from

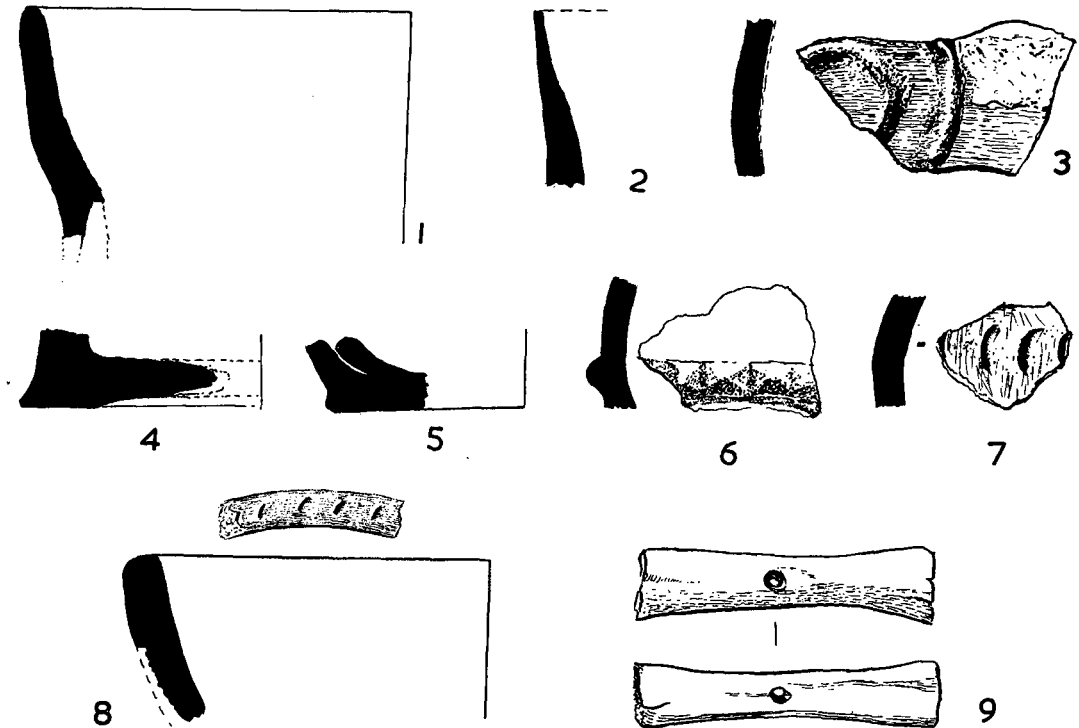


Fig. 2. 1-7 and 9. Dun Scurrival. 8. Dun Bahn ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ).

two crannog sites, both ruined and overgrown. One gives the name to Loch an Duin<sup>3</sup> where the remaining walling rises sheer from the water line on the west; a curving causeway leads from the eastern shore. The other crannog site, on the Loch of the Red-Haired Girl, Loch nic Ruaidhe, also shows tumbled walling, a causeway leading to the dun from the shore by way of a second and larger island. Mr J. S. McRae reported the find of a worn hammer-stone at a depth of two feet from the surface while cutting peat near the shore of this lochan, in the summer of 1955.

On the edge of a stretch of machar to the south of Dun Cuier, the founda-

<sup>1</sup> *R.C.A.M.*, 441.

<sup>2</sup> *R.C.A.M.*, 459 and *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXVII (1952-3), 80-105.

<sup>3</sup> *R.C.A.M.*, 445.

tions of the Chapel dedicated to St Brendan, the sailor saint, are now enclosed within the present day cemetery wall. The wall itself includes the base of a round tower of massive build, with a square opening which gives on to the sloch below, all that can now be traced of Dun na Cille.<sup>1</sup>

Between the Allasdale and Borge (another dun of which little trace but the name remains) there is a sheltered cove known locally as Sloc a' Churraich. Out of sight of Dun Cuier but possibly visible when standing at full height, the remains of a sub-circular building crown the rocky headland of Dun Bhan.<sup>2</sup> There are traces of walling across the narrow neck of the promontory (see Pl. XXVIII, 4). Pottery, including a notched rim (see fig. 2, 8) and hammer-stones, were found at this site, linking it with Dun Scurrival and Dun Cuier. On the east coast of the Island, two neighbouring tidal islets in Baigh Hirivagh, an inlet of the sea, cannot be certainly related to the foregoing. It is possible that they have been rebuilt, but are more probably of a later date, for, though characteristic causeways connect them with the shore, Sir Lindsay Scott, who examined them carefully, was of the opinion that the existing remains were of rectangular buildings, one 30 ft. by 25 ft., the other 25 ft. square, both opening onto courtyards. These sites are only a few feet above high water mark.

#### THE SITE.

Dun Cuier lies upwards of 200 feet above sea-level, on the first western outcrop of gneiss as it rises from the dunes and short turf of the machar. There is a 40 ft. drop to the north of the site, the rock falling in a series of steep terraces to the south. The approach leads partly through one of the natural faults common to the formation and opens onto the good grazing for which the site is noted. A local saying relates that if a cockle shell be placed face downwards on the grass in spring, the growth of two days will overturn it. At this season dark purple heads of sweet scented orchis abound, and the crevices of the rock are blue with little wild squills. A spring, or more probably a catchment of water close to the dun has seldom been known to dry. While the site is fully exposed to the Atlantic gales and to the east winds which sweep down the Allasdale, there are sheltered rock ledges to the west of the Dun and just below the entrance, which faces due east. These overlook little patches, each perhaps a third of an acre or thereby, which have been cleared of stones and appear to have been reinforced with soil. The remains of a low earthen bank limits the westerly patch in part and though no date can be suggested for this, it is an unusual

<sup>1</sup> *R.C.A.M.*, 469.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 446.

feature in a land which abounds in stone. A ledge of the southern cliff is cultivated at the present day, despite the difficulty of access.

The eastern end of the ridge was levelled with large boulders on which the foundations of the dun were laid, including a terrace of varying width,

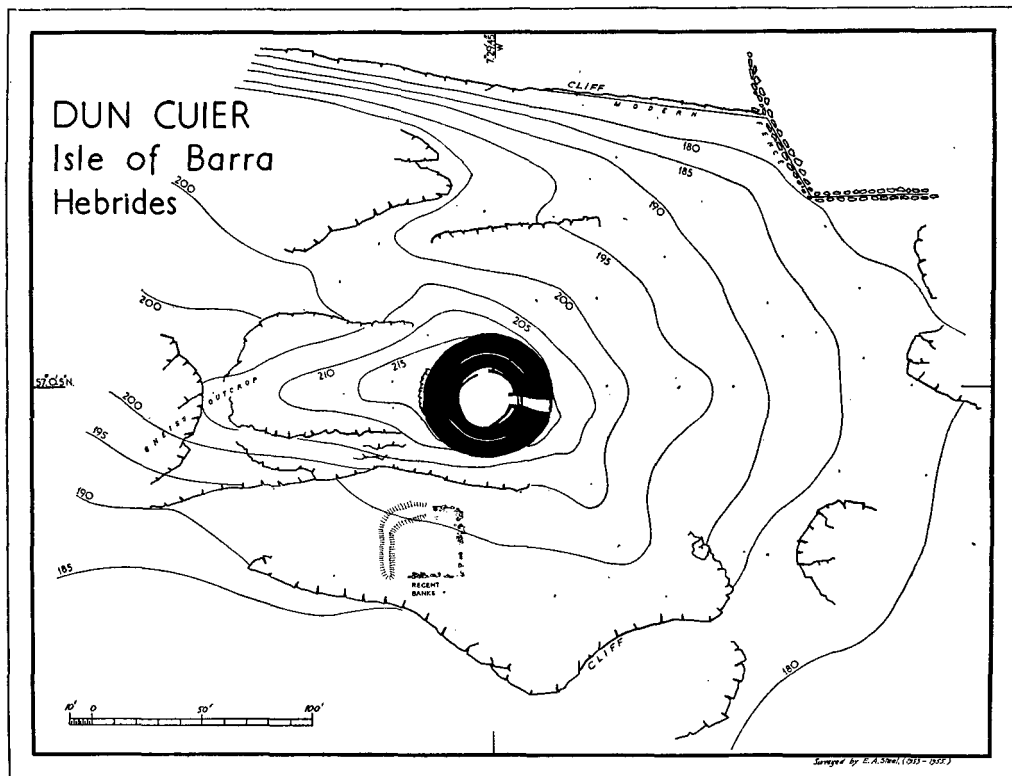


Fig. 3.

which surrounds the structure on three sides, rising on the west to the living rock. Before excavation the turf covered mound of the dun was studded with protruding stones, intermittent stretches of walling showed on the summit, which enclosed a saucer-shaped hollow, filled with a rank growth of docken and nettles. A depression facing due east indicated the entrance.

#### RECENT WALLS.

At an early stage in the excavations a rectangular lime-built wall was uncovered, constructed apparently of tumbled dun material, the turf-covered hollow of the original entrance providing a convenient approach

to the doorway, which was flanked on the north by a fireplace formed of upright slabs, filled with half-burnt shell. This, doubtless, supplied the rough lime mortar with which the intrusive wall had been built. Three

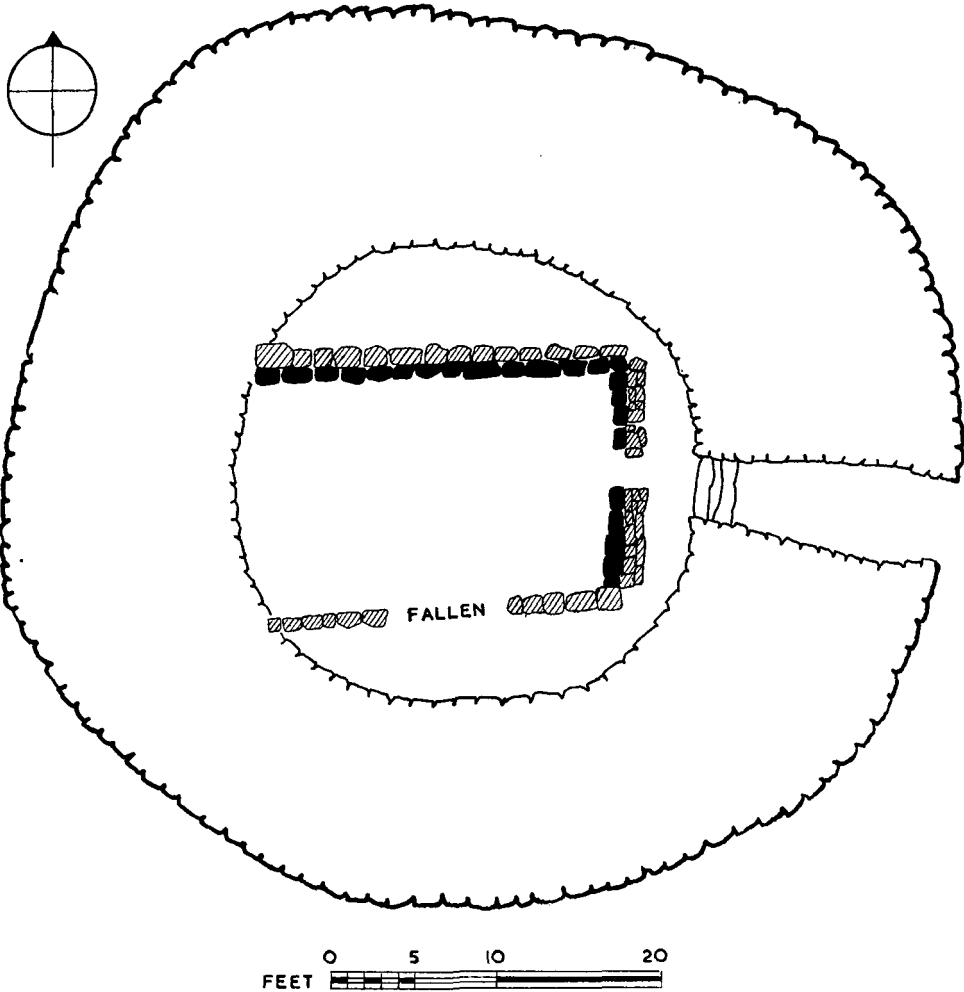


Fig. 4. Plan of "Recent Walls".

sides of an oblong construction remained (fig. 4 and Pl. XXII, 1) consisting of footing slabs and low walls, evenly laid, now 3 ft. 2 ins. at the highest. Only the lowest course survived on the south and this had collapsed at one point. No sign of this building appeared on the west, where the seaward wall of the Dun was readily accessible, and the area had been considerably disturbed. Within living memory this stretch of walling has been used as

a bonfire site for local rejoicings, and is conspicuous from much of the Island. Immediately under the short turf covering the walls a clay pipe was found and a heavy iron chopper with an  $8\frac{3}{4}$  ins. long blade, as well as a "pistol"-shaped bone knife handle of mid 18th-century date (see fig. 5, 8),

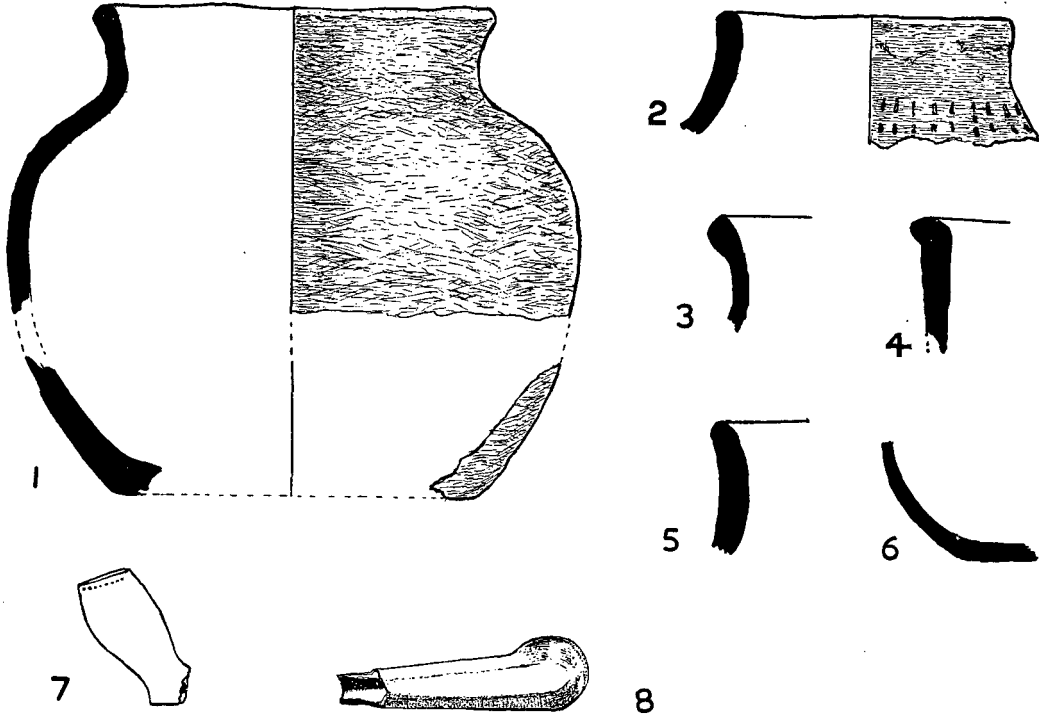


Fig. 5. Pottery and Knife handle Contemporary with "Recent Walls".

all belonging to this horizon. Numerous leathery sherds of craggan (fig. 5) were also recovered at this level. Martin Martin, writing in 1703,<sup>1</sup> notes that "these are used for storage and cooking." The intrusive walling, with its sparse refuse material, appears to denote occupation of a very temporary nature and may well coincide with the events which led to troops being quartered in the Island in 1746.

#### THE DUN STRUCTURE.

The building of the Dun consisted of three separate walls, an outer, a main and an inner wall. The paved entrance passage, measuring 12 ft. 3 ins. from the outer sill to the first of two massive lintel stones, continued beyond these into the interior giving an overall length of 20 ft. (fig. 6).

<sup>1</sup> Martin Martin, *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* (1703) "The Island of Tiree."

The outer wall was 6 ft. 6 ins. in thickness. The outer face rose from a course of stonework, which included the sill of the entrance and could be traced round the circumference of the building, rising on the west, as it joined the living rock. Stones of varying size, including boulders measuring 4 ft. 6 ins., were built into the retaining wall, of which, in places, three courses remained standing. Much of the solidly built outer face had collapsed, the inner facing however, remained standing 3 ft. above the boulder foundations, well faced on the inner side and at a consistent level round the dun. Short stretches of supplementary walling, outside the continuous kerbline, were found at varying levels on both sides of the dun, the longest of these retaining walls is indicated on the plan, to the north.

The main wall, of solid masonry, varied from 4 ft. to 6 ft. in width and carried two carefully chosen lintel stones, the outer curiously arched, 6 ft. 2 ins. long and on an average 1 ft. 4 ins. wide and up to 1 ft. 6 ins. thick, the inner 5 ft. 7 ins. long, about 10 ins. wide and 8 ins. thick. Standing now 8 ft. at the highest point, there is no possibility of computing the original height of this wall. At 4 ft. 6 ins. above the boulder foundations, an even course of rounded stones securely bonded into the masonry of the inner face, provided a ledge reminiscent of the typical scarcement of the brochs, though by no means as solid in construction, and this may have been used as the support for some form of roofing, either completely covering the small interior space or, less probably, in the nature of a verandah. The boulder course could be traced half-way round the main wall, but no sign of it showed on the west.

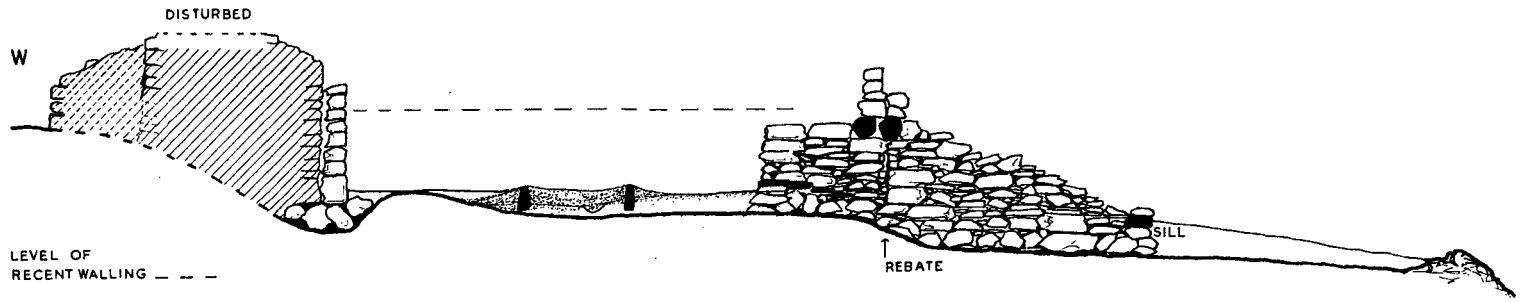
Between the outer and main walling a variable space averaging 2 ft. 6 ins. in width was traced approximately 6 ft. from the entrance passage round each side of the dun to the point where the walls reached the living rock on the west. The infill of this space was of ashy sand throughout and at all points examined yielded sherds at high levels, including a large rim fragment (fig. 8, 27). Broken hammerstones, bone and shell refuse scattered throughout the infill suggest that the inter-mural space was filled during the construction of the main wall.

#### THE ENTRANCE.

The entrance passage welded the outer and the main walling into one unit, the courses laid over foundation boulders. The south wall of the passage had collapsed in places and showed building comparable to the main wall. No point of entry to the inter-mural space could be found, though straight joints in the masonry which might indicate a blocked-up passage were sought. The doorway measured 4 ft. in height from the paving slabs of the passage to the lintels and 4 ft. in width, and under the outer lintel on the south side of the entrance there was a carefully built opening



SECTION ABC



SECTION XYZ

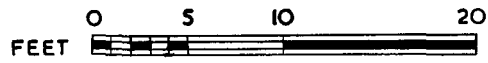
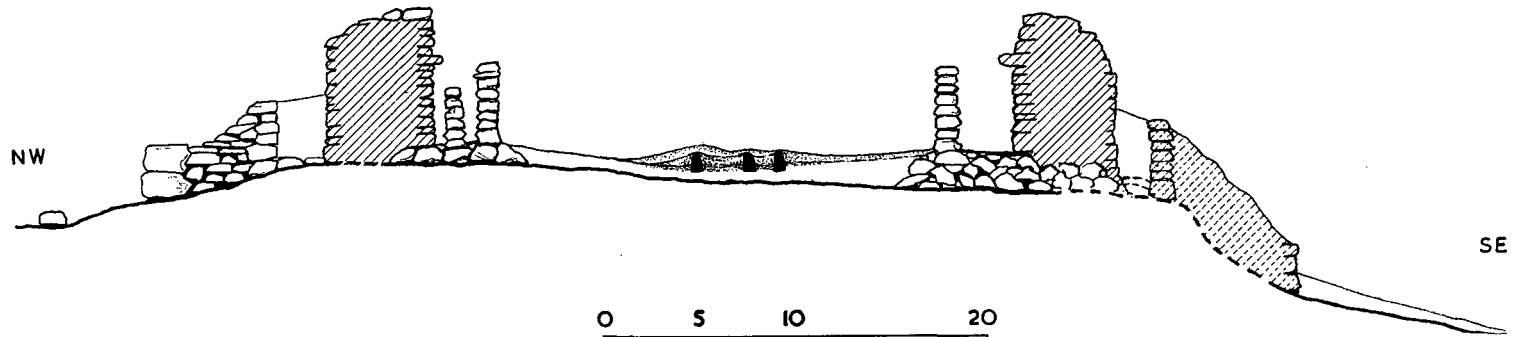


Fig. 6 B

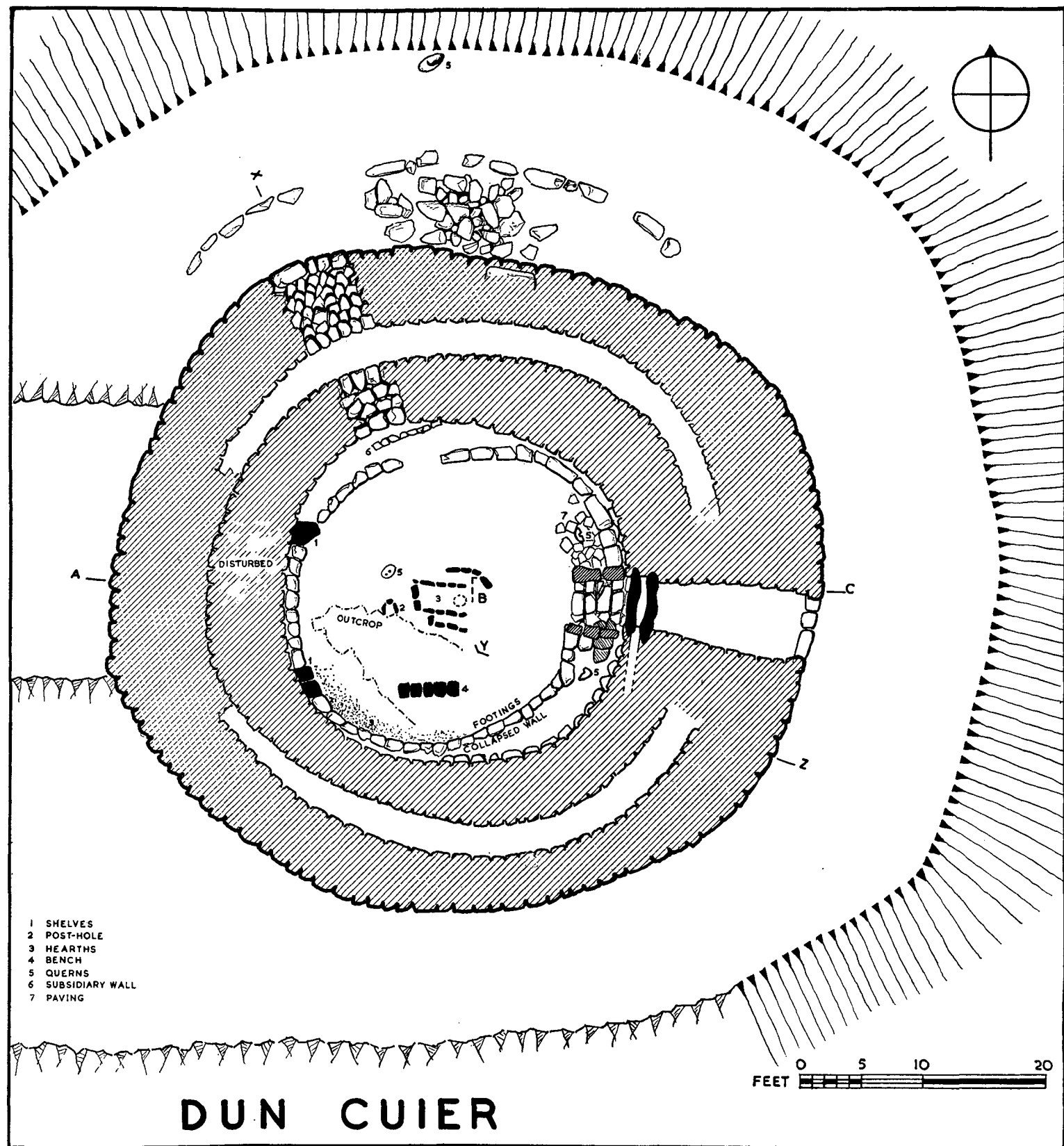


Fig. 6 A

8 ins. square. The bar housing was traced for 2 ft. 6 ins., beyond which point the masonry had collapsed. Originally, the barhole must have carried a 5 ft. pole to stretch across the entrance passage and lodge against the vertical edge of masonry on the north side, which formed a 4 ins. rebate. There was no evidence of guard chamber or recess opening from the entrance passage, and the possibility of a rebuild was considered, but finally rejected. The masonry, though in part collapsed on the south, showed no sign of restoration and the barhole and rebate were certainly original features.

To the north of the entrance passage, a heap of unburnt peat lay over the paving, covered with ash. This was *in situ* when stone tumble blocked the entrance passage, for a thin slab, originally covering the gap between the lintels, had slipped between them and lay athwart the peat ash leaving the imprint seen in Pl. XXII, 2, and was covered by blown sand which subsequently filled the doorway. The lintel cover, now removed, can be seen lying across the foot of the entrance. The ash covering the unburnt peat contained no occupation refuse and it seems probable that the wide entrance passage was used for a peat stack. A concentrated mass of sherds lay in the ash and may have been collected to grind as backing for future pot making. Part of an unused crucible (fig. 13, 22) and the partly molten residue of bronze from a metal-working hearth, were recovered from the ash overlying the peat stack. Dr Plenderleith has identified the fragments as scrap metal of varying composition, but all of bronze with low tin content.

The paving of the entrance continued under the lintels, rising in four shallow steps to the interior living-level, the passage walled on either side. Two stones bonded into the south wall of the inner entrance passage formed a stile, a feature recorded at two comparable sites, Kildonan<sup>1</sup> and Castlehaven.<sup>2</sup>

#### THE INNER WALL.

On the south side of the entrance passage, a wall, one stone thick bonded into the structure, curved to back against the main wall, forming an enclosure. Though ruined at this point, the footings of the inner wall remained *in situ* and the height could be determined from the collapsed section which still lay in its courses and would have been no higher than the boulder course of the main wall. The inner wall was shaped into alcoves or shelves on the west and was carefully faced towards the interior of the dun but was irregularly backed, a feature observed by Dr Fairhurst at Kildonan.<sup>3</sup> The inner wall curved forward again on the north to form a shallow recess with a 3 ft. square entrance, originally bridged by a lintel stone, measuring 4 ft. by 8 ins. which lay nearby. The tumbled stonework was somewhat

<sup>1</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXIII (1938-9), 185, see "ladder," 192, plan fig. 2 and 200.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XLI (1906-7), 68, see p. 76 "stile."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXIII (1938-9), 185.

confused at this point, in 1955 however, examination disclosed a short stretch of subsidiary walling only 5 ins. in thickness and 3 ft. high, running obliquely from the inner to the main wall and this may have carried some form of roofing for the recess, for large slabs lay in the space between the subsidiary wall and the 3 ft. doorway. No ash had penetrated into the shallow wall chamber, which may have had a curtain or door across the opening. The inner wall curving back continued round the circumference of the dun.

#### THE INTERIOR.

The sub-circular interior measured, approximately, 25 ft. across and was filled with tumble from the wall, which covered a level of blown sand of varying depth sealing the occupation. At the centre of the building Hearth 1, irregularly edged with chamfered stones, in part a double row, was buried by deep layers of peat ash, and in a bowl-shaped hollow lay a lump of iron slag, while hard against the kerb stones nearest to the entrance there was a concentrated mass of slag. To the south of the central hearth, a working bench, well built of carefully chosen stones, stood on the natural rock, which at this point rose to occupation level, and a thin layer of clean sea-shore sand covered the space between bench and hearth, running below the spill of peat ash. From the footings of this bench a whalebone handle was recovered (fig. 14, 41) squared and toolmarked, with a half-inch tang-hole at one end, as well as five fragments of a high-backed composite comb (fig. 13, 1). Of the four different types of dice or gaming pieces, three came from the vicinity of the central hearth. Apart from these no bone and few sherds were found near the central fire-place, which is presumed to have been used primarily for metal working. Deep ash filled the space between the smoothed boss of rock which protruded through the floor level and the south wall. The material from the second hearth is purely domestic in character and contained numerous sherds of coarse ware (fig. 7) as well as quantities of bone. Fourteen bone pins (fig. 14) and the remains of five combs (fig. 13) were found in the area round Hearth 2, many of the small objects had been trodden into the sea-shore sand which levelled the boulder foundation, showing sharp and clean in striking contrast to the overlying peat ash. Here and there an attempt had been made to lay a second sand level above the occupation refuse, but this was patchy and must have been a half-hearted measure. Against the smoothed boss of natural rock near the centre of the interior, stone slabs were wedged into the crevices making a remarkably solid post-hole, from which charcoals have been identified as of pine and birch.

The angle formed by the inner extension of the entrance and the main wall on the north was roughly paved; the uppermost of super-imposed

hearths lay over a broken quernstone (fig. 16, 53), and heavily burnt kerbstones were heaped in the corner. The remains of an iron knife, pottery including a ring-marked sherd (Pl. XXIV, 109) and two spindle whorls (fig. 13), were found in this area which rose above the normal floor level. Slipped into a crevice among the foundation stones, a perfectly preserved bone needle was recovered (fig. 14, 39). Two small vessels (fig. 7, 2 and 3) closely resembling the large cooking pots of Hearth 2 in texture and technique came, one from the lower hearth, and matching sherds of the other from the same level and from the entrance passage. The paving of this area and the slight accumulation of peat ash in Hearth 3 suggested living-quarters, as opposed to the kitchen and workshop.

Access to the space formed by the southern stretch of inner walling, as already mentioned, was by a stile of two steps. A carefully made square aperture in the wall is seen in Pl. XXI. Stone tumble in this recess included a broken quernstone, most probably re-used in building; three fallen slabs overlapped in such a way as to suggest steps, until examination showed that they were in no way underpinned and rested only on the greasy earth which formed the living-level of this small chamber, from which the otherwise all pervading peat ash was noticeably absent. A curious gritty substance observed at floor-level is unidentifiable, but the presence of carbonised heather roots suggests bedding. An unfinished gaming piece (fig. 13, 10) had slipped into the dark earth among the foundations.

#### SUMMARY.

The background of the little dun may be considered against the sequence of events.

That the chieftains of the Orkneys made formal submission to Claudius has been deduced<sup>1</sup> but the protective value of this act would diminish as Britain became gradually isolated. While there is no mention of the Western Isles in this context, occasional finds in the Hebrides, such as the terra-cotta model of a baled fleece from Dun Iadhart<sup>2</sup> in Skye, or the 4th-century coin from Garry Iodrach in North Uist<sup>3</sup> imply some contact with Rome, possibly, as Sir Lindsay Scott has suggested,<sup>4</sup> trade in wool, as well as a knowledge of the northern sea ways.

Guerilla warfare, even a measure of concerted action has been quoted for the 4th century<sup>5</sup> and by the early 5th century the power of Rome was finally withdrawn from Britain. Various dates in this epoch have been mentioned for a new element in the west, the arrival of Fergus, son of Erc who, with his warband, established the Kingdom of Dalriada in Argyll. The *Annals of the Four Masters* quotes A.D. 506 but there can be little

<sup>1</sup> V. G. Childe, *Scotland before the Scots*, (1946), 129 and *The Problem of the Picts*, (1955), 59.

<sup>2</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-5), 57, fig. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, LXVI (1931-2), 32.

<sup>4</sup> *P.P.S.*, XIV (1948), 101.

<sup>5</sup> Wainwright, *The Problem of the Picts* (1955), 5.

doubt that this was preceded by earlier settlements in Knapdale and Kintyre, the latter only 12 miles distant from the coast of Antrim.<sup>1</sup>

In the 6th century, St Columba was granted the Isle of Iona, and from that island and other Irish settlements Christianity gradually spread throughout the country.

In Barra, the site of Cille Bharra or Kilbar,<sup>2</sup> a foundation attributed to St Findbar,<sup>3</sup> traditionally reputed to have given his name to the Island, lies at the foot of Ben Eoligarry Mor and within the modern cemetery wall on Borve Point, which includes the remains of Dun na Cille, there are traces of a chapel dedicated to St Brendan.

While in no way suggesting any connection with the site under discussion, it seems fitting to record a shore dun on the nearby Isle of Pabbay where a system of built-up fields is still visible, the name alone suggests Norse influence, but the symbol stone<sup>4</sup> on the island is doubtless earlier and bears an incised crescent symbol and the "Lily." The top of the slab has been broken and a cross, side arms potent, rising asymmetrically from the crescent symbol, may have been a later addition. A cross potent is also incised on a slab of native gneiss, now lying nearby.

With this sequence in mind, Dun Cuier and the economy revealed by material equipment may be considered.

The choice of site was evidently of paramount importance to the builders of the three related duns on Barra, which are all placed on a rocky eminence, within easy reach of the sea. The intrusive walling of the 18th century, which in part preserved the outline of the dun and arrested further stone fall, probably entailed the removal of much of the surviving main wall, which is still higher than the "scarcement" in places and would rise above any roofing. It is probable that the outer wall, now greatly denuded, was never higher than its inner face, which remains at an even height throughout, and that would mark it as distinct from a true broch building, where only secondary structures mar the upward sweep of the wall. There is negative evidence that the space between the outer and the main wall, which showed no sign of batter, was never enclosed. No putlog hole to take supports was traced and, as already noted, chips of broken hammerstones and pottery fragments, as well as food refuse, were found at high levels in the infill but no fallen building stones, and the variable space may have been filled to living-height for added warmth on a notoriously exposed site.

The chips of hammerstones, as well as the roughly shaped stone work, indicate the use of these tools. The selection of stones for building is not so careful as at Tigh Talamhanta, size was neither a deterrent, nor was it a necessity. The uneven stonework is apparent in Pl. XX, 2.

<sup>1</sup> Reeves, Adamnan's *Life of St Columba*, ed. (1851), 433.

<sup>2</sup> *R.C.A.M.*, 436.

<sup>3</sup> It would appear that more than one missionary saint bore the name of Findbarr.

<sup>4</sup> *R.C.A.M.*, 438.

Within the building there are definite differences in construction as compared with the Aisled Farmhouse. No use had been made of radial piers with which the Farmhouse builders replaced the wooden posts of more fortunately situated circular houses. Only one posthole could be traced with certainty at the dun, a structure of upright slabs wedged into the natural rock of the floor, which may have supplemented any arrangement for roofing.

The second radical difference in building technique is the total absence of those carefully constructed slab-covered drains which are common in the Aisled Farmhouse buildings of the Hebrides.<sup>1</sup> One obvious reason for the lack of both features at the dun is the characteristic preparation of the ground, using natural rock as a part of the structure, an idiosyncrasy attributed to Dark Age sites by Mr Feachem,<sup>2</sup> in his discussion of the ring towers of Perthshire. The flooring, levelled round the natural rock, as it outcrops, would preclude the use either of stone piers or of drains. This make-up is recorded by Dr Fairhurst in the comparable building in Kintyre<sup>3</sup> where he also describes slab sockets or postholes. The choice of site, therefore, was in no way determined by a flat surface, nor was there any evidence of the clay "mortar" used at the Farmhouse for bedding the stone work and flooring the bays. Dun Ringill<sup>4</sup> at Kilmarie on Loch Slapin has certain features in common with Dun Cuier, here, however, a batter both on the outer and inner face of the walling is recorded. Double walling technique at the entrance compares closely with the seaward wall at the dun. A rectangular lime-built construction has obliterated some features, and lintel stones, re-used in the later building, may possibly have once covered the entrance passage, which is 16 ft. long, with double check and bar-hole and is at a lower level than the interior. The interior diameter, approximately 35 ft. by 40 ft. is larger than that of Dun Cuier, but the double walling and the indomitable use of a rocky site are common features.

Taken as a whole, the economy of Dun Cuier suggests both some overlap with the Aisled Farmhouse culture and a continuation well into the Dark Ages.

While the fine fillet decoration of earlier Hebridean pottery is lacking at Dun Cuier, the flaring rim form, with a hooked variant as well as coarse cooking pots are not characteristic of Aisled sites and traces of a secondary occupation have been suggested for Cletraval which produced similar wares. The bone material shows increasing skill in the use of iron tools. The bone pins are not an enlightening group, a few can be matched at Hebridean and Orkney sites, but the most significant for dating purposes are probably the nail-headed patterns for making clay moulds, which compare with

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note in this connection a recently excavated site in the Scilly Isles, see *Ant. Journ.*, xxxv (1955), 189.

<sup>2</sup> *Problem of the Picts* (1955), p. 71. Ed. Wainwright.

<sup>3</sup> Kildonan, *P.S.A.S.*, lxxiii (1938-9), 185, Pl. LXXV, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *R.C.A.M.*, No. 650, fig. 293.

Dark Age material from the Mote of Mark. The tool handle and netting needle, both of whale bone, may be noted in this context, while the trammel net, for which the latter was made, is also evidence of a developed way of living. The rock-bound shell-fish of the Farmhouse culture, supplemented at the dun by deep water scallop and oyster, as well as by the fish represented, confirm the use of net and boat. The rotary querns indicate a sophisticated stone equipment as do the discs and whetstones, besides the imported stone tools and the fragmentary stone mould. The slag witnesses to considerable metal working, though the poor state of the iron remains is unfortunate, but evidence of skill in the use of iron tools is again apparent in the gaming pieces and more especially in the composite combs, which perhaps provide the most definite dating evidence.

The gaming pieces have a human interest and conjure up a picture of the long northern nights, with the central fire and perhaps a feeble fish-oil lamp the only means of lighting the interior of the dun. The fine workmanship of the charred fragments (fig. 13, 5) compares oddly with the crude execution of the three pieces nos. 6, 7 and 8. All except one come from the vicinity of the central hearth, fashioned perhaps beside it, and lost in the ash.

The closest comparison for the high-backed comb is from Lagore Crannog, an unstratified find. Dr Hencken gives the mid 7th century as the earliest date for that site. Taken with the rest of the material, however, an earlier date seems indicated for the carved comb from Dun Cuier.

While a careful assessment of material from secondary occupations, both in the Hebrides and further north is necessary before any close dating is suggested, it may be reasonable to suppose from the comparisons already quoted that the Scotie influence recorded in the Southern Hebrides also spread further north. The four hundred year gap in the evidence of North Hebridean<sup>1</sup> occupation has been a matter of comment,<sup>2</sup> the suggested dating of Dun Cuier with the early 7th century A.D. as the lower bracket falls into this period, called variously Dark Age and Early Christian.

#### THE POTTERY.

Coarse and fine pottery from Dun Cuier is all ring-built and mainly of reddish paste; beds of clay occur in the locality and were used exclusively by the inhabitants of the nearby Farmhouse. A small proportion of the dun material, however, was made of grey clay which fires into a cement hard paste and was evidently used in rather a dry state by the potters, for the "biscuit" inclines to be harsh. The local source was traced as a patch of grey clay at the foot of Ben Mhartin, used at the present day for hearths and fire-brick.

<sup>1</sup> North of the isles of Ardnamurchan.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Lindsay Scott, *Viking Congress* (1954). Ed. Douglas Simpson, p. 195.



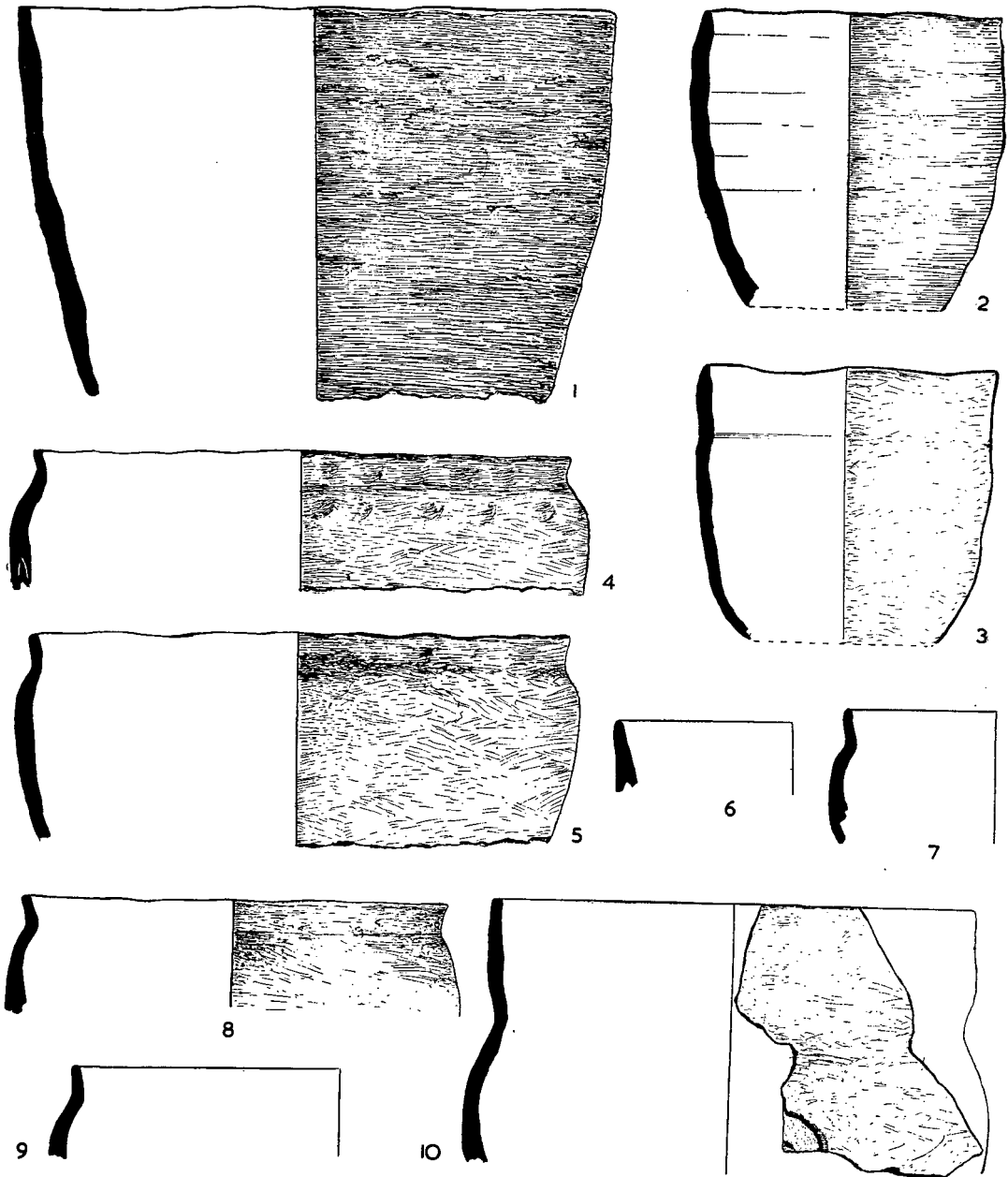


Fig. 7. Cooking pots. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

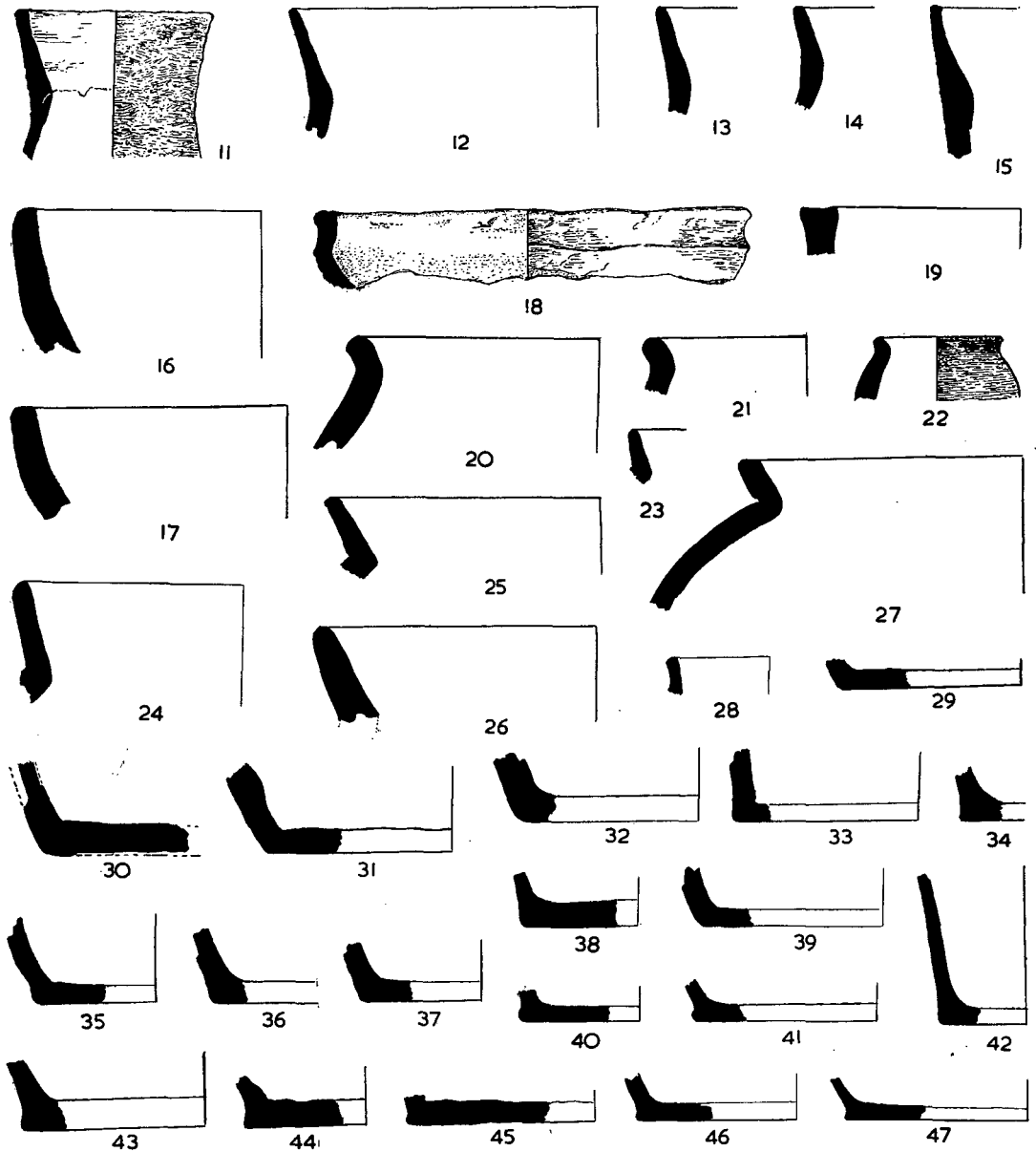


Fig. 8. Splayed out Ruins, Bowls and Basis. (1/3.)

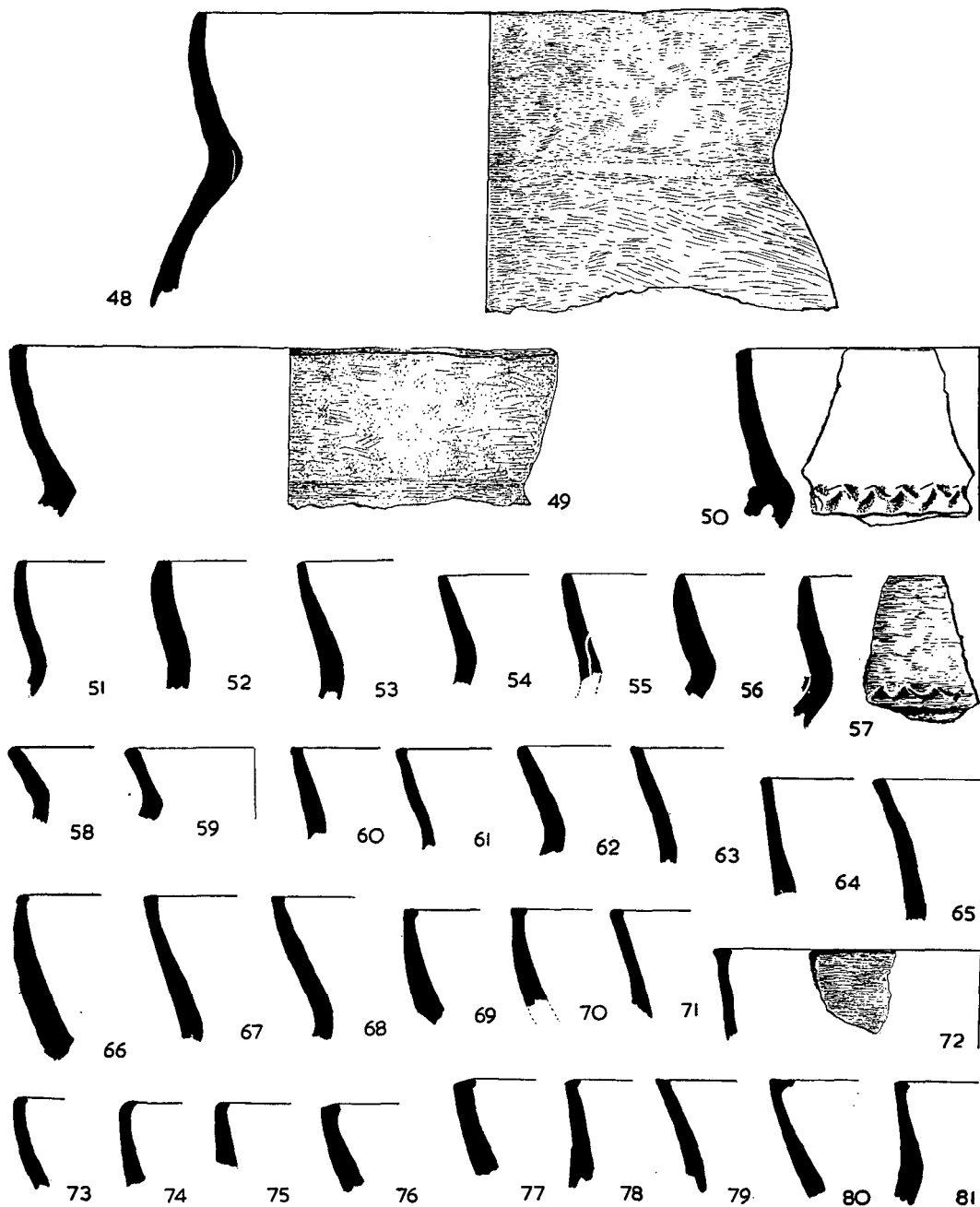
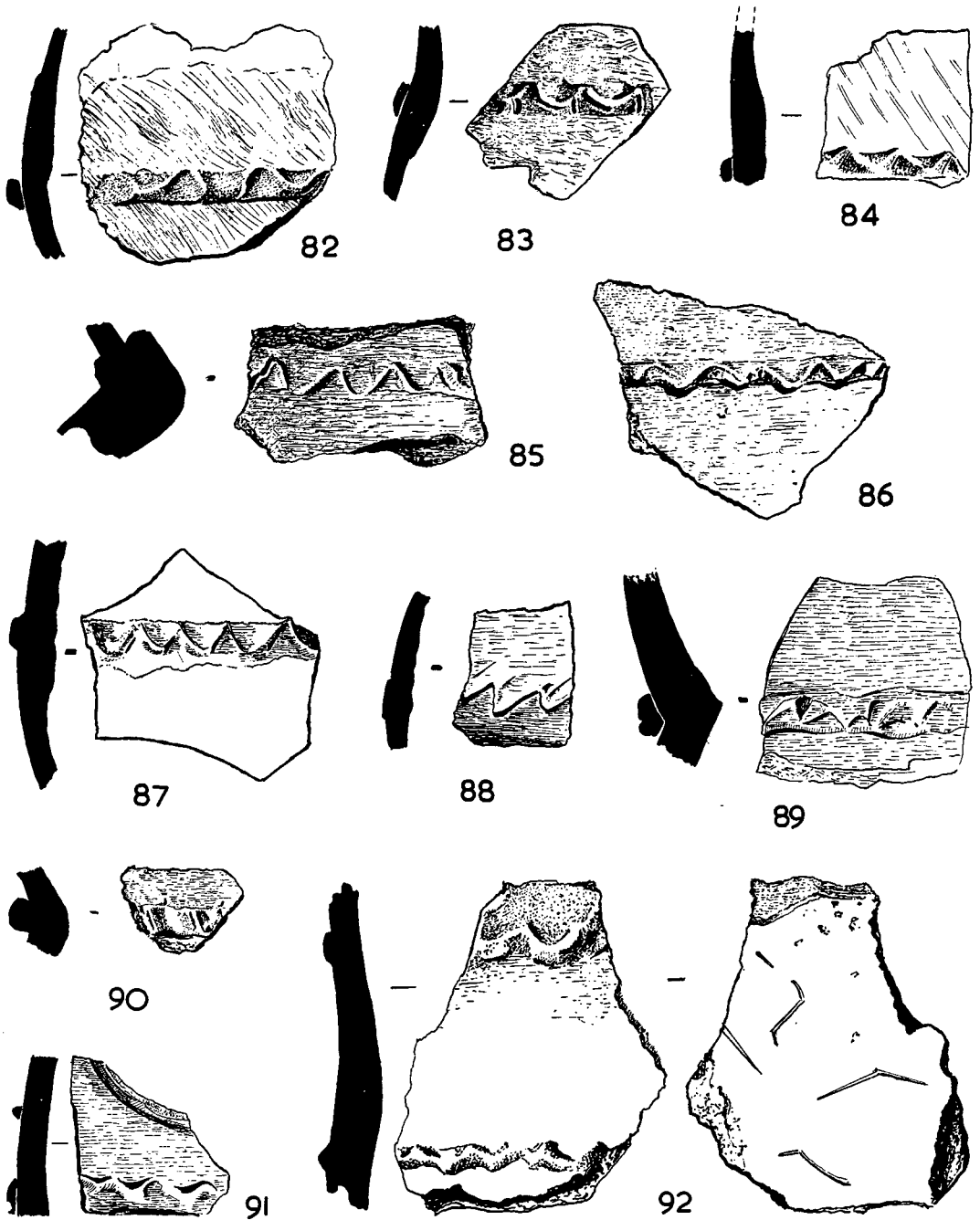


Fig. 9. Flaring and inturned Rims. (½.)

Fig. 10. Decorated Sherds ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

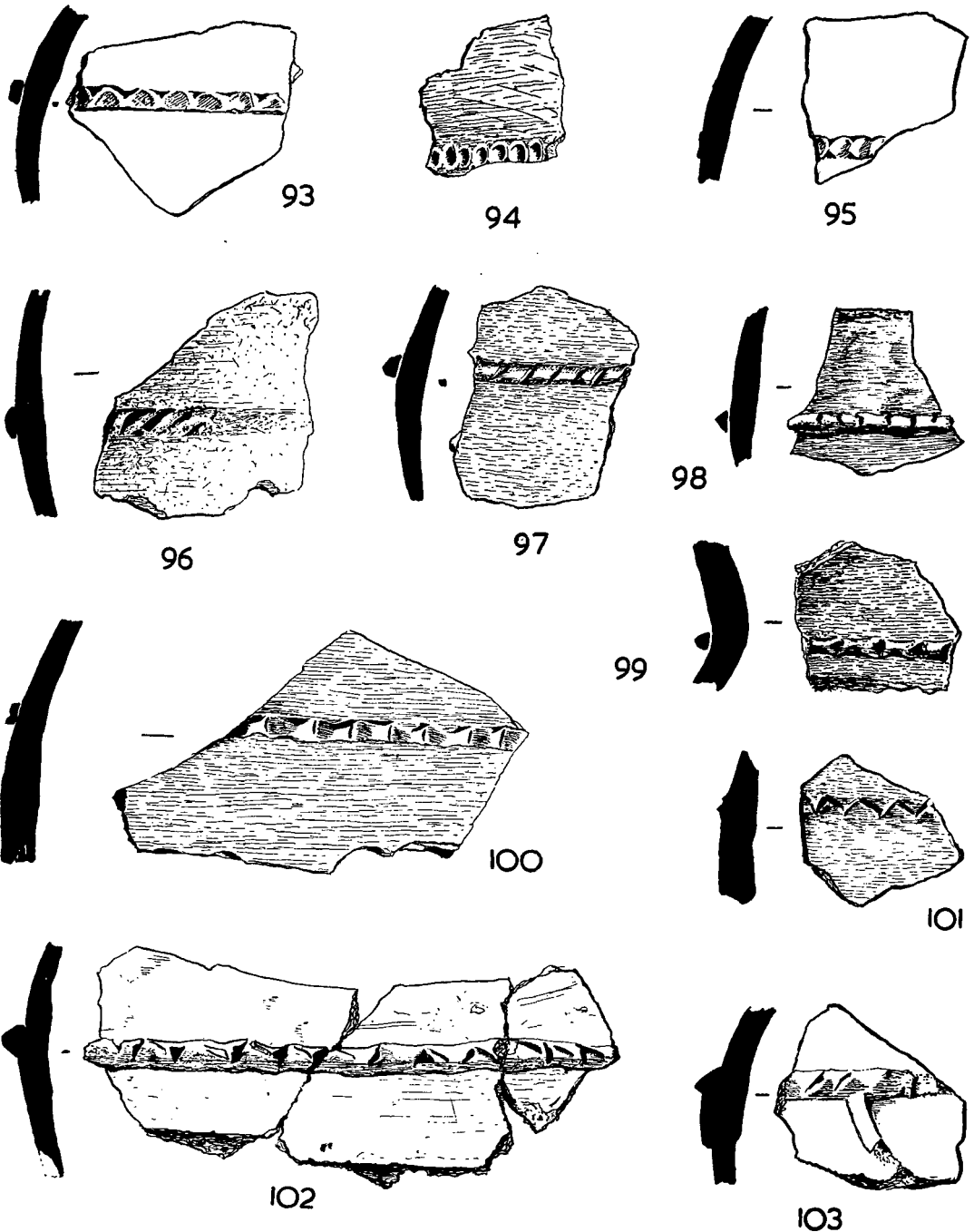


Fig. 11. Decorated Sherds. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

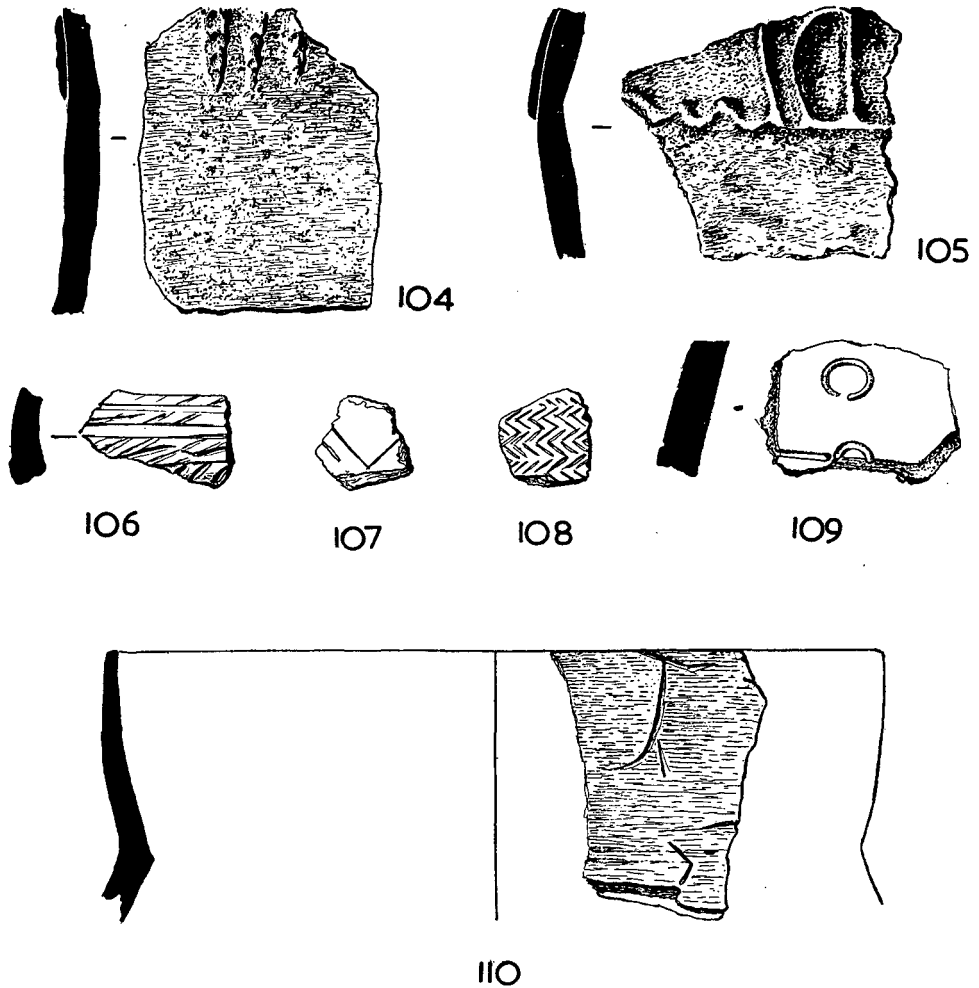


Fig. 12. Decorated Sherds. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

Coarse wares include many sherds of large cooking pots, nos. 1, 4, 5 and 10 from Hearth 2 and a smaller type, no. 2 from the inner entrance passage and nos. 6-9 from Hearth 3. The outside of these vessels is caked with soot, the inside is clean. There are two forms, the one, wide-mouthed and straight-sided,<sup>1</sup> the rest have a short rim fingered onto the body. The large forms would hardly permit of much handling and the sooty exterior suggests that they remained permanently in the peat ash of the hearth until they broke. Though burnt and distorted, these vessels can be compared to coarse pots from cave sites on the Antrim coast<sup>2</sup> and a parallel type is also figured by Mr Lethbridge from South Uist.<sup>3</sup> This comes from the midden of a robbed structure, Sithean a Phoibaire, as also the ring-stamped sherd (fig. 8, 3). At Cletraval<sup>4</sup> a similar coarse vessel is noted. It is difficult to comment with any certainty on the excellent photograph of the sooty sherd. Evidence of secondary occupation at Cletraval is, however, not wanting (see fig. 6, right-hand sherd) and the coarse pot may equate with this phase. These cooking pots are irregularly made and the thickness and shape vary in the same vessel, a feature noted in the Ballintoy Report. The Dun Cuier pots appear to have been made of the grey clay already mentioned. Professor Childe records that sherds from Larriban,<sup>5</sup> an Antrim promontory site, were grey throughout and "apparently owe their colour to a reduction of iron oxides in the clay." It may be that the continued reheating of the cooking pots produced this idiosyncrasy but the "short," harsh paste, which flakes away at the long joints of the ring building, is characteristic of material from the grey clay bed.

In another category, a small group of well-fired sherds from globular pots of carefully prepared clay, nos. 24-27, resemble in form Lindsay Scott's Cletraval Type 1, with short, squeezed out rim, a simple type found also at the Allasdale<sup>6</sup> where it occurred mainly in the rebuild. The large sherd, no. 27, was found at a high level between the main and outer walls and sherds of comparable paste were found amongst broken pottery lying over the peat heap in the entrance passage. Nos. 16 and 17 are of simple bowl form, of which examples occurred exclusively in the outside working place at the Farmhouse,<sup>7</sup> no. 18, another bowl form, carelessly made in slipped ware, is the only example of the type.<sup>8</sup> Nos. 20-22 are globular bowls, while no. 19, from Hearth 2 is a unique fragment of a finger-flattened rim.

Apart from the last group and the debased type of the *batterie de cuisine*, the main forms are globular jars with restricted neck and flaring rim. While the paste of some is well finished, the majority are finger pressed<sup>9</sup> and the long out-turned rim, which must have required some degree of skill in potting, is in some cases, pulled out and gradually diminishes, leaving a narrow ledge, often noticeably flattened as with a spatula, or as if the rim unit had been originally worked on a flat surface. These flaring forms can again be divided into three types.

Firstly, the flaring rim, nos. 48-65. Of these nos. 48 and 49 from the entrance have the finger-pressed surface common at Dun Cuier. Rims of out-turned type were also found at Dun Scurrival (see fig. 2, 2), and in Northern Ireland, in his report on Drum na kill<sup>10</sup> Professor Estyn Evans compares the material as a whole to pottery from the promontory site of Larriban as well as to the decorated pottery of the Hebrides.

<sup>1</sup> A comparable form is from Camus, Co. Londonderry. See *Ulster J.A.*, 7-8 (1944-5), 61, fig. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ballintoy, *Irish Naturalists' Journal*, 5 (1934), 109.

<sup>3</sup> *P.P.S.*, xviii (1952), 176, fig. 8, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *P.P.S.*, xiv (1948), 46, Pl. X, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ant. J.*, xvi (1936), 179, 190.

<sup>6</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, lxxxvii (1952-3), 80, fig. 5, nos. 3-6, 8 and 10. See also Foshigarry, *P.S.A.S.*, lxxv (1930-1), 299, fig. 25, 1-13.

<sup>7</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, lxxxvii (1952-3), 80, fig. 5, 21-24.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, fig. 5, 26.

<sup>9</sup> Camus, Co. Londonderry, *Ulster J.A.*, 8 (1945), 61, fig. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27, fig. 7, 9 and 11.

Secondly, some of the rims, nos. 66-81, are inturned at the lip and can be compared to material from Northern Irish sites.<sup>1</sup>

The third rim variation is figured in nos. 11-15, where a thickening of the wall at the neck ring forms a splayed out rim. So far no absolute parallel has been found for this type; the vessels quoted have the roughened surface already alluded to, with an outer profile which resembles the latest type at Cletraval.

The ornament of the decorated wares is a debased variant of the characteristic Hebridean applied band, either finger-flattened, nos. 94 and 95, or pushed up and down, sometimes slashed with the finger nail, sometimes with a pointed tool, nos. 82-88. For earlier types reference may be made to the report on the Allasdale Aisled Farmhouse where the decoration of some sherds is a fillet of clay applied in zig-zag patterns round the neck or girth of the vessel. Examples of the later type are also illustrated, the clay fillet replaced by a coarser technique, applied and fingered or tooled into wavy patterns, or, as on Dun Cuier no. 101, where the clay is raised by pressure and slashed in imitation of the applied band (see also no. 88). Simple cable patterns, nos. 96 and 97, are included. Two sherds have a double line of ornament, no. 92. In the main the pattern is round the greatest girth of the pot, but there are sherds which show decoration covering the mortice joint at the neck, a weak point in otherwise fairly good ring building, and the outward splay of the rim tends to crack and breaks easily away.

The variety of decoration is marked. This includes circles, nos. 91 and 103, sometimes a double circle as on a sherd from the neighbouring site of Dun Scurrival (fig. 2, 3).<sup>2</sup> Two sherds, nos. 104 and 105, show fanciful variation of design. No. 85 is from a thick-walled storage jar, a form of which few sherds were recovered. Of two fragments with incised decoration, nos. 107 and 108, were found in the sand level over the natural rock, no. 108, has a characteristic pattern.<sup>3</sup> Both sherds are much abraded and may have been among the shore sand brought up from the machar, they are presumably from an earlier horizon and are unique among pottery from the dun. Two ring-built sherds of lustrous black slipped ware (not illustrated) recovered from Hearth 2 are also unlike the majority of pottery from the site. Another singular sherd, no. 109, found on the paved area, is made of grey clay. The smooth surface of the well-prepared, gritless paste is decorated with stamped ring marks for which a small type of shouldered pin has been used. A deep incised line runs across one of the stamps, which is incomplete. Another well-fired rim sherd of good paste, no. 110, has part of a free-hand incised pattern closely resembling the style used on sherds from Dun Borvaidh in Coll<sup>4</sup> and a sherd from Kilpheder.<sup>5</sup> These sherds, the last named possibly from an out-turned rim, may be compared to the naturalistic incised roebuck in Glen Domhain, Argyll.<sup>6</sup>

A single sherd, no. 106, with shallow tooling and slight remains of cabled ornament, resembles a fragment from the lowest level at Larriban.<sup>7</sup>

In considering the overlap in the occupation of Tigh Talamhanta and Dun Cuier it is noteworthy that pottery sherds of laminated ware with brushed surfaces, found at the Farmhouse, are recorded as indicative of a later stage of occupation,

<sup>1</sup> *Irish Naturalists' Journal*, 5 (1934), 111, Pl. VII.

<sup>2</sup> See also E. Beveridge, *North Uist* (1911), 208, Pl. III, Eilean Maleit.

<sup>3</sup> For a comparable decoration on sherds from Cletraval see *P.P.S.*, xiv (1948), 46, Pl. IX, 4, from the Broch of Ayre, see *P.S.A.S.*, XLVIII (1913-4), 31, fig. 13, from Foshigarry see *ibid.*, 65, 1930-1), 299, fig. 23, 7 and from the Duns, E. Beveridge, *Col and Tiree*, p. 174, Pl. VIII

<sup>4</sup> Beveridge, *ibid.*, p. 14 and 174, Pl. V.

<sup>5</sup> *P.P.S.*, xviii (1952), 176, fig. 7, 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Antiquity*, xv (1941), plate facing p. 288. I am indebted to Miss Marion Campbell for showing me this stone. See also V. G. Childe *Prehistory of Scotland* (1935), 245, Pl. XVI B.

<sup>7</sup> *Ant. J.*, xvi (1936), 179, fig. 6, 8.



equating perhaps with the third stage of that structure recognised by Sir Lindsay Scott. These fragmentary sherds resemble material from Dun Cuier, where the long joins of the ring-built pottery contrast sharply with the lumpy technique common to the Farmhouse. Though pottery with this lumpy characteristic did not occur inside the Dun, it was found among the heap of sherds from the entrance passage, which was so closely packed and so isolated as to suggest that originally it had been held in a basket or other container and must have been collected for a specific purpose.

While brushed and roughened surfaces are common among Hebridean wares (see nos. 82 and 84) no sign of true grass-tempering has been recognised in pottery from Dun Cuier, though surface impressions of coarse grass and straw have been observed. From three base sherds Hr Hans Helbaek has identified grain impressions of Hulled Barley, so that we may deduce straw and chaff lying about the potting floor.<sup>1</sup>

### CATALOGUE OF THE POTTERY.

Figs. 7-12

- 1-10. Cooking pots from hearths, grey paste, irregularly made, soot-caked exterior. Nos. 1, 4, 5, 9 and 10 from Hearth 1, Nos. 2, 3 and 8 from Hearth 3.
11. Rough surface, careless ring-building. Cf. *P.P.S.*, xiv (1948), 46, Pl. X, 1.
12. Surface gone, finger-pressed.
13. Grey clay, burnt surface.
14. Brushed surface.
15. Gritty paste, brushed surface.
16. Bowl, good, smooth ware.
17. Bowl, grey paste, large grits.
18. Bowl, very irregular, covered with thin coating of clay, from Hearth 2.
19. Bowl with flattened rim.
20. Bowl, see no. 27.
21. Bowl.
22. Bowl similar to no. 27.
23. Bowl, red ware as no. 27.
24. Bowl, with decoration at the neck, worn surface.
25. Bowl burnt and abraded. From Hearth 2.
26. Bowl, see no. 27.
27. Bowl, red clay, good surface, squeezed back rim, well made. From inter-mural space.
28. Short, upright rim, paste as no. 27.
- 29-47. Bases.
48. Outside well finished, rim finger-pressed, body smooth, but paste includes very large grits. Coarse ring build, possibly had originally decoration applied round the neck, now gone. Rounded angle on the inside. From Hearth 2.
49. Good paste, well made and with few grits, rim finger-pressed outside, very smooth inside. From Hearth 2.
50. Good ware, rough outer surface, decorated. From heap in entrance.
51. Good hard ware, brushed surface.

<sup>1</sup> Pottery from Dun Cuier included, apart from illustrated material, 132 rim fragments, 118 decorated sherds, and 69 bases.

52. Very short grey paste, sooted outside.
53. Short paste, brushed surface.
54. Grey clay, burnt core, brushed surface.
55. Burnt, well made. From heap in entrance.
56. Grey clay, rough paste, sooted outside. From Hearth 2.
57. Burnt surface in and out. From heap in entrance.
58. Good surface, burnt core.
59. Smoothed surface, burnt core. From Hearth 2.
60. Grey clay, sooted outside, brushed surface. From Hearth 2.
61. Finger-pressed.
62. Finger-pressed. From Hearth 2.
63. Finger-pressed, roughened surface.
64. Pink paste, gritted. From Hearth 2.
65. Light-red clay with very big grits bursting through the surface. From Hearth 2.
66. Very lumpy but interior well finished, finger-pressed, short paste, grass-marked. From heap in entrance.
67. Well-prepared clay.
68. Finger-pressed, wavy rim, paste not gritted. From below paving.
69. Good red ware, smoothed surface. From heap in entrance.
70. Good hard ware. From heap in entrance.
71. Finger-pressed.
72. Dry paste, very flat rim, brushed surface.
73. Dry paste, core burnt, unsooted surface, large grits.
74. Short paste, very sooty outside. From heap in entrance.
75. Grey ware, finger-pressed.
76. Big grits, surface gone.
77. Well-fired clay, well made, grass marks on outside, sooty surface. From heap in entrance.
78. Grey clay, burnt through.
79. Grey clay, sooty surface, finger-pressed, flat rim.
80. Short paste, sooty surface, finger-pressed.
81. Cooking pot paste.
82. Brushed surface, coarse, finger-pressed applied band, heavily gritted paste, inner surface good.
83. Grey paste, finger-pressed, applied band, nail marks.
84. Brushed surface, applied band, nail slashed.
85. Heavily built-up, pushed-up pattern.
86. Grey clay with very big grits, very regularly thumbled-applied band.
87. Short red paste, poorly applied decoration, with finger-nail marks, brushed surface, irregular inside.
88. Fine paste, pushed up decoration.
89. Grey clay, inside good surface, sharp angle at neck, cordon very coarsely slashed.
90. Short grey paste, applied band, finger-squeezed, and nail marked. From over paving.
91. Heavily burnt, *cf.*, Scurrival, fig. 2, 3 for ornament.
92. Coarse gritted paste, good outer surface, inside tool marked, double row of decoration.
93. Burnt; applied band finger-tipped.
94. Brushed surface, neatly thumbled up, slightly raised decoration.

95. Grey clay, good outer surface, thumb-raised decoration. From between walls.
96. Grittied grey paste, surface abraded, slashed applied cordon.
97. Large grits, irregular surface inside, slashed applied cordon.
98. Roughly made sherd, irregular, slashed cordon.
99. Inner surface gone, outer good.
100. Grey paste burnt, applied band, finger pressed, with nail decoration.
101. Good smooth outer surface, inner rough, pattern pushed up and slashed with tool.
102. Good red paste, well-applied band, rough slashed.
103. As above, remains of circular ornament as 91.
104. See no. 105.
105. Sooted inside and out, finger-pressed, fair surface.
106. Gritless paste, shallow tooling and brushed, vestiges of applied slashed decoration.
107. Much abraded, from sand infill.
108. From sand, edge of Hearth 1, for comparisons see text.
109. Ring-stamped, smooth grey clay.
110. Smooth grey clay, well-finished paste, freehand incised decoration.

## Fig. 2

- 1-7. Pottery from Dun Scurrival.
- 1, 2. Flaring rim forms in coarse paste.
3. From walling, cf. fig. 10, 91 and Tigh Talamhanta, fig. 8, 80.
- 4, 5. Bases.
6. Applied decoration.
7. For decoration compare Tigh Talamhanta, fig. 8, no. 89 also Foshigarry.
8. From Dun Bahn, notched rim of bowl form.

## THE FINDS.

*Metal Objects and Evidence of Metal Working.*

Metal working in iron and possibly in bronze, took place within the comparatively small interior of the dun. Part of an open mould, carved from soft stone was found in the sand level at the foot of the bench (fig. 13, 19). Of triangular shape, it may have been part of the matrix for a penannular brooch with expanded terminals; a mould for a comparable brooch, almost complete, was found at the Mote of Mark.<sup>1</sup> A broken crucible<sup>2</sup> (fig. 13, 22) was also recovered and 6 lbs. of iron slag were in the peat ash of the central hearth,<sup>3</sup> slag fragments occurring in the occupation level. Partly fused bronze plates of scrap metal from the entrance have already been noted, though no bronze artefacts were recovered. The fragmentary remains of iron included three knives, all from the occupation level, one sufficiently complete to show a V-section blade. A short blade came from the space

<sup>1</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, XLVIII (1913-4), 125, figs. 13, 14, no. 8.

<sup>2</sup> For a crucible from Dun Beag see *P.S.A.S.*, LV (1920-1), 110 fig. 8, 4 and 5, from Buaille Risary, see Beveridge, *North Uist* (1911), 209, Pl. II.

<sup>3</sup> Traces of broken iron objects have been recognised by Mr Biek, see Appendix II.

between the inner and main wall, and a similar piece of iron was found immediately below the blown sand above Hearth 2, near an iron nail (fig. 13, 23). In the boulder foundations of the main wall the remains of a sickle-shaped knife<sup>1</sup> bore signs of plaited rush wrapping and an unidentifiable fragment of iron retained the oxydised pattern of a textile (Pl. XXI), the subject of a note on p. 328. These objects were buried in the sand at the bottom of the wall, perhaps for safe keeping.

*Bone Combs* (fig. 13, 1-4).

Within the limits of function and material, composite combs, originally derived from a Roman prototype, show certain conventions in design, used individually by craftsmen yet offering characteristics by which a group may be identified. The general distribution is widespread and the type occurs over a long period. The comb is a common feature on the symbol stones, where, with the mirror, it has been considered to be a feminine attribute. As late as 1543 the grave slab of Prioress Anna in Iona<sup>2</sup> was carved with a double-edged comb. High-backed combs are represented on symbol stones at Daviot, Kintradwell, Inverravon, Newbigging, Clynemilton and Aberlemno.<sup>3</sup> Witness of the value attached to such articles is recorded by Romilly Allen, who notes that in A.D. 625 Pope Boniface presented a silver mirror and an ivory comb to the Queen of Edwin, King of Northumbria.<sup>4</sup> The high-backed comb from Dun Cuier (no. 1) was evidently prized, it shows attempt at repair, both in the extra rivet and in the holes drilled for suspension, perhaps after the ornamental lugs were broken away.

The group of combs can be related to material from Foshigarry,<sup>5</sup> Garry Iochdrach<sup>6</sup> and the Earth House of Galson,<sup>7</sup> three Hebridean sites which show traces of a second occupation. With the exception of an example from the Broch of Burrian,<sup>8</sup> Orkney combs are of a less sophisticated type which has little in common with the Barra group. These last appear to be closely related to Irish material from Ballinderry,<sup>9</sup> Lagore,<sup>10</sup> and Loch Gur,<sup>11</sup> as well as from Port Bradden<sup>12</sup> and Ballintoy.<sup>13</sup>

1. This high-backed comb was found in the shore sand level covering the natural rock at the foot of the bench. Fifty ring and dot motifs form

<sup>1</sup> A sickle-shaped mould is figured in the report of the excavations at Ardifuar, see *P.S.A.S.*, xxxix (1904-5), 259, fig. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Spalding Club, *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* (1867), vol. 2, Pl. LXI.

<sup>3</sup> J. Romilly Allen, *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (1903), III 161, fig. 170, 153, fig. 159, p. 177, fig. 192, p. 40, fig. 37 (for the last see also *P.S.A.S.*, xxxvi (1901-2), 11, fig. 47) and 205, fig. 221.

<sup>4</sup> Spalding Club, *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* (1867), vol. 2, appendix to preface p. v.

<sup>5</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, lxxv (1930-1), 299, fig. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxvi (1931-2), 32, see p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, lviii (1923-4), 185, fig. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, *Scotland in Pagan Times* (1883), 249, fig. 235.

<sup>9</sup> Munro, *Ancient Scottish Lake Dwellings* (1862), 278, fig. 255.

<sup>10</sup> *P.R.I.A.*, liii (1950), fig. 97, 241 and fig. 102, B.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, lii (1948-50), fig. 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Ulster J.A.*, 6 (1944), 39.

<sup>13</sup> *Irish Naturalists' Journal*, 6 (1934), 104.

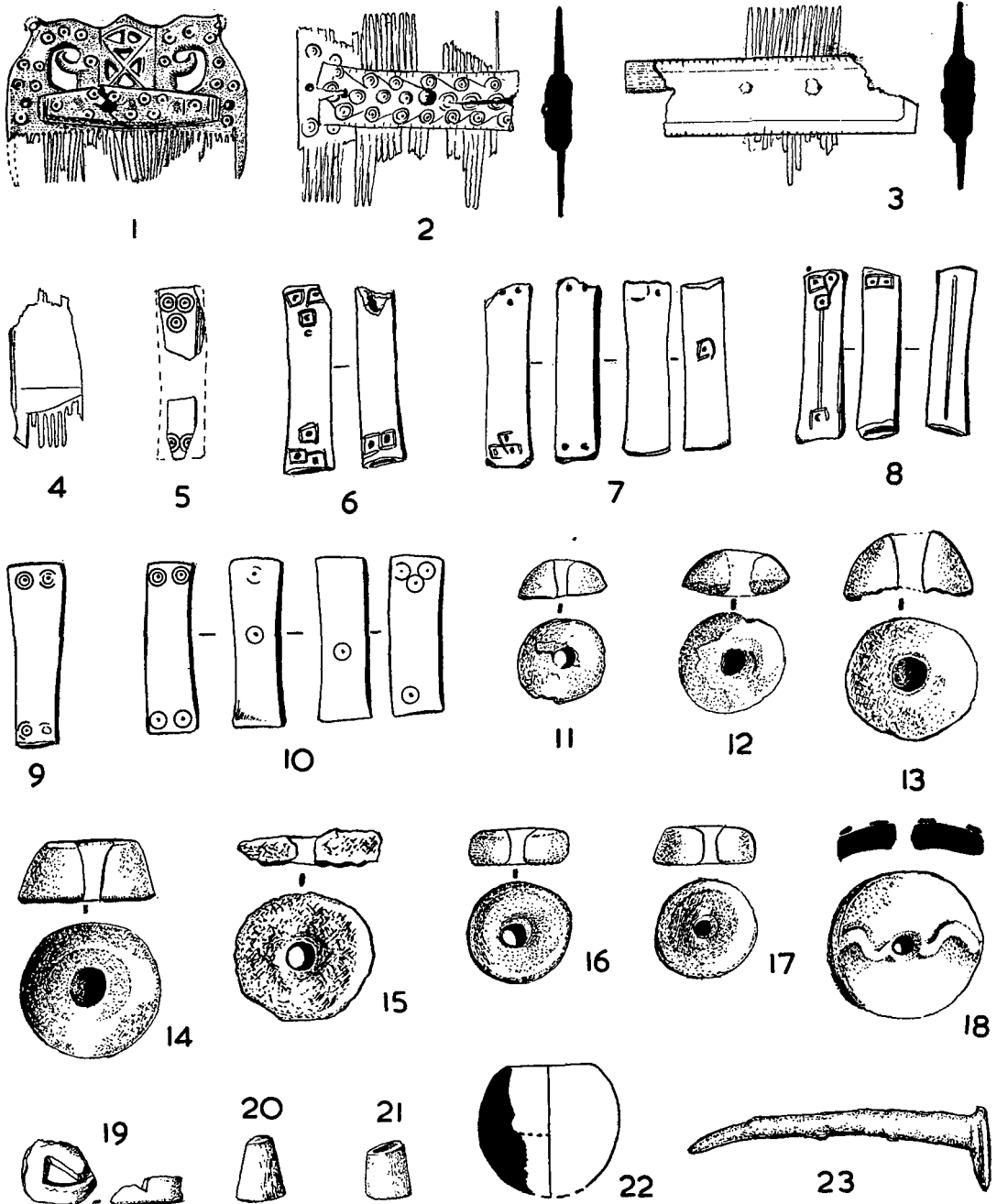


Fig. 13. Combs 1-4; Gaming pieces 5-10, 20, 21; Spindle Whorls 11-18; Mould 19; Crucible 22; nail 23. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

the decoration of the comb which is made of three carved bone plates and measures  $2\frac{3}{4}$  ins. by  $1\frac{3}{4}$  ins. when assembled. Carved bone cross-bars hold the toothed plates together, originally fixed by three iron rivets, but anciently mended by a fourth; the heads of the rivets are concealed by a covering of some material exactly matching the bone of the comb. The teeth are finely cut and the three plates have been completed before the whole was assembled, for the decorated cross-bars show no knife marks. The handle of the comb has two lugs, now incomplete, which formed a part of the pattern showing hour-glass perforations and which may have been used for suspension; two straight-sided holes have been drilled at either end of the cross-bars. On one side there is, in addition, a partly drilled hole. Six triangular holes form the decoration of the central comb plate, two arranged diamond-wise and four forming a maltese cross, the whole enclosed by incised lines which also decorate the lower cross pattern with a drilled dot in the centre. On one side, three lightly incised lines surround one of the ring and dot motifs, perhaps as a means of identification. The outer plates are decorated by an openwork scroll pattern. The bars holding the comb plates together are carved asymmetrically; on one side, as well as ten ring and dots, two lines have been incised at each end of the bar. The other bar has also been decorated with ten ring and dot patterns and has two incised lines at one end, three at the other, with an additional line outside the first ring and dot. The closest comparison for this comb is from the Old Finds at Lagore Crannog.<sup>1</sup>

2. This double-edged comb was found in the vicinity of Hearth 2, as were the remaining four specimens. The comb sections, probably originally four, of which three remain, were secured by two cross-bars, neither complete. The remaining end-plate, which projects beyond the cross-bar, had twelve teeth and is ornamented with two dot and double rings and two dot and ring motifs on each side, with a straight perforation for suspension drilled at the edge of the comb plate, which is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ins. long and 3 ins. wide. The cross-bars are incomplete and are ornamented with an incised pattern, three rows of dot and double circles, the upper and lower joined to form a running scroll. This pattern, originally derived from classical sources, was also used for the decoration of a single-edged comb, an unstratified find from Ballinderry Crannog<sup>2</sup> and is seen on a comb from Lagore<sup>3</sup> noted as similar to another, larger example from Buston,<sup>4</sup> the latter, however, has a weak scroll pattern on the end-plate as well as chip carving, which suggests a late date.

The fragmentary remains of four combs without decoration were also recovered.

<sup>1</sup> *P.R.I.A.*, LIII (1950-1), fig. 102 B.

<sup>2</sup> Munro, *Ancient Scottish Lake Dwellings* (1882), 278, fig. 255.

<sup>3</sup> *P.R.I.A.*, *ibid.*, fig. 97, 241.

<sup>4</sup> Munro, *ibid.*, p. 59, fig. 30.

3. A double-sided comb of rather coarse workmanship, which has been assembled before the teeth were cut. The two remaining comb sections each have eight teeth. The overall length of this comb is  $3\frac{1}{4}$  ins. and the comb plates measure 2 ins.

4. Part of the end-plate of a comb of different type bears some resemblance to a toothed plate from the Earth-House at Galson<sup>1</sup> in Lewes and to another from Carraig Aille House I, Lough Gur.<sup>2</sup> The oblique end of the toothed plate is wider than those of the other examples and the scratched rough out for cutting the teeth can be seen.

3B. Little survives of a fifth comb (not figured but see Pl. XXVI) except the broken cross-bars, with two rivets still in place and the worn remains of one comb plate with twelve teeth. The notched edges of the cross-bars indicate that the comb was assembled before the teeth were cut.

3A. One end-plate only remains of a sixth comb (not figured but see Pl. XXVI), a coarsely made example, showing a hole drilled for suspension—one rivet is still in place.

*Bone Gaming Pieces or Dice* (fig. 13, 5–10 and 20, Pl. XXVI, 6–10).

It is not easy to envisage the manner in which the long pieces, occurring from the Iron Age onwards, were used, though the well-known set from Glastonbury Lake Village<sup>3</sup> which was associated with a throwing cup were also parallelepiped in form. Sir Mortimer Wheeler in describing oblong bone dice from Maiden Castle<sup>4</sup> presumes that they were “used, like the cubic, for throwing, although the narrower sides, which usually bear the lower numerals, rarely fall uppermost, on the other hand they may have been used as a sort of multiple domino.” The known Hebridean examples are from Foshigarry<sup>5</sup> (where they are shorter and of polished deerhorn) and from Bac Mhic Connain,<sup>6</sup> (an oblong piece). Comparable dice are reported as chance finds in Orkney and in the Brochs of Ayre<sup>7</sup> and at Burrian<sup>8</sup> where they were unstratified and like the composite combs from that site appear to have come from a secondary level. They are also recorded from the Broch of Lingrow.<sup>9</sup> Bone and wooden gaming pieces, one with an ogham marking are reported at Ballinderry Crannog no. 2,<sup>10</sup> as well as bone plaques of a flat type. Flat gaming pieces are recorded among the material

<sup>1</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LVIII (1923–4), 185, fig. 9, 9 and 10.

<sup>2</sup> *P.R.I.A.*, LI (1948–50), 39, fig. 13, 284.

<sup>3</sup> H. St George Gray, *The Glastonbury Lake Village* (1911–7), II, 407, fig. 146.

<sup>4</sup> *Soc. Ants. Lon. Report no. XII* (1943), 310, fig. 106, 5 and 6.

<sup>5</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXV (1930–1), 299, fig. 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, LXVI (1931–2), 42, fig. 15, 9. This site is reported as showing signs of reconstruction; an ogham inscribed knife handle was among the finds.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, XLVIII (1913–4), 31, fig. 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Arch. Scot.*, v (1890), 341.

<sup>9</sup> J. Anderson, *Scotland in Pagan Times* (1883), 244.

<sup>10</sup> *P.R.I.A.*, XLVII (1941–2) fig. 22, 17 and 45.

from Cush<sup>1</sup> and from Carraig Aille Fort,<sup>2</sup> both in County Limerick, where Professor O'Riordain suggests an alternative method for their use.

5. Two burnt fragments from a carefully made gaming piece were found together in the peat ash of the central hearth. These show a more sophisticated workmanship than the examples described below, one fragment has three dot and double circles neatly executed, the other, two of the same motif.

Three pieces, nos. 6-8, apparently of a set, were found in the spread of the peat ash round the central hearth. Fashioned from the metatarsal bones of sheep, they measure 2 ins. in length and have crudely incised numerals of dots enclosed in rectangles.

6. Three of the numerals are on each end of one facet of the bone, with a single dot below one group. On another facet, two numbers have been incised. The other end of the bone is damaged and may have had a comparable arrangement.

7. The second of this group appears to be unfinished, four dots show on one facet, three on another, which has three dots enclosed by roughly incised lines at the opposite end. On a third facet a dot is surrounded by a crudely incised square. Tool marks comparable to those made by filing are visible on this piece, a feature noted on the whale bone handle no. 41.

8. Two sets of three dots appear on the third piece of this set, five of them drilled in incised squares, the sixth enclosed by a pear-shaped incised line. On another facet two small dots are surrounded by rectangular lines. Two facets of the piece show a line longitudinally incised.

9. A single, apparently unfinished example, lay to the east of the central hearth, also in the spread of peat ash. This piece, 2 ins. in length, has on one facet two dot and double ring numerals at one end and at the other end a completed dot and double ring. There is a rough-out for a second. The use of some form of tool for the dot and circle pattern is indicated on this piece as on no. 10.

10. An unfinished piece was found in the greasy earth of the enclosure formed by the inner wall. On one side of this piece three single circles with dots have been roughed out, another facet has two similar circles with central dots and two double circles. The third facet has four dots, two of them with a lightly incised single circle. The use of a tool is indicated.

20. A horn or antler tip, cut and shaped, which may also have been used as a gaming piece, lay among the paving stones to the north of the entrance. A counter or gaming piece (not illustrated) made from a trimmed vertebra was found below the sand level in the interior.

<sup>1</sup> *P.R.I.A.*, XLV (1939-40), 83, fig. 38, 238.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, LII (1948-50), 99 and see 39, fig. 38, 238.



*Spindle Whorls* (fig. 13, 11–18).

Of the eight spindle whorls recovered, four were femur heads (nos. 11–14), one was of antler (no. 15), two were pierced and shaped beach pebbles (nos. 16 and 17), and one was from a decorated potsherd (no. 18). The most carefully made of the bone whorls was found at the opening to the recess on the north of the dun, the remaining three were in the spread of ash from Hearth 2. The burr of an antler had been rather crudely shaped to fashion no. 15 and a decorated sherd was neatly drilled through the pattern in no. 18, which was also found in the ash of Hearth 2, with a bone pin, no. 29 in close proximity. Pebble whorls had hour-glass perforations, no. 17 came from the paved area to the north of the entrance, no. 16 from Hearth 2. With the exception of the pebbles, the material used appear to be very light for practical purposes as spinning whorls and the objects described could equally have served as dress fasteners.

21. A neatly made toggle of antler was recovered from the ash spread of Hearth 2.

*Bone Pins, Needle and Whale bone Handle* (fig. 14, 24–41, Pl. XXVI, 24–36).

Fourteen bone pins were found in the ash spread of Hearth 2. Two nail-headed pins, nos. 37 and 38, were probably used in making moulds for casting bronze pins (a pin together with the matrix which had been used in fashioning it was found at the Mote of Mark.<sup>1</sup> Of a pair found together nos. 27 and 28, one has a chisel-shaped head, the other neatly cut, closely resembles a pin from the Broch of Burrian.<sup>2</sup> With the exception of no. 34, also represented at Burrian, the remaining pins are of simple form and rather careless workmanship. A comparable bone pin, much worn, was found at the neighbouring site of Dun Scurrival. Such pins are characteristic of many Hebridean and Orkney sites.

39. A well-made bone needle with a pointed head and carefully pierced eye, came from the foundation stones, a type commonly found from the Iron Age onwards.

33, 40. Deerhorn points, no. 40 is highly polished.

41. A squared whale bone handle with tang hole  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. wide at the smaller end. This shows marks of tooling as with a file, seen also on the gaming pieces.

*Not illustrated.* Two ox end-bones, the proximal end of a femur and the distal end of a humerus, were found in close proximity, built into the inner face of the main wall. These were roughly trimmed and had possibly been used as handles.

<sup>1</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, XLVIII (1913–4), 125, fig. 15 and for pins see also Broch of Ayre, *ibid.*, p. 31, fig. 11, 1 and Galson, *ibid.*, LVIII (1923–4), 185, fig. 9, 16 and 19.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, *Scotland in Pagan Times* (1883), 246, fig. 225, 3.

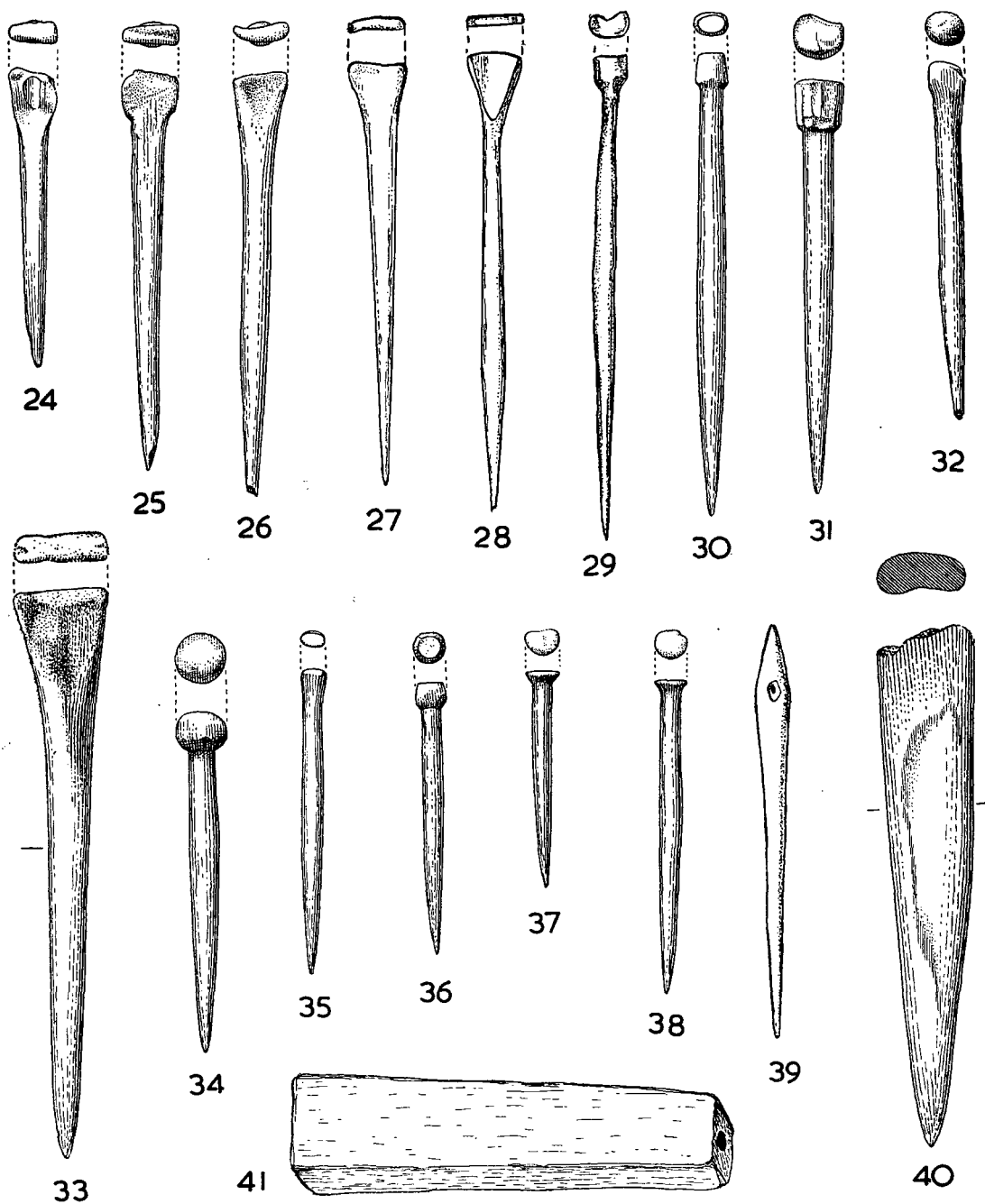


Fig. 14. Bone pins 24-38; Needle 39; Antler Point 40, ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .); Whale bone handle 41. ( $\frac{1}{4}$ .)

*Stone Tools* (fig. 15).

42-45. Many used hammerstones and rubbers were found throughout the occupation level, often laid in crannies of the wall. Broken chips of these tools were recovered from the filling of the inter-mural space. Their use as mauls for rough dressing the boulders used in building is indicated. Many of the stones, as well as the natural rock in the interior, showed signs of tooling. The carefully made hammerstone, no. 45, with shaped finger-holds<sup>1</sup> is one of three found together, of similar heavy stone, which has been identified as foreign to the island, a quartz bearing diorite, for which the nearest source would be Mull or Ardnamurchan.

46. Whetstones worn by use and for the most part fragmentary were also recovered.

47. A thin micaceous slab, grooved on one side only, shows marks of wear at the ends. This was probably used as a sinker.

48. A "tracked" beach pebble appears to have been used as a strike-a-light.

49. Quartz rubber.

Shaped rubbers of pumice, as well as rough material from the beach were found at the dun, as at the nearby Farmhouse and on many other Hebridean sites.<sup>2</sup>

*Whale bone Objects* (fig. 15, 50, 51).

50. A fork-shaped piece of whale bone from the base of the inner wall, broken across at one end, the prongs trimmed at the points, may have been used as a prop.

51. A whale bone netting needle of the size used for making trammel nets.<sup>3</sup>

*Querns* (fig. 16, 52-55 and Pl. XXVIII, 1 and 2).

52. A saddle quern lay among the stone tumble on the northern slope of the knoll on which Dun Cuier was built and had most probably been reused in building. Regularly hollowed from a boulder of local stone, one end of the quern formed a ledge on which the user could sit while working.

53. Two broken upper quern stones were re-used, no 53, as the base of Hearth 3, the other (not illustrated) lay among the wall tumble in the enclosure on the south side of the entrance.

54. Two roughly ovoid rotary quern stones were recovered, lying one on top of the other, both are upper stones and are characteristic of the

<sup>1</sup> A hammerstone with similar characteristics is reported from Port Bradden, *Ulster J.A.*, 5-6 (1942-3), 39.

<sup>2</sup> An interesting example of the late use of pumice is the smooth lump reported found in an alder wood box recovered from a bog in Birsay, Orkney. *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXVI (1951-2), 187.

<sup>3</sup> Netting pins from Dunagoil, *Transactions of Bute Natural History Society* (1925), 56, Pl. 18.

Hebridean series of hand mills. They are made of local stone. The first, no. 54, is more regularly smoothed and shaped, with the upper surface hollowed to allow for the easier use of the handle, for which a vertical hole had been drilled. This is hour-glass in form, as is the larger central feed-hole. The second (not illustrated) has a roughly hollowed trough for the feed, near the hour-glass perforation. This stone is not complete and no hole for the handle can now be traced. The under surfaces of both mills are smoothed by friction and show no sign to suggest the use of a sleeve or rhind, a means of adjustment noted in some querns of this type. Handmill no. 54 has many parallels, notably a closely comparable quern from the galleried dun of Kildonan<sup>1</sup> and an upperstone which had been used to cover a post-hole at Freswick.<sup>2</sup> Rotary querns have also been found at Castlehaven<sup>3</sup> and at two Antrim sites, Port Bradden<sup>4</sup> and Ballintoy,<sup>5</sup> where grains of wheat, rye and barley were identified.

55. The fragment of an upper quern stone of unusual type lay in the blown sand which sealed the occupation, and may have been a part of the fallen wall material. This stone, like those described above, is of the local rock and is decorated with three grooves concentric to the central hole. No parallel for this hand mill has so far been found. It is however worth noting a stone, 11 ins. by 14 ins. and 2 ins. thick from the upper layers at Ballinderry Crannog no. 1.<sup>6</sup> The stone is broken and round a central point five concentric rings have been made with a pecking technique. A flat triangular stone, with a shallow pecked hollow, lay at floor level; the hollow showed no signs of wear. This may have been an uncompleted pivot stone similar to that found at the Farmhouse.<sup>7</sup> See Pl. XXI, view of interior of dun with the stone lying near the wall.

#### *Stone Discs* (fig. 16, 56-58).

Flat stones, mainly local in origin, some obviously sea-worn beach pebbles, had been chipped into rough discs, objects which were not found at the Farmhouse, but which are common to many Dark Age sites.<sup>8</sup>

Mention must also be made of little groups of stones of even weight which occurred in various parts of the occupation level, smooth pebbles, carefully matched, probably for use as "chuckie" stones. Small chips of flint were recovered, one fragment only showed secondary working.

#### *Animal Bones.*

The majority of the bones submitted for identification are from domestic stock and include many from immature animals. Cattle of a shorthorn

<sup>1</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXIII (1938-9), 185, fig. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XLI (1906-7), 68, 78.

<sup>3</sup> *Irish Naturalists' Journal*, v (1934), 109.

<sup>4</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXVII (1952-3), 80, Pl. V, 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71, Pl. XLVI, 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ulster J.A.*, 6 (1943), 39.

<sup>7</sup> *P.R.I.A.*, XLIII (1935-7), 103, fig. 29 A.

<sup>8</sup> *E.g.*, Dunadd, Traprain, Garranes.

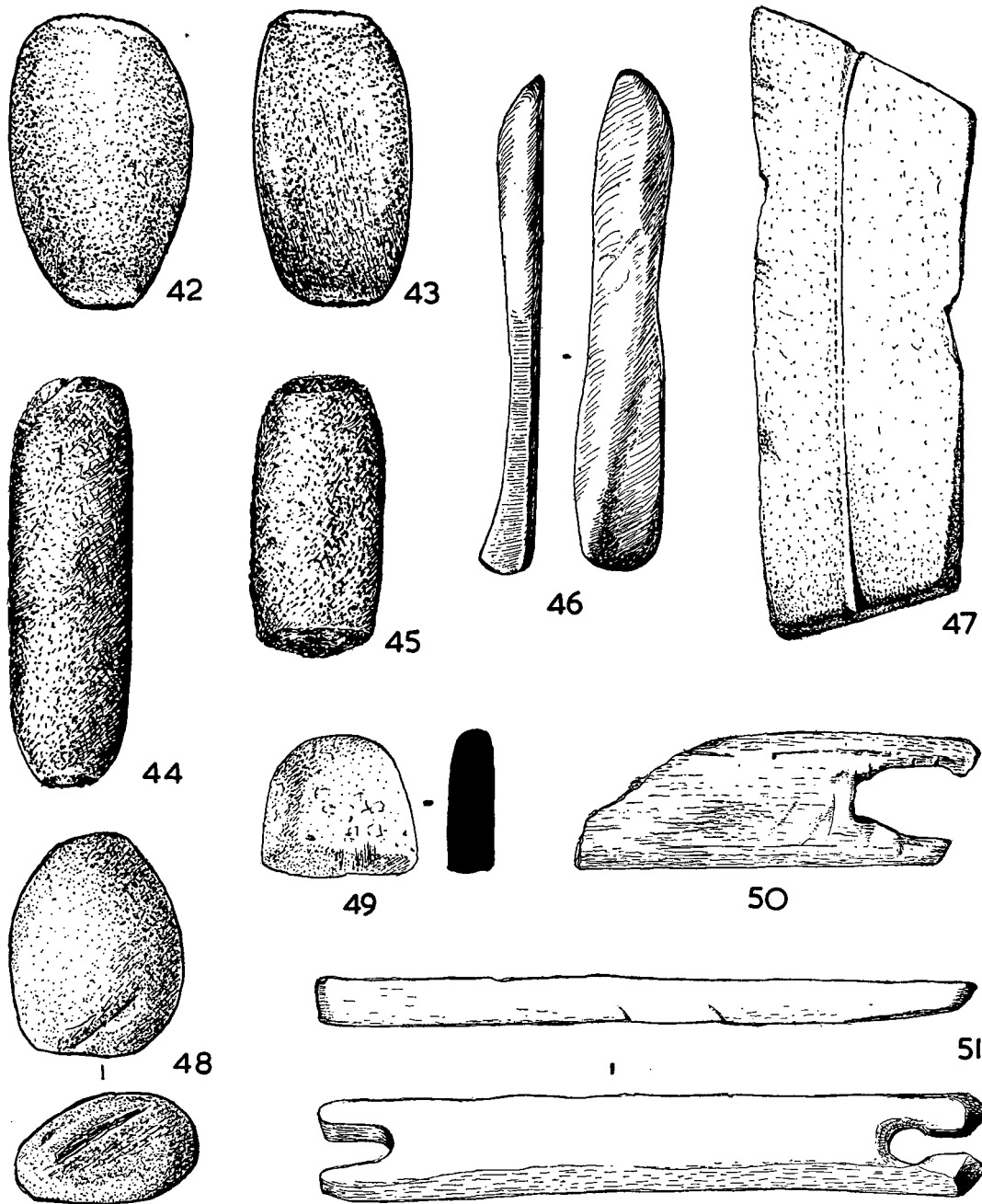


Fig. 15. Hammerstones 42-45; Whetstone 46; Stone Sinker 47; "Tracked" Stone 48; Quartz Rubber 49; Whale bone Prong 50; Whale bone Netting Needle 51. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

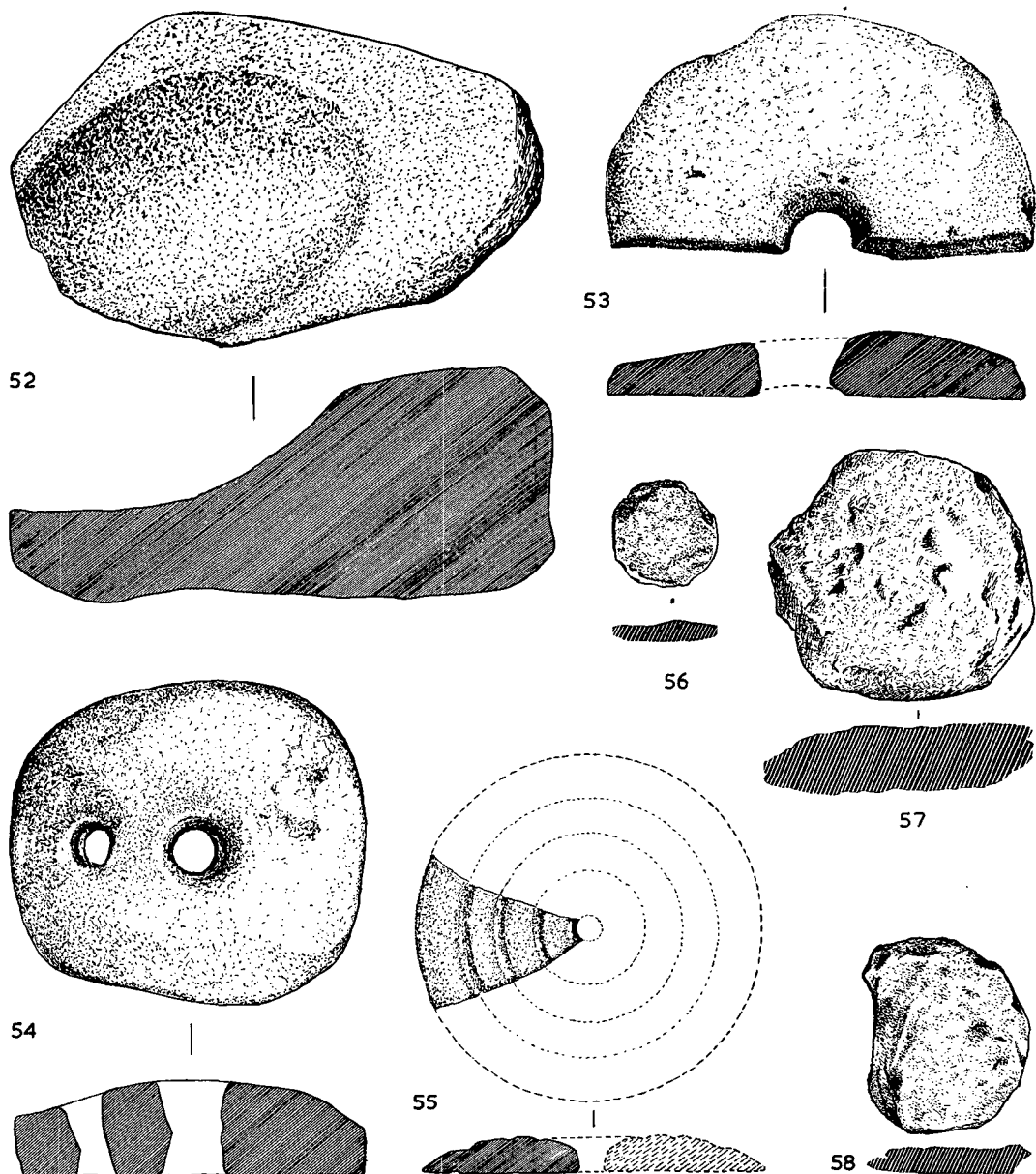


Fig. 16. Querns (‡) and Discs (‡).

type are represented, as well as the slender long bones of sheep, which Dr Fraser compares in size to a Soay specimen. Traces of this "old breed" can be seen among the flocks on the island with grizzled grey-brown faces, short fine wool and the characteristic habit of casting the coat. Formerly the fleece was pulled in the Spring.<sup>1</sup> Scanty remains of pony and pig were found, as well as of grey seal and otter. Whale bone, doubtless obtained from stranded animals, a common raw material in the Hebrides,<sup>2</sup> was used for the netting needle (fig. 15, 51). Besides a large lump of whale bone from the foundations of the main wall, cut and shaped pieces were found in the occupation level, many of them charred. Antlers of red deer, an animal no longer known on the island, were found, both in the natural state, as though stored for use, and cut into strips, ready to be worked. Three of the bone points noted were made from tines and a smoothed and hollowed ferrule or perhaps a partly made handle together with a toggle also of deerhorn were in the occupation level.

Bird bones, mainly shag and cormorant, include whimbrel, whooper swan and merlin, the latter bird also recorded amongst remains from Larriban in Antrim.<sup>3</sup> This bird would hardly be used for food and there is a temptation to suggest that they may have been trained for hawking.

Besides shell refuse of oyster, scallop, mussel, limpet, cockle and whelk, the remains of fish, wrasse, black bream, cod, ling and saithe, argue the use of boat and net or line.

<sup>1</sup> While probably mainly concerned with sheep breeding, the absence of a byre building is not particularly significant. Cattle remain outside during most of the winter months in the Hebrides at the present day and shelters of a more or less temporary nature would suffice.

<sup>2</sup> *P.P.S.*, xiv (1948), 78.

<sup>3</sup> *Ant. J.*, xvi (1936), 179.

## APPENDIX I

## REPORT ON IMPRESSION OF TEXTILE ON IRON.

By AUDREY HENSHALL, M.A., F.S.A.Scot.

Fragments of textile have been preserved on a small piece of iron through impregnation with the metal oxide. The material is probably wool which is apparently unfelted, and the comparatively coarse staple can easily be seen. Both are plain weave.

(a) (To the right on Pl. XXXVII, 1.) The probable warp is well spun Z, about 18 threads per inch. The probable weft is lightly spun S, about 47 threads per inch. The cloth is really a rep, with the warp practically hidden by the closely beaten weft.

(b) Is similar to the former cloth, but the weft is so very lightly spun as to appear untwisted in places, and is far more widely spaced. There are about 18 warp ends per inch, but it is not possible to give an accurate count of the weft.

## APPENDIX II.

## REPORT ON IRON SLAGS, ETC.

By L. BIEK,  
Ancient Monuments Laboratory.*Slags*

Three groups of specimens were submitted. These were visually examined with the assistance of the Morgan Crucible Company.

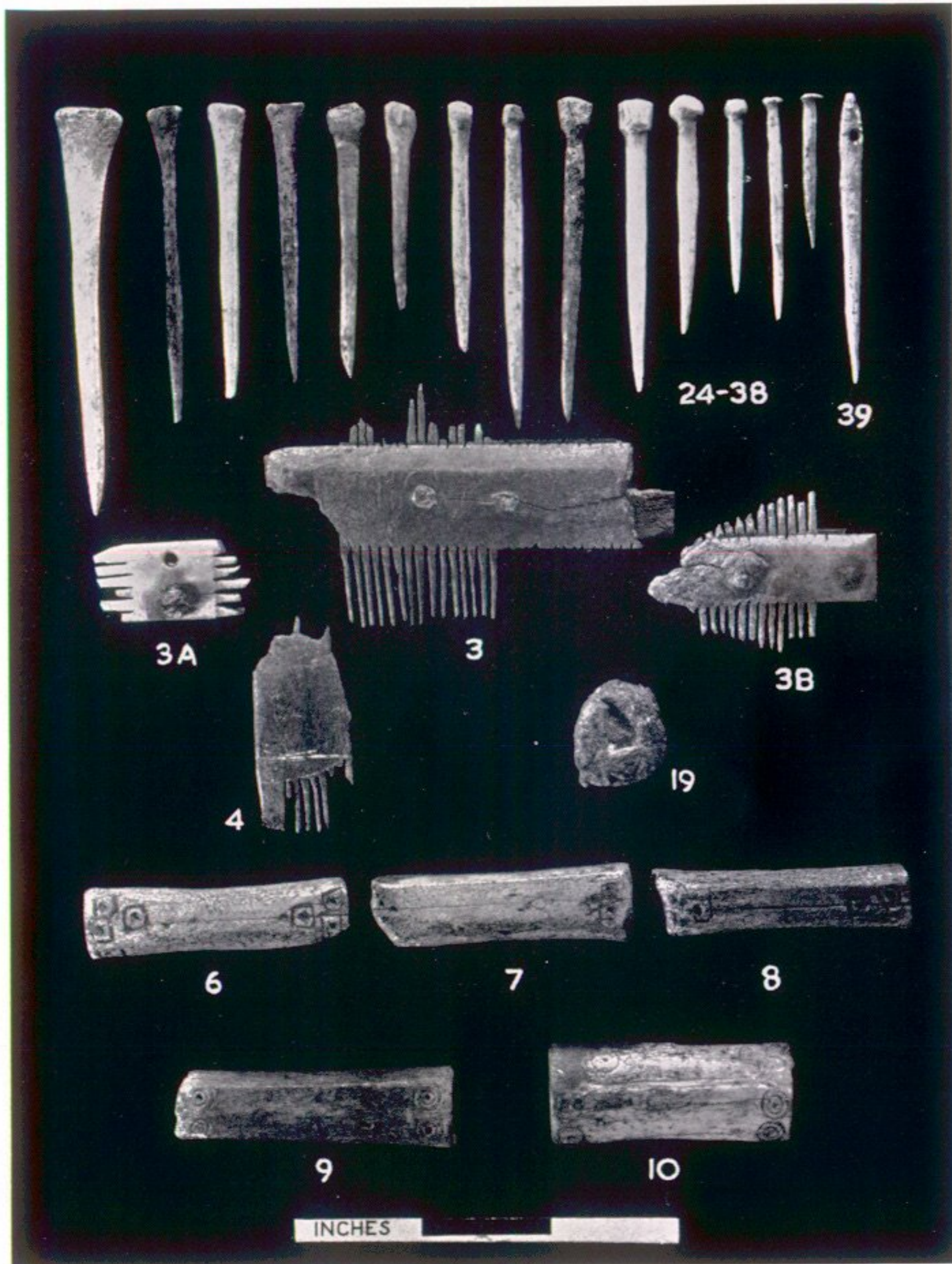
Group 1 (from the Hearth Level) which comprises the bulk of the samples, contains a large proportion of material which has been less completely fused than the specimens from both Group 2 (from the Inner Entrance) which occupies an intermediate position in this respect, and Group 3 (from Low Level of occupation) which is most completely fused. All specimens represent waste from an iron smelting process.

In Group 1, three objects were found which, though showing unmistakable signs of partial fusion and slagging, were undoubtedly nails and segments of iron, as is shown by X-ray examination.

*Iron Fragments*

1. The X-ray indicates that at least the larger fragments may represent an object, possibly a twisted (knife?) blade.
2. The X-ray shows this to be a knife blade.



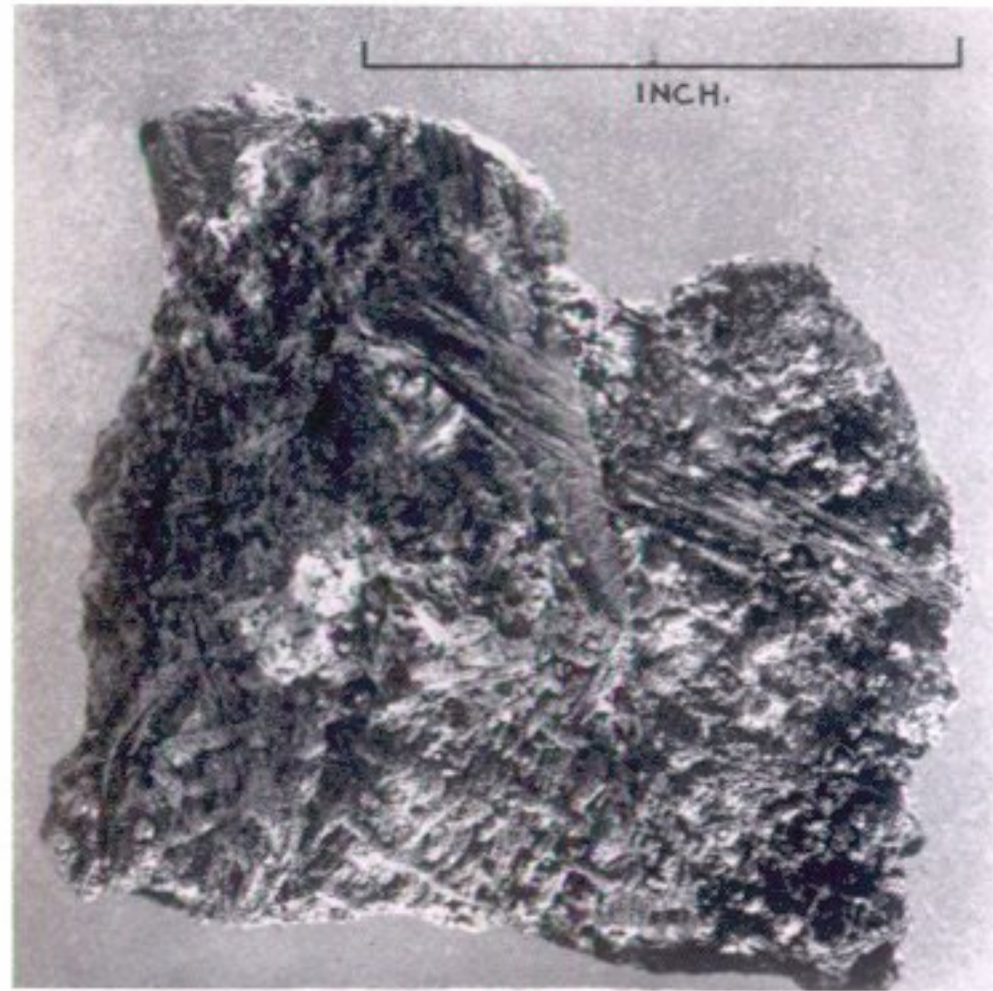


Pins, etc.

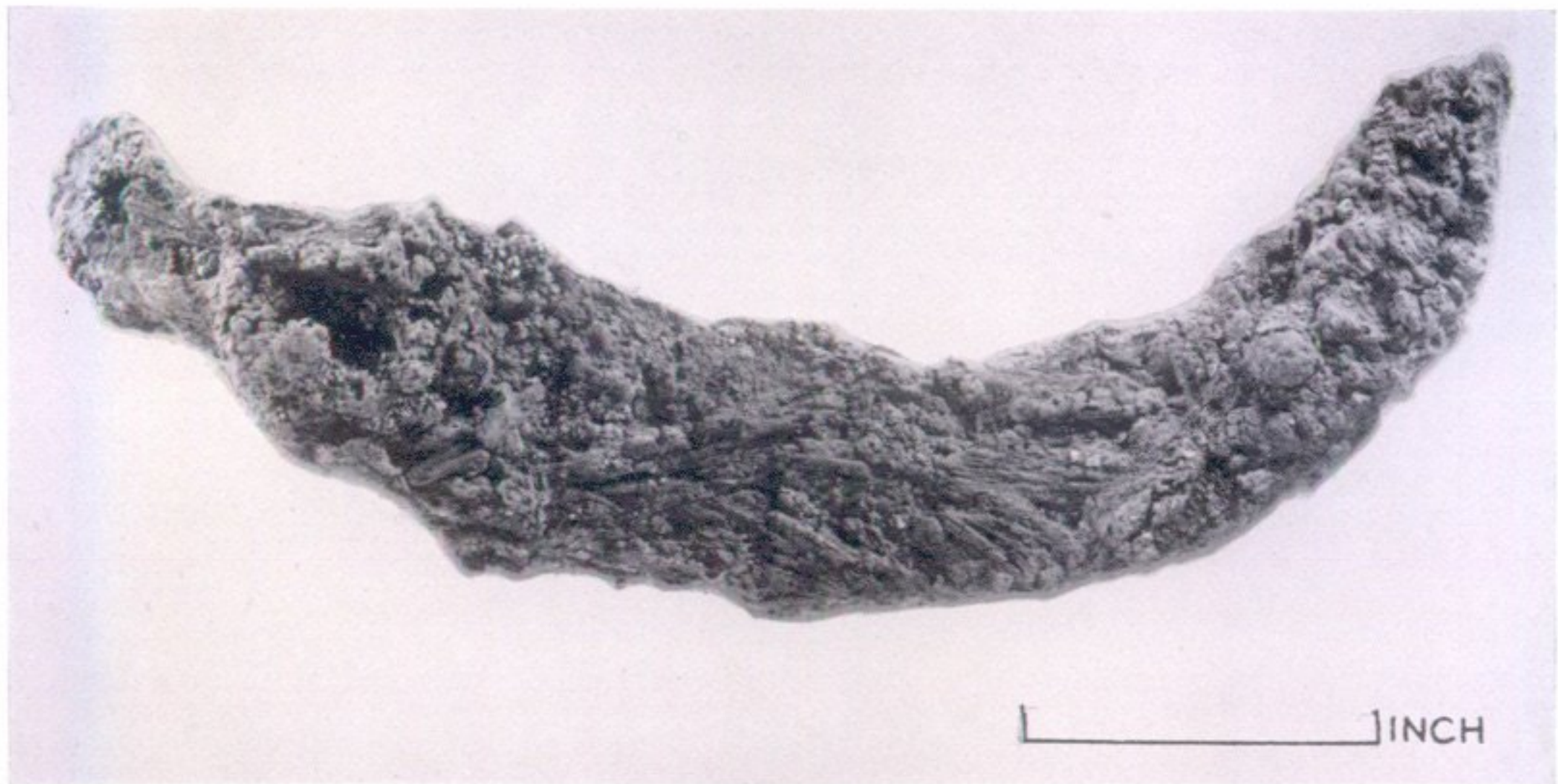
Pins, Combs, Mould and Gaming-pieces.

ALISON YOUNG.



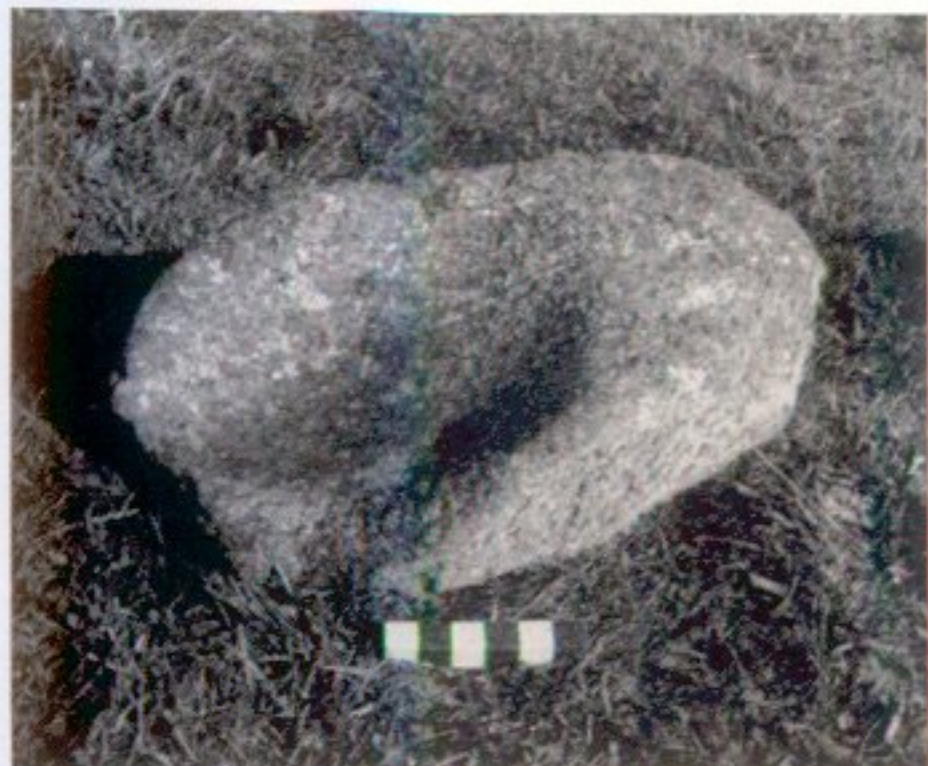


1. Imprint of Textile



2. Sickle.





1. Saddle quern.



2. Rotary.



3. Dun Scurrival.



4. Dun Bahn.

ALISON YOUNG.





1. Dun Cuier, General View.



2. Inside Dun, west end.





Inside Dun east end.



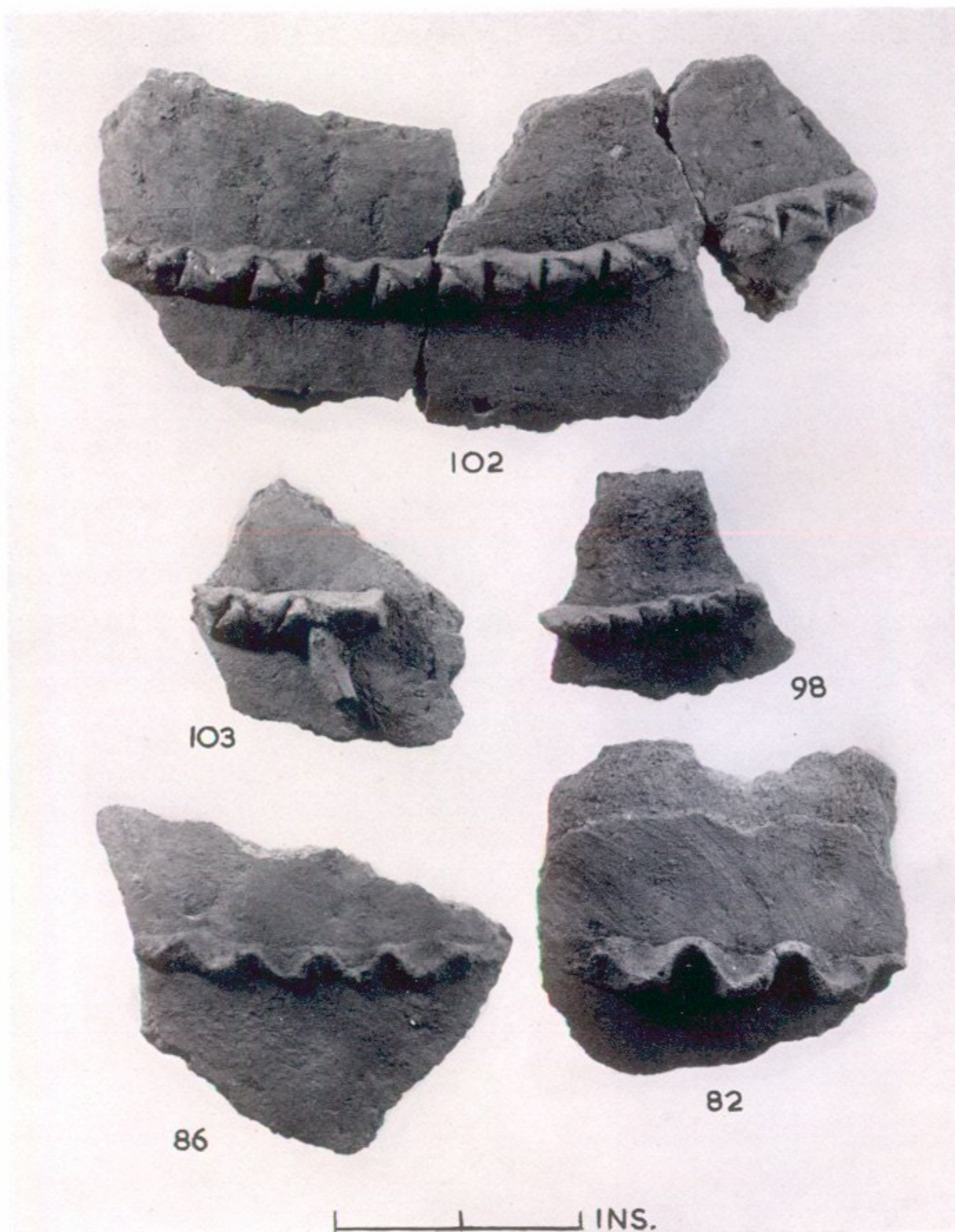


1. Recent walling.



2. Entrance, showing fallen lintel cover.

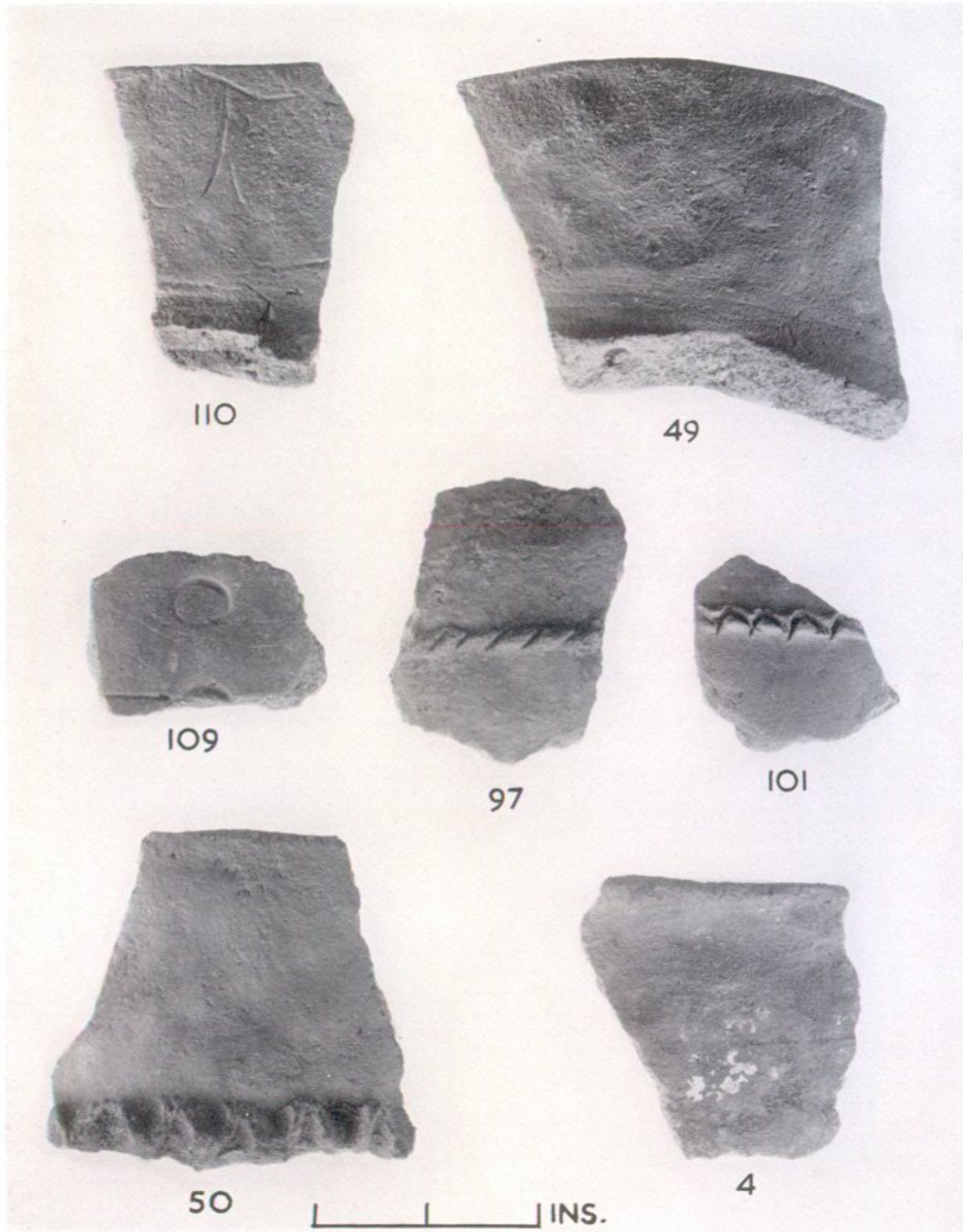




Decorated Pottery.

ALISON YOUNG.

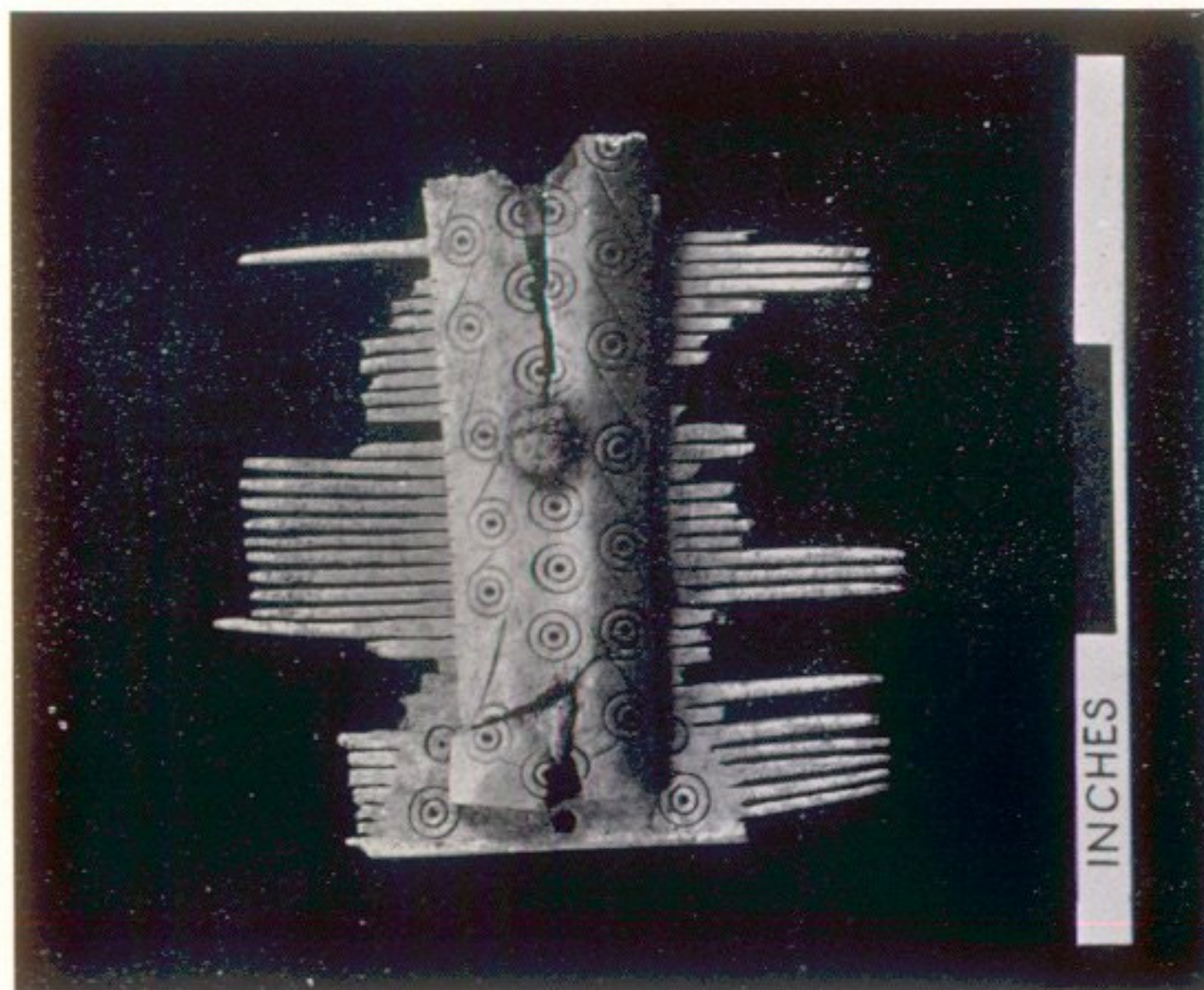




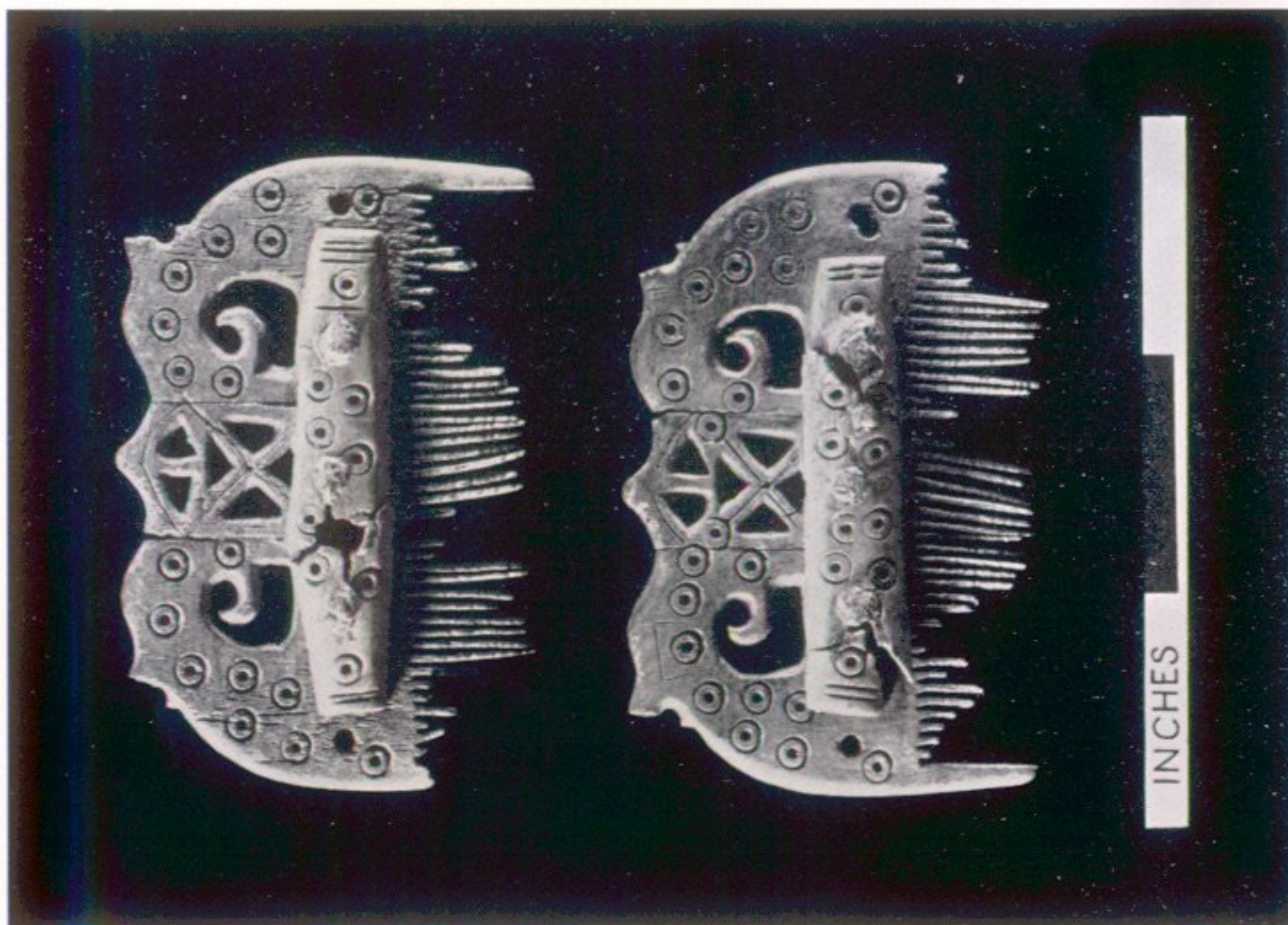
Decorated Pottery.

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2. Combs.



1. Combs.

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