

East Midlands Scored Ware

by Sheila M. Elsdon

Evidence now suggests that the core area for the development of East Midlands Scored Ware may have been the upper Nene Valley in the late fourth and third centuries B.C. rather than the more generally accepted Ancaster-Breedon area. In some places, in the more northerly part of the distribution it continued in use alongside wheel made pottery of the first century A.D. The distribution, overlaps with two distinctive styles of middle and late La Tène decorated pottery, one in north and central Lincolnshire and the other centred on Hunsbury in the upper Nene Valley. The distinction between the users of the fine decorated pottery and of scored ware may have been one of status rather than chronology.

Ancaster-Breedon pottery

Deeply scored pottery was first recognised as a distinctive style by K. Kenyon at Breedon-on-the-Hill in Leicestershire, and was considered an Iron Age B technique. The pottery forms are barrel-shaped with stubby, upright rims which fairly frequently bear finger decoration (Kenyon 1950). Subsequent excavations at Breedon confirm the general pattern but also include plain jars with burnished exteriors (Wacher 1977). Cottrill and Dunning added an essay to the Kenyon report which described similarly scored pottery from Harston and Melton Mowbray and it was, at that time, thought of as a fairly localised Trent Valley phenomenon. The late date of first century BC to first century AD given by Kenyon was soon discounted as more evidence emerged and it can be noted that Breedon produced a penannular brooch of Fowler's type Aa which has a second to first century BC date. C.F.C. Hawkes always maintained that a third century BC date was the most probable. It now seems much more likely that there was a long period of occupation at Breedon and that the bulk of the scored ware could well belong to a middle phase.

Excavations at Ancaster Quarry rural settlement site in Lincolnshire in 1962-5 produced many examples of deeply scored decoration on jars which are either straight-sided or barrel-shaped with finger decoration prevalent on the rims (illus. 1; 2,3). The twig brushing technique was also frequently employed. The small finds here range from a bronze La Tène 1 variant brooch which could have been made in the fourth century BC, if not earlier, to a glass bead which would be unusual in a context earlier than 100 BC. On this evidence the excavator originally suggested a date of fourth to second century BC for the site. (May 1976).

As a result of these two excavations this deeply scored pottery with finger impressions on the rim became known as Ancaster-Breedon ware with generally accepted dates of fourth to second/first century BC (Cunliffe 1991).

Scored Ware

This term is difficult to define as it covers a multitude of types of decoration. It is common practice to roughen the surface of coarse pots to make them easier to handle but 'scored ware' is a deliberate decoration. It can vary from deep scoring to light twig brushing; it can be regular vertical lines or shallow, random ones with deeper lines superimposed and it shades into the more regular combing of the late Iron Age period. Rims can be thick with deep finger impressions or fine and tapered. At present there are some hints that deep scoring, particularly regular vertical lines, may be an earlier feature and that finger impressions on the rim maybe absent from later pottery, but there is no clear progression recognised as yet. The one generally accepted fact is that jars with regular combing are of late Iron Age date.

Analysis of the pottery fabrics suggests that the pots were locally made. Outlying examples may have been made in the core area and then transported, perhaps as containers for some commodity. This would appear to be the case at the Berth, Shropshire, where two scored ware sherds were found. These were made from an iron rich Keuper Marl which is common in the Midlands but not in Shropshire (Morris, 1991).

Distribution

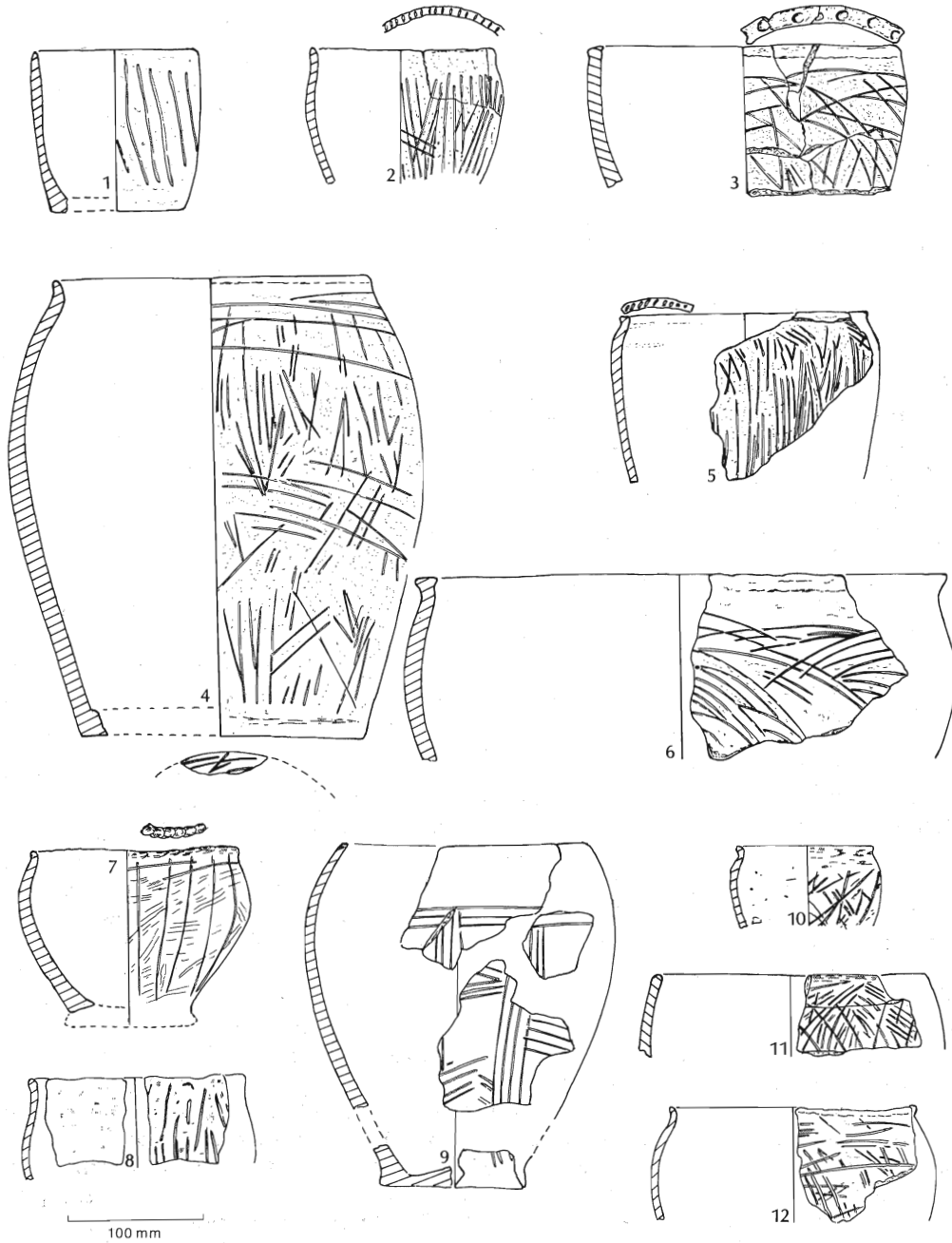
The distribution map (illus. 2) is based on two detailed regional studies plus my own knowledge of pottery in the middle Trent and Soar Valleys and details of sites in Warwickshire, Suffolk and Essex from C. Pendleton. The first regional study covers the Trent Basin and northwards (Challis and Harding 1975) and the second is a study of the Iron Age period in the Nene and Ouse Valleys in Northamptonshire (Knight 1984). It would seem that the centre of the style lies in the Nene Valley where it spreads to the Fen edge at Fengate, south to Egginton in Bedfordshire and Barley in Hertfordshire and westwards to Milton Keynes. It is also the commonest form of middle Iron Age pottery in the middle Trent, Soar and Witham Valleys where it extends from Helpringham and Billingborough on the Fen edge to Fisherwick in Staffordshire in the west. It is very uncommon north of Ruskington in Lincolnshire. The find spots indicated further north than this represent isolated sherds in assemblages which are otherwise quite different, and they depend on the interpretations of the fieldworkers, but they are included here to give as complete and unbiased a picture as possible. It can be noted that this distribution map differs from the one published by Cunliffe where the centre of the style still appears to be in the Ancaster-Breedon area (Cunliffe 1991, Fig. 4,5).

Trent, Soar and Witham Valleys: pottery and dating

Several sites in this area have now been examined in detail. Holme Pierrepont, a rural settlement in Nottinghamshire, has very fine, thin walled, scored ware jars with scoring on the base and no finger decoration on the tapered rims (illus. 1.4). These fine vessels are associated with wheel made jars. A settlement site at nearby Shelford has produced

(Caption to illustration opposite) 1. East Midlands Scored Ware Styles

1. Ancaster Quarry, May 1976, Fig. 69,6
2. Ancaster Quarry, J. Samuels
3. Ancaster Quarry, J. Samuels
4. Holme Pierrepont, TPAT forthcoming
5. Fengate, Padholme Rd. Pryor 1974, Fig. 21,17
6. Whitwell, Todd 1981, Fig. 12,1
7. Breedon-on-the-Hill, Challis and Harding 1975, Fig. 13
8. Wakerley, phase 1, Jackson and Ambrose 1978, Fig. 36,1
9. Fisherwick, Smith 1979, Fig. 12
10. Wakerley, phase 2, Jackson and Ambrose 1978, Fig. 3,1
11. Redhill, Ratcliffe-on-Soar, Elsdon 1982, Fig. 4,22
12. Harringworth, Jackson 1981, Fig. 7,42



similar pottery. At Willington, a rural settlement south west of Derby, a sherd of scored ware is associated with a wheel made pedestal base (Elsdon 1979, Fig. 70. 34, 39).

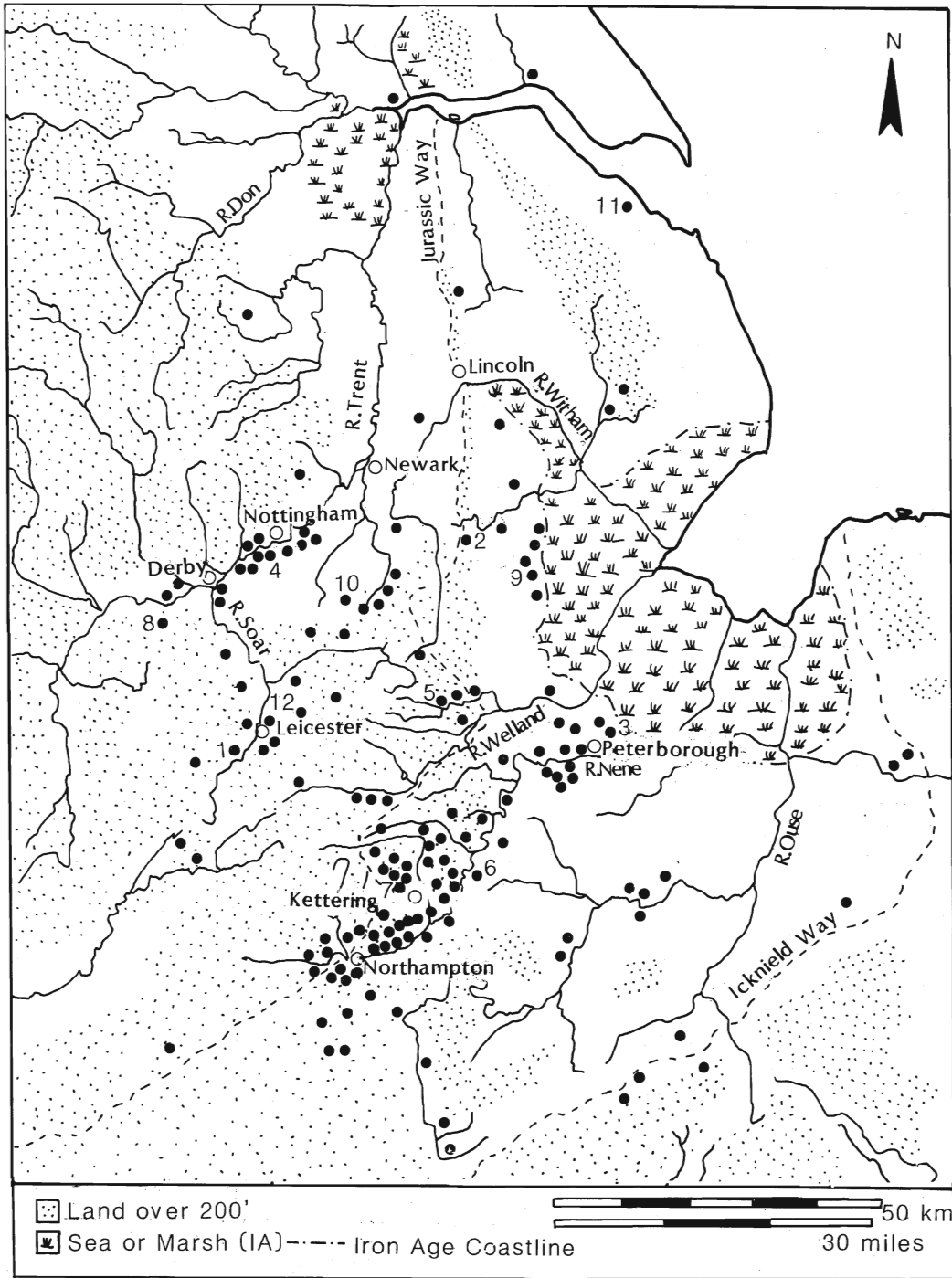
At Whitwell, Leicestershire (illus.1.6), another rural settlement produced a good scored ware assemblage from several pits (Todd 1981). The barrel-shaped pottery has deep scoring with finger decoration on the rim, and in one of the pits there was also a fine black burnished, wheel made jar of late Iron Age type, although the excavator says this pit could have been re-dug. (This pot is not illustrated in the report). Small finds at Whitwell include a fine late Iron Age enamelled strap junction and an uninscribed base gold stater, which should date from the end of the first century BC to the first half of the first century AD. The excavator suggests a gap between the Iron Age and Roman occupation at the site, but there is no real evidence for this, apart from the previously accepted late second century BC date for the cessation of scored ware in this area. Possibly the gap does not exist. Burrough Hill in Leicestershire is another site where hand made sherds with scoring were possibly associated with both bead rim and wheel made pottery in a group of pits. But here the records are not fully published and the association of the various pits is not proven (Thomas 1960). A group of scored ware vessels has recently been excavated in Leicester itself in contexts which seem a little shadowy as regards dating but they are associated with at least one late calcite gritted combed ware jar (Pollard forthcoming).

There is a group of sites producing scored ware in the Welland Valley on the Leicestershire-Northamptonshire border, Great Bowden (Cottrill and Dunning 1950) and Drayton for example. These sites all produce Roman pottery but not wheel made late Iron Age pottery. This would suggest that here also Ancaster-Breedon ware may have continued to be made well into the first century AD (Liddle 1982, 25).

Small quantities of pottery from Ratcliffe-on-Soar (illus.1.11 Elsdon 1982) and Swarkeston (Posnansky 1955) are not helpful for purposes of dating. However Fisherwick, a small farmstead in Staffordshire, has elegant barrel-shaped jars with scoring organised into vertical lines and horizontal arcs (illus. 1.9, Smith 1979). There are four radiocarbon dates from the enclosure ditch here, all closely associated with the Iron Age pottery. When calibrated, these dates range from 410-10BC (Birm. 614) and 10BC-AD130 (Harwell 1470) which leaves the possibilities wide open, but we could be seeing a late development of the scored ware here.

Recent and reconsidered excavations at Gamston, Notts (Knight, forthcoming) and Empingham, Rutland (Cooper forthcoming) reinforce the suggested late date for much of the Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire scored ware.

If at least some scored ware continues to be produced into the first century AD as seems to be suggested by these examples, it could be, that in the Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire area we are seeing a rural sub-culture which co-existed with the larger late Iron Age settlements such as Old Sleaford and Dragonby. In the light of this new evidence, the Ancaster Quarry site at least in part, contemporary with the late Ancaster Gap site, which would allow some scored ware to belong to the end of the Iron Age (May pers comm.). The differences in pottery styles could represent differences in status and not chronological ones (Elsdon and May 1987, 68). There is also evidence from the lower Nene valley that some scored wares could have continued in use alongside later vessels imitating 'Belgic' types (Rollo 1988).



2. East Midlands Scored Ware Styles

1. Enderby 2. Breedon-on-the-Hill 3. Ancaster 4. Weekley 5. Twywell 6. Aldwinckle 7. Wakerley 8. Upton
 9. Egginton 10. Lakenheath 11. Draughton 12. Burrough Hill

Nene and Welland Valleys: pottery and dating

Scored ware has been both excavated in quantity and extensively studied at a group of sites in Northamptonshire on the middle Nene and Welland, roughly between modern Northampton and Peterborough. The conclusions here are that all scored ware is 'pre-Belgic', when the first wheel made pottery is thought to have been introduced, that is to say it is not produced after the end of the first century BC. From a great wealth of published material in Northamptonshire three sites give a good sequence for scored wares.

D.W. Harding studied the pottery from Twywell (Harding 1975) and compared it with a similar group from Upton (Jackson *et al* 1969). At Twywell finger tip decoration on the rims occurs with deeply scored body ornament (Harding, 1975 Fig. 21, 6-10). The jars have a slack or gently curving body profile with a short, sometimes everted rim. He noted three principal variants in the style of scoring but no apparent chronological sequence. In the first style deeply scored lines intersect at random (Harding, 1975 Fig. 21, 8 and 9) and the second has the same deeply scored lines in one direction only (Harding, 1975 Fig. 23, 17). Thirdly the linear scoring is arranged more formally at approximate right angles (Harding, 1975 Fig. 24, 14 and 15). Also present at Twywell are fine burnished bowls with upright or slightly everted rims (Harding 1975 Fig. 21, 1-3) and handled jars (Harding 1975 Fig. 22, 31). There is a single radiocarbon date from Twywell which, when calibrated, produced dates of 430-340 BC, a date range extending well back into the fourth century BC. Harding concludes that the pottery could have started in the fourth century BC and continued to the second or early first, but certainly terminated before the advent of the wheel made 'Belgic' wares. The first two types of scoring are present at Ancaster Quarry which could reinforce the argument for a fourth century beginning there.

The scored ware from Wakerley, unlike Twywell, does not have finger tip decoration on the rim (illus. 1.8,10, Jackson and Ambrose 1978) and there is no scored, as distinct from combed, ware in the Belgic assemblies. Wakerley Phase 1 has 25% scored ware, but this is not the deep scoring found at Twywell, and it probably dates towards the end of the middle Iron Age period. Phase 2 has 45% scored ware mostly on globular forms and is the final pre-Belgic stage dating here from late first century BC or early first AD. (For comparison the hill fort at Breedon has 25% scored ware and none in pre rampart levels). Aldwinckle (Jackson 1977) spans the time between Twywell and Wakerley. Here there is also no deep scoring or finger decoration on the rim and in the earliest phase scoring on the globular jars is already becoming less common. In the second phase scoring is negligible and there is linear decoration on barrel-shaped jars. The final phase is Belgic with no scoring. Evidence from these three sites, Twywell, Aldwinckle and Wakerley, suggests that deliberately scored wares are rare before the third century BC, and that they occur mainly from the mid third and mid second centuries. More recently excavated sites corroborate this evidence. Geddington (Jackson 1979) with 20 to 25% deeply scored wares is comparable with the middle and later period at Twywell. Another similar assemblage at Gretton has uncalibrated dates of 290 and 250_{BC} which compare well with Twywell's 280_{BC} (Jackson and Knight 1985).

More evidence comes from Harringworth where phase 1 pre-dates the widespread use of scored ware (illus.1.12, Jackson 1981). A date of around fourth to third centuries BC is suggested for this phase comparable with similar pottery from Twywell and Gretton. Phase 2 at Harringworth has 50% scored wares including fine jars with S profile and T-shaped rims and is dated to the later part of the Iron Age. This second

phase has three different types of scoring: twig or straw brushing, deep scoring with a sharp tool and shallow grooves made with a blunt-ended tool.

At Hunsbury there is very little scored ware in a large assemblage of pottery where the curvilinear style of decoration dominates. This reinforces the status argument put forward by May for the Ancaster pottery (see above) as Hunsbury was clearly a high status site. The possibly contemporaneous users of scored ware may have been living elsewhere.

In summary, the Northamptonshire evidence is that deep scoring and finger tip decoration on the rim could start in the fourth century BC, but is rare before the mid third. The earliest type of scoring is deep, accompanied by finger tip decoration on the rim. About 25% of these early assemblages is decorated. There is much more variety in the types of scoring, in the later part of the Iron Age, on globular pots and pots which have S-shaped profiles or T-shaped rims. A much higher proportion of the pottery, up to 50%, is decorated in the later period. But all scoring pre-dates Belgic and wheel made pottery.

Pottery very similar to that from Twywell and Upton comes from the Padholme Road site at Fengate, Peterborough (illus.1.5, Pryor 1974, Figs. 20-22). This site was near the Iron Age coastline, comparable to Helpringham in Lincolnshire. The one uncalibrated date from the feature in which these pots were found is 350+46_{BC}, somewhat earlier than the Northamptonshire dates. A fifth century BC start is suggested for this Group 2 pottery. Scored ware from the Cat's Water site at Fengate starts in the fourth century BC and probably finishes with the introduction of combed wares and wheel made pottery. One pit does have quantities of large scored ware sherds in good condition together with late Iron Age wares which could argue for its continuance in to the late period here as in the Trent Valley. But, as occupation is continuous, there will have been rubbish survival and one cannot be certain of the continued use of scored ware in the late period (Pryor 1984, 153-7).

There is new evidence from Werrington, just north of Fengate, that scored wares appeared to have continued in use until late in the Iron Age alongside vessels imitating 'Belgic' ceramic types (Rollo, 1988). The same situation may well have been the case at Cat's Water, Fengate. Thus the sequences in the lower Nene valley appear to contrast with those in the middle Nene valley and to be more in tune with the pattern found in the middle Trent valley and Whitwell in Rutland. A newly excavated site at Market Deeping, also on the Fen Edge in the Peterborough area, has a very large assemblage of the classic deeply scored ware which is associated with a copper alloy La Tène 2 flat bowed brooch of 3rd century B.C. date (Knight in preparation). This site provides further evidence for an early start for scored ware.

Conclusion

Evidence to date seems to suggest that scored ware starts as a style of decoration in the fourth century BC but it is not common or widespread until the mid third century. In the middle Nene Valley it stops before the introduction of wheel made pottery but further north, in the Trent and Soar Valleys, and in the lower Nene Valley it seems to continue into the first half of the first century AD, if not later, on rural sites which could represent a lower stratum of late Iron Age society.

The distribution, as it is known at present, is quite different to the accepted tribal divisions of later Iron Age society. The heartland of the style would appear to be in the Nene Valley which corresponds to the Hunsbury style of late Iron Age decorated

pottery. It is well represented in the Trent Valley, particularly at Ancaster itself, where it could overlap with the rouletted style of decoration of Old Sleaford and Dragonby. But it does not correspond with the distribution of this style which extends to the Humber and has not yet been found west of the Trent. Scored ware also extends to areas of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire which were untouched by either the Hunsbury or Dragonby-Old Sleaford styles of late Iron Age fine ware pottery. This would seem to add strength to the suggestion that scored ware represents a sub-stratum of society which, in some areas at least, was untouched by the new technology of the upper classes.

Note

A complete gazetteer of sites with scored ware is available from the author at the above address.

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