

Unphased features

These were located in trenches I and II and comprised a range of shallow pits and scoops, short lengths of shallow gullies and a number of postholes. Several features in trench II (eg contexts 20 and 23) were recorded as containing much pottery, which cannot now be isolated from the mass of unstratified material. However, an iron slide key from context 23 (fig 8, no 6), a copper alloy ring with glass paste setting from context 22 (fig 8, no 2) and a holed but otherwise complete mortarium above context 13 (fig 7, no 51), suggest that some of these features were of Roman date.

As far as the curving gully (context 7) is concerned, the sections corroborate Tom Walls' excavation notes, which suggest that it started as a shallow, narrow feature to the north-east of trench IIA, before becoming wider (*c* 1.25m) and deeper (*c* 0.5m) as it curved slightly downhill into trench I. Here it rapidly shallowed out and disappeared. Its fill contained substantial quantities of Roman pottery, building material and iron nails, some of which can be identified, though they are not considered here.

The finds from The Looe

With the exception of the animal bones, virtually all the finds from the site survive, although the bulk of the material is unstratified. Finds comprise a considerable amount of pottery and fired clay, together with chalk objects, struck flint, fragments of quern stones, bone and metal objects, human and some animal bone and ceramic building material. In addition, small samples of charcoal and snail shells were retained from the storage pits, as were the cremated human and animal bone from the two urned burials over pit 2. The neonatal human bones from pit 2 (layer 12) were presented to the Royal College of Surgeons by the excavator shortly after their discovery and identification; the bulk of the animal bone was discarded following identification by Judith King at the British Museum (Natural History) (Tom Walls, pers comm).

Unless of intrinsic interest, only the stratified finds are dealt with here.

THE POTTERY

In figures 5–7 the relevant pit layer numbers are shown in microprint.

Tom Walls' excavations produced a surviving total of 1346 sherds weighing 23.55kg, together with four complete or reconstructed vessels weighing a further 4.69kg. However, a large proportion of this material, comprising over 15kg of predominantly Roman forms and fabrics from trenches I and II cannot be related to individual contexts with any degree of confidence, and must therefore be regarded as unstratified. The stratified material is confined to:

- 1 a small group of early pre-Roman Iron Age pottery from the 'working hollow' (context 26) in trench III (fig 4);
- 2 larger groups of late pre-Roman Iron Age/Roman Iron Age material from pits 1 and 3 (contexts 19 and 24) in trench II, and pit 2 (context 32), in trench IIA (table 2; figs 5–7);
- 3 two complete Roman vessels containing burnt bone inserted into the top of backfilled pit 2 and context 35 (fig 11).

This report is divided into three sections: early pre-Roman Iron Age (EPRIA); late pre-Roman Iron Age/Roman Iron Age (LPRIA/RIA), and unstratified Roman. The two complete vessels are treated separately below (the human and animal cremation).

Up to seventeen different fabrics were identified by eye amongst the stratified material, although no microscopic or thin-sectioning work has been carried out to confirm or deny their validity. Consequently, for the purposes of this report, the pottery has been divided into four generic fabric groupings, defined on the basis of the principal tempering agents: FLIN: crushed burnt flint; SHEL: fossil shell; GROG: 'grog'/ironstone; SAND: quartz/sand.

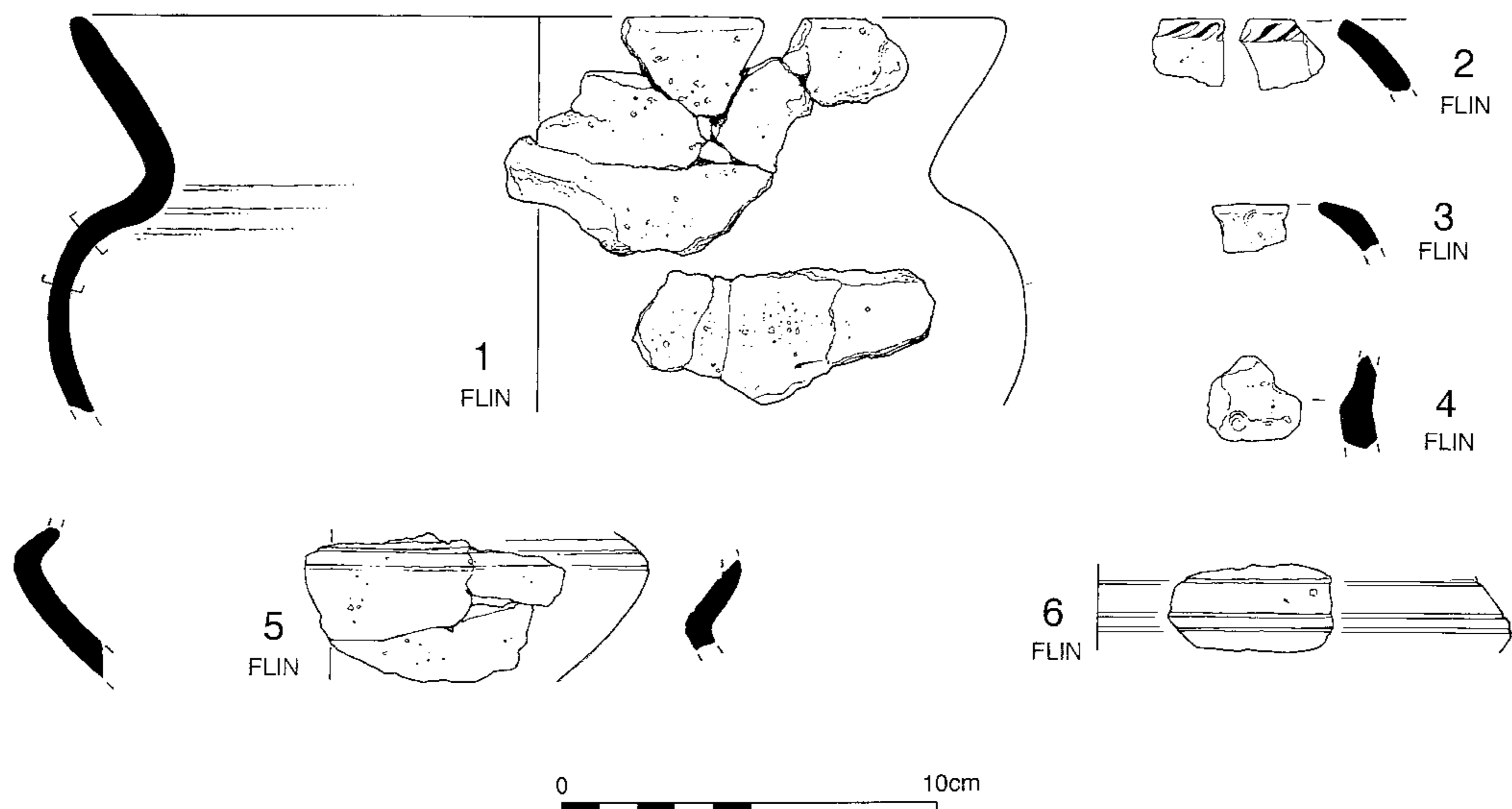


Fig 4 The Looe: early pre-Roman Iron Age pottery from the 'working hollow' in trench III

Occasionally it has been possible to be more specific and the following common name codes, based on those used in London (Davies *et al* 1994, 233), have been ascribed: SUG: East Sussex Grog-Tempered ware; FMIC: Fine Micaceous; AHSU: Alice Holt, Surrey (early Roman); AHFA: Alice Holt, Farnham (later Roman); BB2: Black-burnished ware (Kent and Essex sources); SWSG: South Gaulish samian (now SAMLG); SAM: Samian ware; VRW: Verulamium-region white ware; OXID: Oxidized wares.

There is a reasonably clear chronological progression in the use of the generic fillers. The FLIN fabric group is wholly early, and confined to the material from the 'working hollow', context 26 (and residual sherds within pits 1–3) and the SAND fabric group mainly late, and here at least referable to the LPRIA/RIA period. The SHEL and GROG fabric groups seem to occupy an intermediate position in The Looe sequence, with the inception of the grogged fabrics probably attributable to the mid–late 1st century BC (eg Thompson 1982), though they are generally considered a later introduction in west Kent (eg Philp *et al* 1991, 193–4). Moreover, both shell and 'grog'-loaded fabric types can be shown to continue in use well beyond the Roman conquest; Pollard (1988, 64) for instance brackets their demise in west Kent to within the period *c* AD75–120.

It is possible that more detailed work on larger assemblages than that available here will eventually sub-divide further, say, the grogged fabrics, although — apart from the recognition of a distinctive and important small group of handmade decorated vessels of East Sussex Grog-tempered ware (SUG) (Green 1980a) — this is not attempted here. It has, however been possible on occasion to identify some of the Roman sandy fabrics to source, eg those from the Alice Holt area (AHSU); likewise the few sherds of South Gaulish samian (SWSG) from pit 3. It is also possible that some of the sherds subsumed into the SHEL category originated in north Kent, and fall within the fabric grouping elsewhere termed 'North Kent Shelly ware' (NKSW); there are several sherds of large 'Patch Grove' jars with characteristic 'bird-bone'-type impressions at the shoulder amongst the unstratified material. These sources notwithstanding, it seems at present likely that much of the pottery found on the site is of local manufacture, for suitable clays (with fossil shell) in the form of the Woolwich Beds exist within a kilometre or so of the site. The Clay-with-Flints deposits on the chalk to the south provide a second possible clay source.

Early pre-Roman Iron Age

Sixty FLIN sherds were recovered from the fill of the 'working hollow', context 26, in trench III, together with a further 44 small abraded sherds from pits 1–3 — the latter separated out on the basis of fabric and, where present, decoration.

Vessel forms comprise both jars and bowls (fig 4). Jars are of predominantly weak-shouldered type with fingertip and fingernail decoration at or just below the shoulder. One vessel from the 'working hollow', represented by a number of conjoining sherds, comprises a large, flaring-mouthed, round-shouldered undecorated jar in a thin-walled leathery fabric (fig 4, no 1); jars of similar form have been recovered locally from Ashtead ('Inward Shaw') and Nonsuch Park (Lowther 1946–7b, E11, G3, 141, 143). Part of another from the same context, represented by two small sherds, has fingernail slashing at the rim (fig 4, no 2). Bowls include two well-finished tripartite examples with tooled horizontal lines at their shoulders from the 'working hollow' (fig 4, nos 5–6); a sherd of another plain vessel of similar form had been incorporated within the fill of pit 3 (fig 7, no 46).

Although small in quantity, in terms of its affinities and dating this material falls squarely within Cunliffe's 'Park Brow — Caesar's Camp' and 'Darmsden — Linton' ceramic groupings (1991, 69–72, 561, 565), now re-dated to the 8th–5th centuries BC. Comparable material has been found on a number of sites within the county and beyond (eg Hastings 1965; Greenwood 1997, 154–6).

Late pre-Roman Iron Age/Roman Iron Age

A total of 562 sherds (including one completely reconstructed vessel) were recovered from pits 1–3 (table 2, M3), although much of the material from pits 2 and 3 came from the upper fills.

Vessel forms comprise various jars of round-shouldered, necked/cordoned and bead-rimmed type in SHEL, GROG and SAND fabrics from pits 1 and 2, together with a group of distinctive round-shouldered jars of 'East Sussex Grog-tempered ware' (SUG) decorated with 'standing arcs' or 'eyebrows' from pit 1 (fig 5, nos 7–13). Necked and bead-rim jar forms are also present in pit 3 alongside sherds of 'romanized' forms including flagons, dishes/lids and samian Drag 27 cups (SWSG) (eg fig 7, no 39). Decoration embraces surface burnishing, shallow-tooling, slip and the occasional use of a dark purple/black pitch-based 'paint' (eg fig 6, no 25).

The dating and affinities of this assemblage can be briefly rehearsed, though its small size obviates the need for extended treatment here. For detailed parallels the reader is referred to the larger and more recently excavated contemporary assemblages awaiting full publication from sites such as Atwood School (Batchelor 1990), Beddington Sewage Works (Howell in prep), Farleigh Court, Warlingham (Hayman 1996), Franks' Sandpit, Betchworth (Williams 1996–7 and pers comm) and Brooklands Site II, Weybridge (Phil Jones, pers comm). However, generally comparable groups of material have already been published from, for example, Purberry Shot, Ewell (Lowther 1946–7a, 25–31), the Felday enclosure, Holmbury (Field 1989, 114 & fig 4) and the pre-villa levels at Sandilands Road, Walton-on-the-Hill (Lowther 1949, figs 5–6).

The presence of high-shouldered bead-rimmed and necked/cordoned jars of various forms has already been noted; these are typical LPRIA products whose origins and dating in the London area have been discussed most recently by Tyers (1996). Both types appear to have been produced in the 'Atrebat' areas to the south and west of the capital (Paul Tyers, pers comm). Of more immediate interest is the presence of a group of distinctively decorated grogged and probably hand-made vessels from pit 1 which can be identified as 'East Sussex Grog-tempered ware' (SUG) (fig 5, nos 7–13; Green 1980a). These occur alongside the local SHEL and SAND bead-rim jars, and are in the main decorated with shallow-tooled 'standing arcs' or 'eyebrows', supplemented in one instance with combing on the lower body (fig 7, no 9). The occasional vessel has been noted in Surrey assemblages

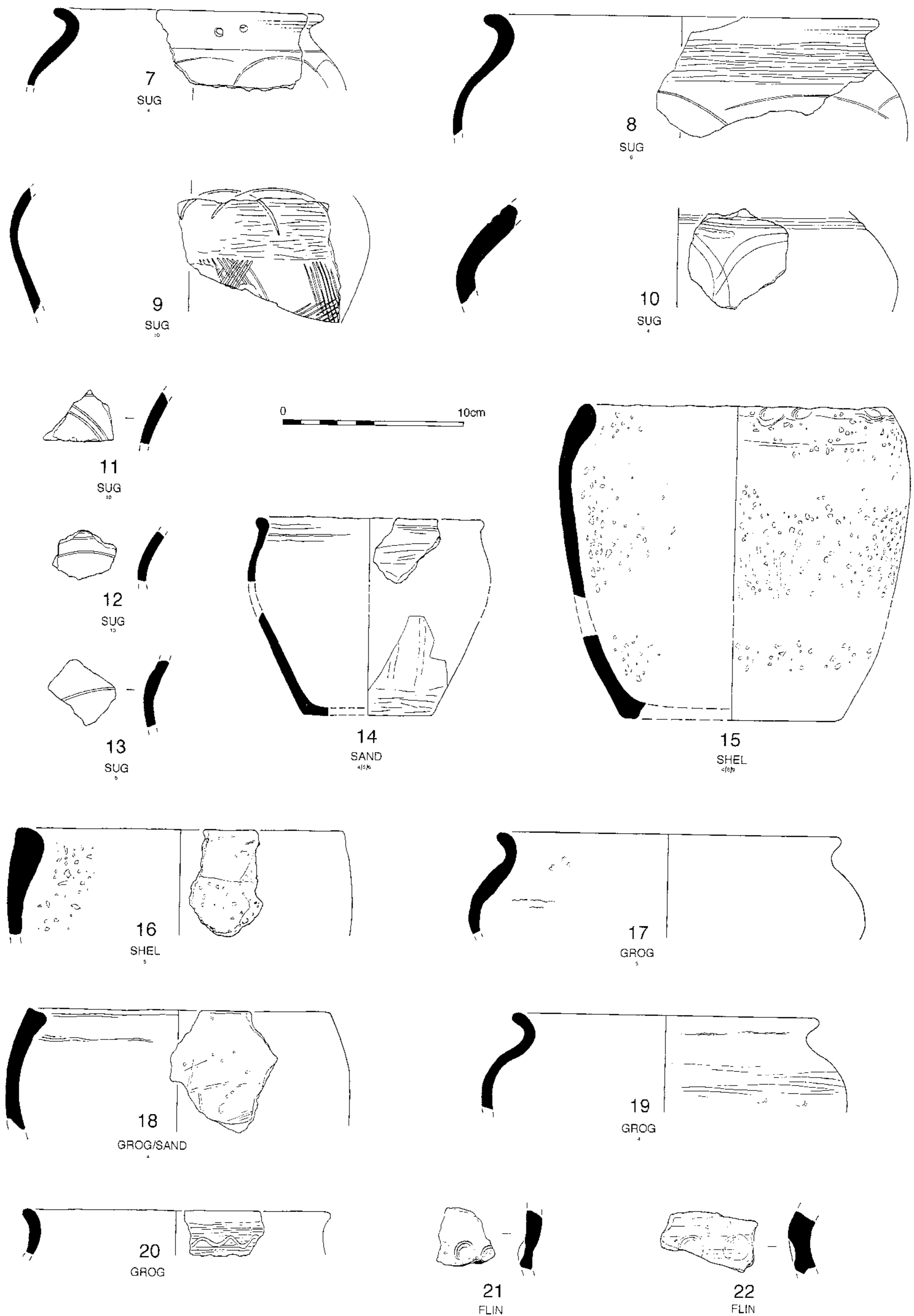


Fig 5 The Looe: late pre-Roman Iron Age/Roman Iron Age pottery from pit 1

previously, as at Hawk's Hill, Leatherhead (eg Hastings 1965, 29–30, fig 13 no 56, but there described as 'grey sandy ware with smoothed surface') and Brooklands Site II (Phil Jones, pers comm). There are also several SUG vessels from mid–late 1st century AD contexts in north Southwark and Londinium, including a complete vessel from Fetter Lane

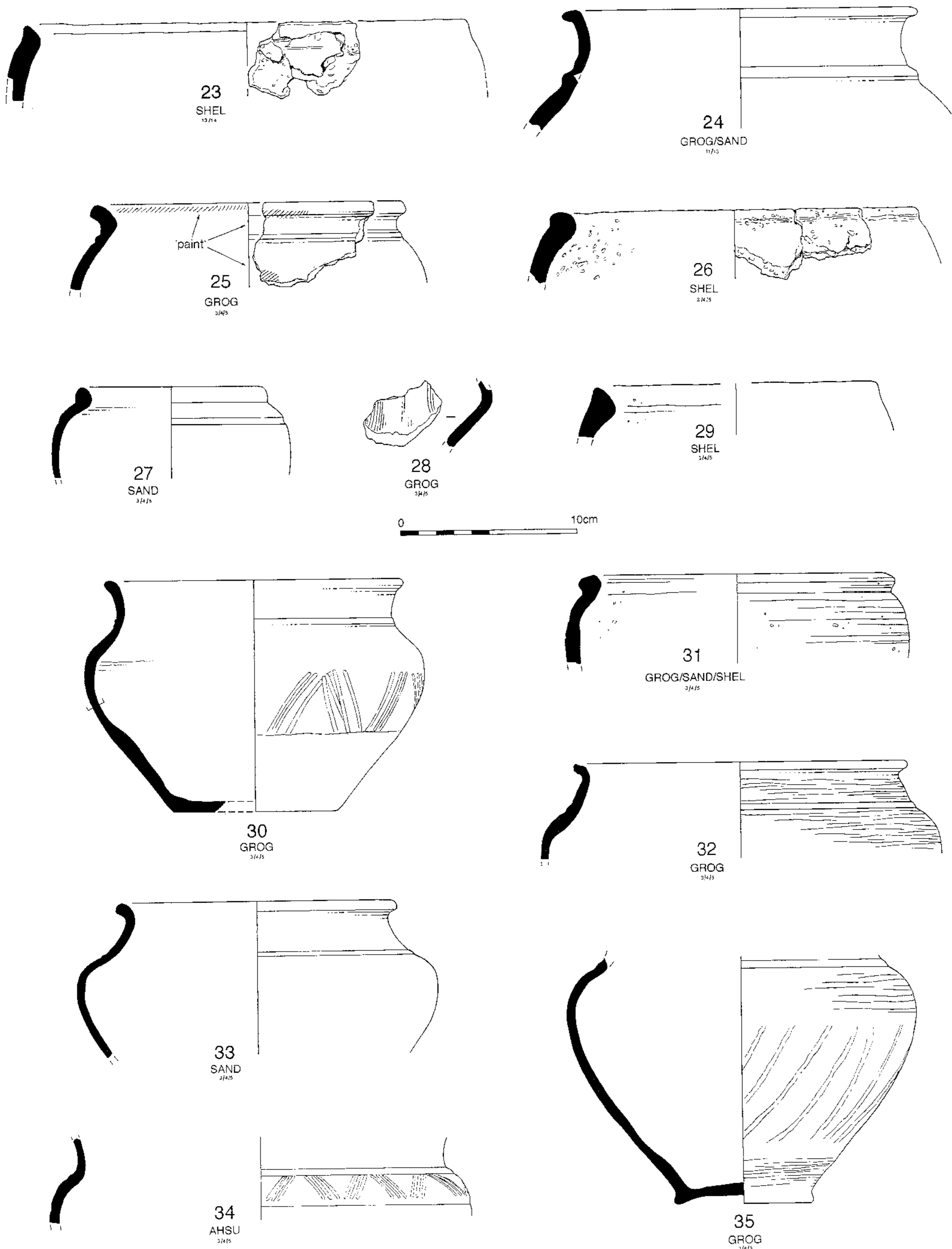


Fig 6 The Looe: late pre-Roman Iron Age/Roman Iron Age pottery from pit 2

to the west of the city (Davies *et al* 1994, 117 & fig 101 nos 671–2; Tyers 1996, 141). The SUG group from The Looe is the largest and most coherent recovered within the county so far although its precise dating remains characteristically elusive (see below). Green

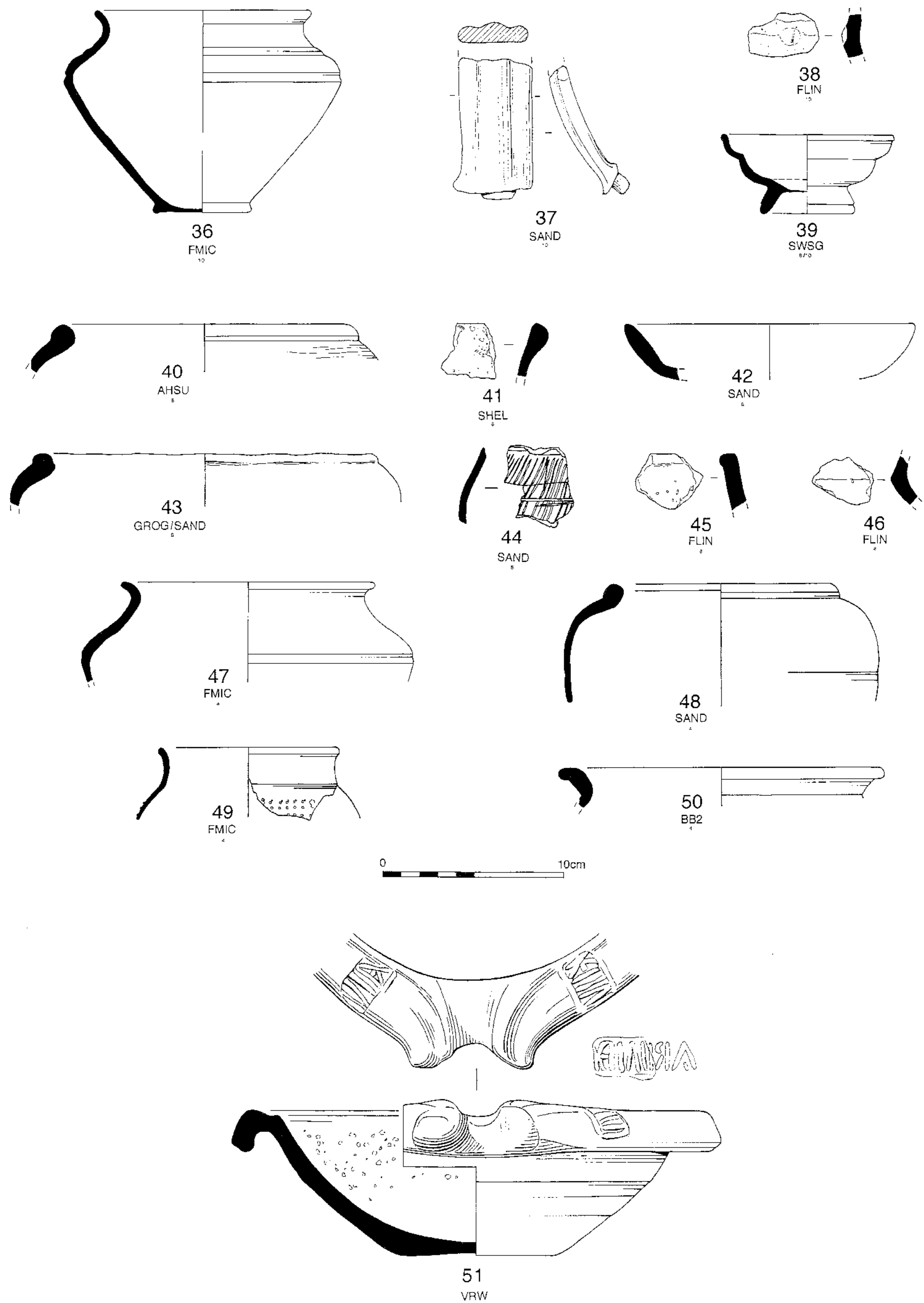


Fig 7 The Looe: late pre-Roman Iron Age/Roman Iron Age pottery from pit 3 and the complete stamped mortarium from trench I

(1980a, 69–72) suggests a broad date range of 1st century BC–AD70 in Sussex (see also below).

In addition to the eyebrow-decorated **SUG** vessels, several **GROG** sherds have traces of purple/black 'paint' surviving on their rims and shoulders (eg fig 6, no 25). This is a feature noted on certain **SUG** vessels too (Green 1980a), though it also occurs on the rims of some of the larger storage jars from north Kent. Analysis of the latter has suggested that the substance is a pitch derived from the bark of silver birch, and that it was used as a sealant, possibly to secure jars of salt for their journey from the Kent salterns (eg Green 1980b, 65; Davies *et al* 1994, 102). Locally, 'paint' was noted on the shoulder of a vessel recovered from the pre-villa levels at Walton-on-the-Hill (Lowther 1949, 73, 78) for which the Sussex parallels were cited.

We need waste little time in attempting any detailed phasing of the infilling of the three pits, beyond noting the presence of fully romanized forms and fabrics in pit 3, and their corresponding absence from pit 1 and from the lower fills of pit 2. These forms included sherds of two South Gaulish Drag 27 cups dated Neronian/Early Flavian and 1st century respectively (Joanna Bird, pers comm), **AHSU** bead-rim jars (fig 7, no 40), a **SAND** butt-beaker (fig 7, no 44) and several sherds of a **SAND** dish based on Gallo-Belgic forms (fig 7, no 42). The white-slipped 'Hofheim'-type flagon handle from pit 3 (fig 7, no 37) is of a fabric not yet recognized in Londinium, though the small complete fine greyware **SAND** jar (fig 7, no 36) would there be recorded as Fine Micaceous (**FMIC**) (Louise Rayner, pers comm), an unsourced fabric type common in pre-Boudiccan to Trajanic deposits (Davies *et al* 1994, 154–61). The occurrence of several **SUG** sherds in Trajanic deposits at 25–6 Lime Street, east of the forum in Londinium (Davies *et al* 1994, 117), is unlikely to be particularly relevant to the dating of The Looe pit 1 group; more telling is the absence of **MPRIA** saucepan pots and 'Wealden' footring jars on the one hand, and of fully Roman wares on the other. The presence of a good percentage of **SHEL** material, including a substantial portion of the barrel-shaped jar with internally expanded rim (fig 5, no 12), is a further likely indicator of an 'early' date, though as noted above, **SHEL** vessels continued to be made and used well after the Roman conquest. However, such differences notwithstanding, it seems at present safer to suggest that all three pits were out of use by or soon after the middle of the 1st century AD, with pit 3 probably the latest of the trio to be backfilled.

The local continuance of a grog-tempered potting tradition is demonstrated by the presence of a wheel-finished necked jar containing the human cremation inserted into the top of pit 2 (fig 11, no 1), and by the regular recovery of grogged wares from Roman contexts in Ewell, for example at the King William IV site (Orton 1997 and pers comm).

Unstratified Roman

Over 700 sherds and one complete mortarium with an overall weight in excess of 15kg were recovered from trenches I and II. Excepting a few **EPRIA** and **MPRIA** flint/sand-loaded sherds, this material comprises for the most part fully Roman forms and fabrics, the latter dominated by sandy grey wares of likely Alice Holt origin. There are few imports: some sherds of samian (one decorated) and colour-coated wares, together with two or three large sherds of amphorae. Forms mostly comprise jars and dishes, including a number of 'Atrebatian'/'Surrey bowls' (Lyne & Jefferies 1979, class 5, 30–1). Flagons are rare as are mortaria, though a holed but otherwise complete example stamped **ARENTVS** retrograde either side of the pouring lip was recovered from trench I (fig 7, no 51).

The Roman pottery recovered from the site comprises a purely utilitarian assemblage dominated by jars and bowls, and as such can best be compared with that recently published from the King William IV site in Ewell to the north (Orton 1997, 114). In any case, it seems more than likely that much of The Looe pottery arrived at the site via the Ewell settlement.

Mortarium

The complete stamped mortarium of Verulamium-region whiteware (VRW) was recovered from a depth of 22 inches (*c.* 56cm) above a shallow pit, context 13, in trench I (fig 7, no 51). Kay Hartley provided the following report on the stamps in 1976:

These are incomplete impressions of stamps which, when complete, are likely to read ARIINT.X retrograde for some such name as Arent(us) or Arent(ius), with X as a space filler. Stamps from the same die have been noted from Baldock (3); Braughing; Brockley Hill (8); Great Chesterford; Highgate Wood; Holme Chase, Bucks; London (6); Northchurch, Herts; Radlett; Richborough; and Verulamium (13) (Frere 1972, 379, no 41).

Stamped wasters from the kiln-site at Brockley Hill are adequate evidence for manufacture there (Castle 1973, 82, fig 6, MS1–4).

There is no independent dating evidence for this potter, but the rims used can be matched in the work of an illiterate potter whose stamps were found in pit 6 in Insula V at Verulamium (Corder 1941, 279, fig 3, A–H). A date in the period AD110–145 is likely for Arentus' work.

METAL FINDS

Copper alloy (fig 8, nos 1–5)

- 1 'Shoe-sole' brooch 39mm in length, with pin and hinge mechanism missing, and a broken circular perforation at the heel which, when complete, would have facilitated the attachment of a chain. Overlying pit 3, context 24, in trench II.

Brooches of 'shoe-sole' form (Hull forthcoming, type 275) are commonly found on the Continent in the Gallo-Belgic areas, and particularly women's graves (Bohme 1972; Rex Hull, pers comm). The type derives its name from the fact that hobnails are so frequently represented that one is obviously supposed to be looking at the underside of a shoe.

A number of such brooches are now known from Britain, particularly in the northern military areas (eg Allason-Jones & Miket 1984, 112; Hattatt 1989, 217), with others from London (eg Murdoch 1991, 141 & pl 14). Another with traces of red enamel has recently been reported from Addington (Williams 1999, 178, fig 4 no 28). No fewer than eight are recorded from Nor'nour in the Scilly Isles and indeed the two closest parallels to The Looe brooch are from here, having similarly broad welts (Hull 1967, nos 219 and 221). The larger example, no 221 (Hull forthcoming, no 6192), has an infill of vermilion enamel in the recessed area between the welts, and the smaller, no 219 (Hull forthcoming, no 6242), red. There can be little doubt that The Looe example was originally so adorned, though no trace of enamel now survives.

Hull pointed out (pers comm) that dating for the type 'is obviously later than the Flavian advance into north Britain', and as most of the Nor'nour brooches date to the 2nd century it is likely that the present piece does too. The meanings that such brooches held for their wearers remain unknowable, although it is

plausible to suggest that a link with travel might be indicated, as shoes for the final journey of the deceased are often deposited in graves (Johns 1996, 177–8). The Looe brooch is number 9980 in Hull (forthcoming).

- 2 Incomplete finger-ring with expanded octagonal bezel and decorative mouldings adjacent. The bezel houses a dark green glass paste setting. Trench II, feature 22.
Similar decorative mouldings occur on a ring with a blue glass setting from Gadebridge Park (Neal 1974, 136), which is there noted to be 'a 2nd century type'. However, Henig (1974, 50–1) regards such trinket rings with elaborate shoulders as typical of the 3rd century.
- 3 Incomplete bracelet or armband of D-shaped section, in two pieces, with one decorated terminal surviving. Unstratified, but probably from trench II.
Such armbands are usually dated to the late 3rd and 4th centuries (eg Crummy 1983, 37–45). The arrangement of transverse grooves at the terminal of The Looe piece can be matched on other examples.
- 4 Simple wire armband of circular section. Adjacent to context 17 in trench II.
- 5 One half of a pair of plain tweezers. Adjacent to pit 1 in trench II.

Coins

In all, seven coins were recovered from the topsoil on the site, although only four could be positively identified, as follows:

Gallienus. Sole reign AD260–8. Æ Antoninianus. *Obv* GALLIENVS AVG, radiate head r. *Rev* SOLI CONS.AVG, Pegasus flying r. Trench I.

Quintillus. AD270. Æ Antoninianus. *Rev* MARTI PACIF, Mars advancing l. holding olive branch.

Valens. AD364–78. Æ 3. *Obv* D.N.VALENS P.F.AVG. Diademed bust r. *Rev* SECVRITAS REIPVBLICAE, Victory. Trench III.

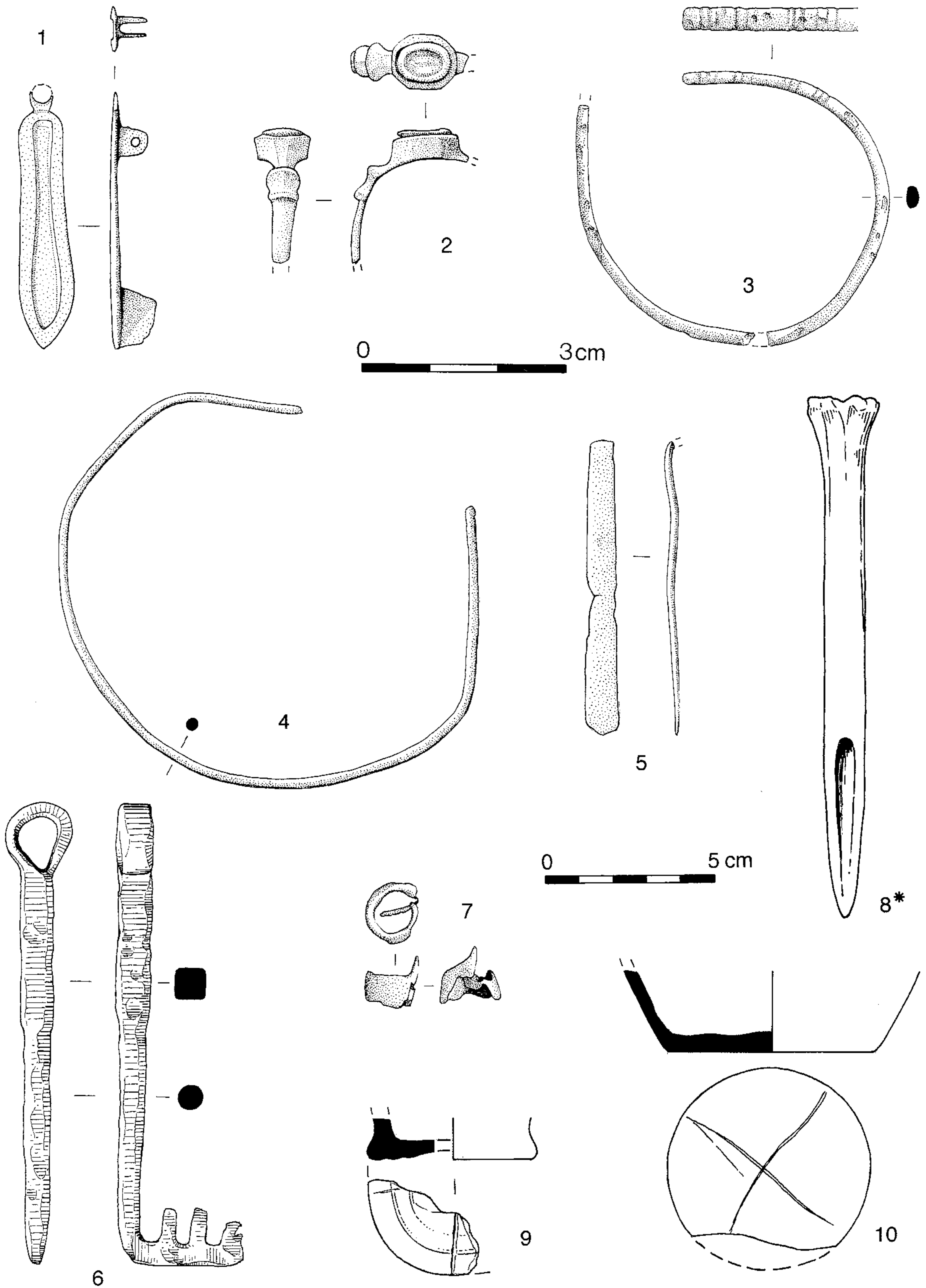


Fig 8 The Looe: small finds of copper alloy, iron, bone and pottery