

ART. VI.—*Excavations at Papcastle, 1961-2.* By  
DOROTHY CHARLESWORTH, F.S.A.

*Read at The Fitz, Cockermouth, September 8th, 1962.*

AN excavation was carried out on behalf of the Ministry of Public Building and Works on part of the Roman fort, *Derwentio*, in July 1961 and April-May 1962, by permission of Cockermouth Rural District Council who had acquired the land for Old People's Homes. The sites of the two ranges of bungalows were left untouched so as not to complicate the laying of foundations, and the extent of the work was also limited by the difficulty of obtaining suitable labour.

Parts of the fort had already been examined in 1912 by R. G. Collingwood,<sup>1</sup> the north-east angle and the east gate located, but no internal buildings identified. It was hoped in the 1961-2 excavations to uncover some of the barrack blocks and to learn more of the history of the site and its layout.

Unfortunately the remains lay very close to the modern surface and, apart from the extensive stone robbing of modern times, there must have been considerable re-use of dressed stone in the successive Roman buildings. It is evident from the small objects, coins and pottery, found at various times that the history of the site was a long one, but from the structural remains little of it can be established. The fort is built on a heavy clay soil, and in the barrack block (Plates I, a, and II) where nothing was left of the walls there were no foundations to indicate the lines of the buildings. Probably they were light, half-timbered buildings for which no foundation was put in. The commandant's quarters (Plate III) were virtually

<sup>1</sup> CW2 xiii (1913) 131-141. For summary of all evidence see CW2 lxiii (1963), E. B. Birley, *Roman Papcastle* (cited as Birley).

without foundations, except where an earlier disturbance had made a firm foundation essential.

Some slight evidence was obtained of a fort with timber buildings. On the eastern edge of the area was a substantial post-hole (Plate IV, a) which must have held one of the timber uprights of the east gateway, on the inner side of the rampart, since no traces of rampart material were found in any of the trenches, and on the northern side of the gateway, since the cobbling of the roadway lay to the south of the post-hole. It was emptied but yielded no finds so it is impossible to determine whether it is part of the defences of a 1st-century fort, the existence of which is expected (Birley, III) or of a late Antonine fort. There were no signs of burning or destruction. The timber gate must have been deliberately demolished.

Inside the fort part of successive timber and stone barrack blocks were opened up. The levels were all very close together and all tended to run out southwards and westwards. The earliest period was represented by the foundation trench, associated with a floor of small cobbles, of a timber barrack building. Part of the trench, packed tightly with small stone (Plate I) was cleared. At the east end of the area it was well preserved but further west it had been damaged both by later Roman levels and by ploughing. The only indications of the date of this building were three pieces of samian, all probably from the same bowl (p. 112), one of which was found amongst rubble in a shallow depression in the floor, the other two in clearing its surface. There were no other traces of occupation and none of destruction. In the top of the foundation trench a crude bronze figurine (p. 114), a coin (p. 114) and two pieces of 4th-century pottery (p. 108) were found. These must date from the laying down of the later stone barrack block and not from the levelling of the timber block. The second cobbled floor, although lying directly on top of the other, also belongs

to the late period. On it late 4th-century pottery was found (p. 108). There were traces of repair or rebuild of this barrack block; the threshold (Plate II, b), which lay too close to the modern building line to be fully uncovered, and the rubble remains of the foundation of a wall running east to west, in which were numerous heavily corroded fragments of bronze, some of them identifiable as scale armour, both seem to be secondary but the remains were heavily robbed and close to the modern surface. No floor levels remained.

The L-shaped building to the west of this barrack block, probably also a barrack (Plate IV, b), was all that might bridge the gap between the timber and the 4th-century stone building, but its relationship to them could not be established and no finds were associated with this building.

In the north-west corner of the site part of the commandant's quarters,<sup>2</sup> probably his bath-house, was uncovered. The building was heavily robbed and only part of the lowest course of masonry, set in mortar, survived. At the south end of the excavated area part of a steep-sided pit was found to underlie the building which had been carried through it on a foundation of re-used stone, including some large well-dressed ashlar (Plate III, b). It is just possible that this had been the sunken strong-room of an earlier fort. The part of it which could be cleared yielded fallen masonry and roofing-slates. There was no kitchen rubbish in it and only two pieces of pottery (p. 108). The floor of the apse at the east side of the commandant's quarters and the room to the west of it had been covered with heavy flags, some of which remained and the base of a small water-tank stood in the middle of the rectangular room. One of the flags near it, when turned over, proved to be a re-used tombstone (Plate V). This was the third use of the stone. The worn

<sup>2</sup> See plan of commandant's quarters at Chesters, *Handbook to the Roman Wall*, ed. I. A. Richmond (1947), 83.



PLATE I, a.—Barrack block, looking east.



PLATE I, b.—Detail of east end, showing foundation of early block.

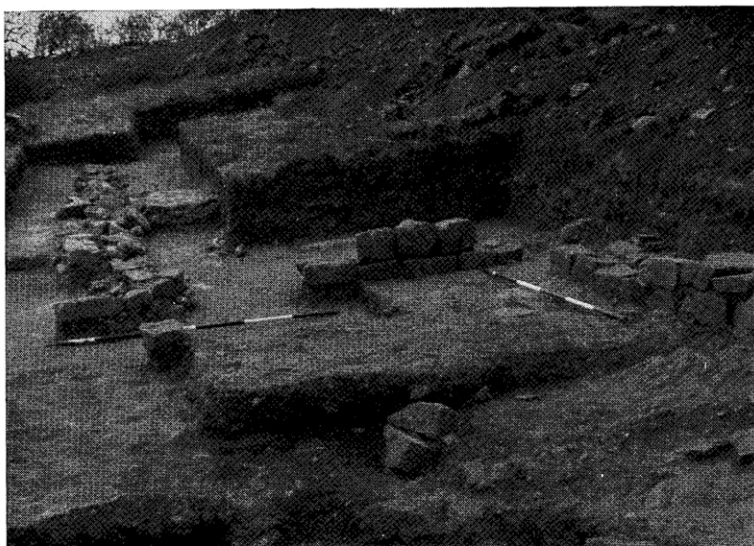


PLATE II, a.—Barrack block, west end.



PLATE II, b.—Threshold.



PLATE III, a.—Commandant's house.



PLATE III, b.

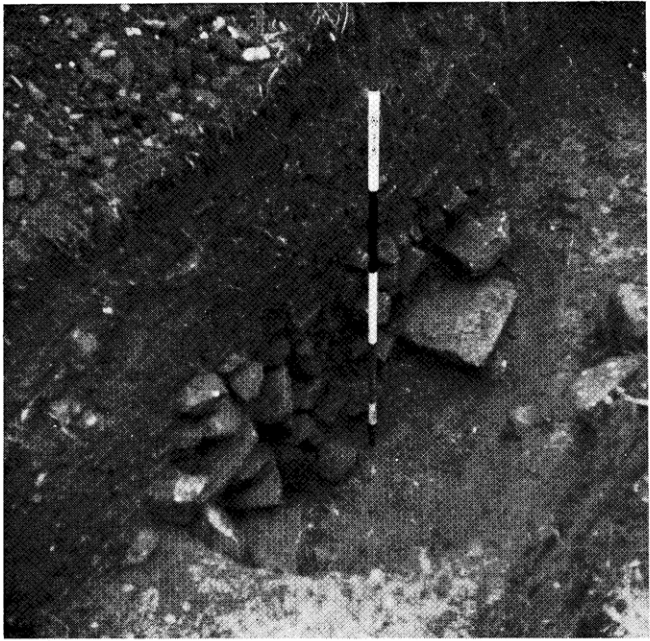


PLATE IV, a.—Filled in post-hole.



PLATE IV, b.

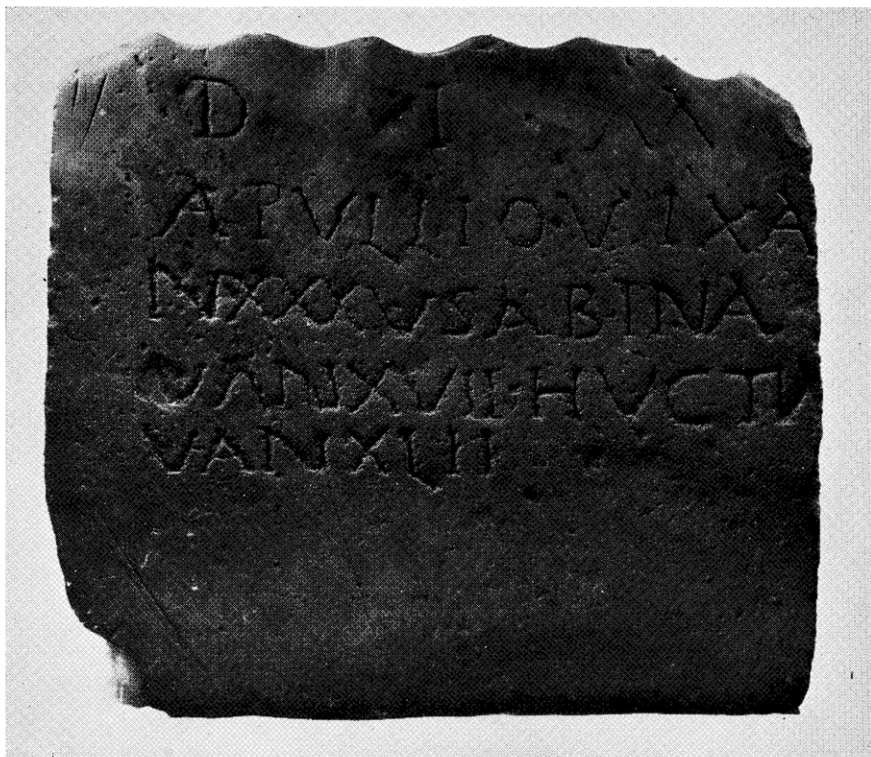
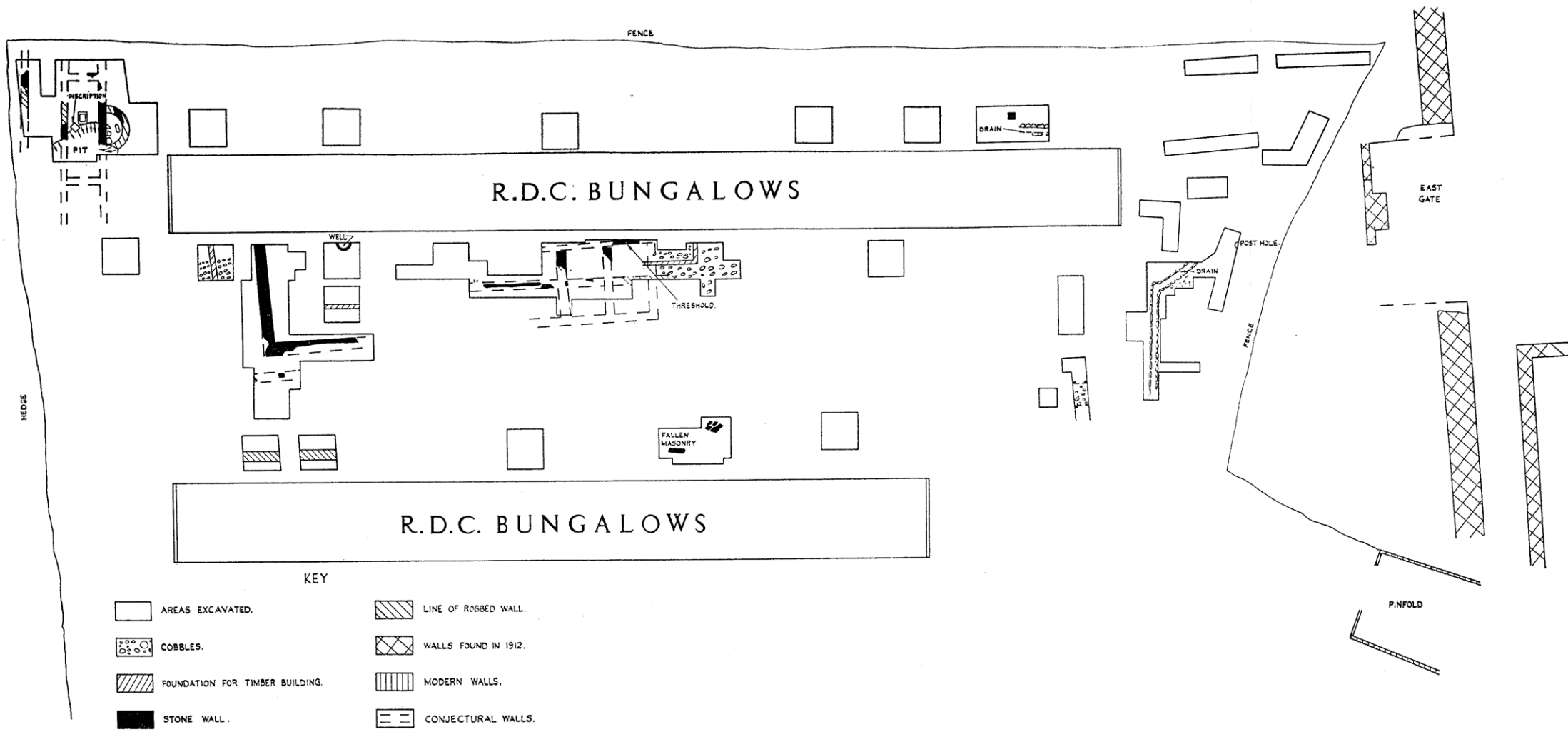


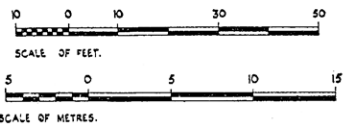
PLATE V.





KEY

- |                                 |                      |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| AREAS EXCAVATED.                | LINE OF ROBBED WALL. |
| COBBLES.                        | WALLS FOUND IN 1912. |
| FOUNDATION FOR TIMBER BUILDING. | MODERN WALLS.        |
| STONE WALL.                     | CONJECTURAL WALLS.   |



PAPCASTLE - ROMAN FORT - 1912, 1961-2.  
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC BLDG. & WORKS.  
ANCIENT MONUMENTS BRANCH,  
SANCTUARY BUILDINGS, S.W.1.  
SEN. ARCHITECT. T. A. BAILEY.  
TRACED BY C. SUTTON. 3-10-64.  
JOB. NO. 644.  
DRG. NO. 045.

# PAPCASTLE, ROMAN FORT 1912, 1961-2

FIG. I.

edge where weapons had been sharpened on it suggests that at one time it had formed part of a public water-tank. The sides of the tank alongside the main east to west road in Corstopitum are similarly worn.

The inscription was kindly examined by Mr R. P. Wright who published it in the *Journal of Roman Studies* liii (1963) 160. It reads:

D (IS) I(NFERIS) M(ANIBVS)  
 APULLIO VIX(IT) A  
 N(NIS) XXXV SABINA V(IXIT)  
 AN(NIS) XVII HVCTIA  
 V(IXIT) AN(NIS) XLII

It records a man Apullio, who died at the age of 35, Sabina, probably his daughter, who died at 17, and Huctia, probably Apullio's wife, who died at 42.

The absence of structures which could be dated to the 1st and 3rd centuries was the most puzzling feature of the excavation. As far as could be judged on the very slight evidence the stone buildings which were identified, the barrack block and the part of the commandant's quarters, belonged to the 4th-century fort. There must have been a very thorough levelling and complete rebuilding of the site, probably, as Birley has suggested, under Constantius Chlorus (Birley, 121). The pottery from the second cobbled floor of the barrack (p. 108) suggests that it represents the final structural phase, about 367.

The excavation has increased our knowledge of the Roman fort but has not solved the main problem. The layout of the fort is still not established, beyond the fact that the barrack blocks lie along the contours. Many of the areas excavated proved entirely barren, a thin top-soil covering the heavy clay. On the eastern part of the site, which was dug in 1961, a drain formed of re-used Roman stone, including some pieces of a chamfered plinth, was the main feature. Few finds were made and no structures, except the gate post-hole, identified.

The defences of the stone fort or forts present a problem which may be stated here, although the 1961-2 excavations throw no light upon it. Collingwood found two periods, the later of which he dated to the time of Severus, but which Birley thinks may be earlier (Birley, 111). How are these to be related to the lines of the defences shown on St Joseph's air-photograph?<sup>3</sup>

Collingwood's period II north wall runs west towards the corner of the field boundary and this line can be seen on St Joseph's air-photograph. The evidence of the photograph alone would suggest that the line is an old field-boundary, but Collingwood uncovered at two points on the line a wall foundation 9 ft. across, which is certainly not the base of a field wall.<sup>4</sup> To the north of it, 12 ft. away, running parallel with it, he found what he describes as a retaining wall, the width of which appears as about 3 ft. on the plan. The slope of the hill is hardly steep enough to justify such a feature, although it seems to have been considered steep enough to render a ditch unnecessary. None shows on either the plan or the photograph. Collingwood's period II wall corresponds with the more southerly of the two lines on St Joseph's photograph and lies at less than a right angle to the east wall found in 1912, an unusual feature in a fort where there is no physical reason for such a deviation. The more northerly line shown on the photograph (not, I think, Collingwood's "retaining wall"), which travels westwards to a point north of the field corner, appears to lie at a right angle to the known east wall. The north-west angle can be seen in the photograph but not the north-east. It is possible, however, that this line ties in with Collingwood's period I wall at the north-east angle and is part of the earlier stone fort defences. This is a point which can only be established by further excavation. The change in alignment must represent a change in

<sup>3</sup> Both plan and photograph are conveniently reproduced in Birley's article, CW2 lxiii (1963) pl. i and fig. 2.

<sup>4</sup> CW2 xiii 135.

layout of the fort at some period, possibly for a new unit, or a re-building after a long disuse of the site.

Collingwood<sup>5</sup> estimated that the fort was some 540 by 620 ft., but the east to west measurement presents a problem. There is a bank, visible on the ground and marked on the O.S. 25-inch sheet LIV 3 (1925 edition), and showing in part on the air-photograph. The photograph also indicates an inner line which links up with the north-west angle shown on the photograph and is certain to be, at one period at least, the west wall of the fort. This again is a point which should be tested by excavation, to see whether at some stage the fort was extended westwards, or whether this outer line is that of a west wall of the civil settlement, such as there is at Kirkby Thore.<sup>6</sup> The evidence suggesting the existence of a substantial settlement to the south of the fort has already been collected together (Birley, 106-107). The main objection to this is the comparatively short distance between the two presumed walls. An extension of the fort seems the more likely.

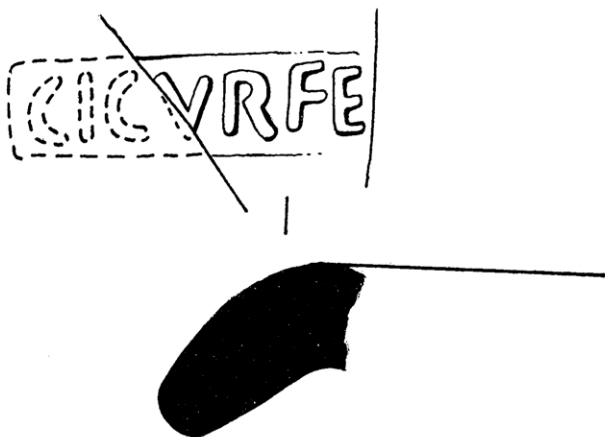


FIG. 2.—Mortarium stamp.

<sup>5</sup> CW2 xiii (1913) 141.

<sup>6</sup> CW2 lxiv (1964).

*The pottery.*

Katherine Hartley kindly reports on an unstratified mortarium stamp:

This broken stamp (Fig. 2), —]VRFE, belongs to a potter who always stamped CICVRFE with the same die. Some such name as CICVRVS or CICVRO is indicated, though neither has been recorded as a Celtic name.

The distribution of his work in the Midlands and North indicates a Midland origin, and his mortaria closely resembles those of the Hartshill potters Minomelus and Grantinus. The presence of a slightly distorted mortarium with this stamp at Hartshill, lends confirmation.

At Castor a stamp has been found in a pit dated *c.* A.D. 130-160 (information from B. R. Hartley), and at Halton Chesters another was found below a period I, b structure, *i.e.* certainly earlier than A.D. 163 (information from J. P. Gillam). A date *c.* A.D. 130-165 seems to cover the possibilities.

*From below cobbled floor (see p. 103).*

1. White ware mortarium with faint reeding on rim. 4th century. (Fig. 3, 1.)
2. Black-flanged bowl. Gillam 228, early 4th century. (Fig. 3, 2.)

*From surface of second cobbled floor.*

3. Grey ware imitation of Dr. 38. Gillam 203, possibly Crambeck type 5a, late 4th century. (Fig. 3, 3.)
4. White ware, much worn, imitation of Dr. 38. Gillam 208, Crambeck type 5b, late 4th century. (Fig. 3, 4.)
5. Rim of cooking-pot. 2nd century. (Fig. 3, 5.)

*From the top of the pit in the commandant's house (see p. 104).*

6. Calcite gritted jar. Mid 3rd century? (Fig. 3, 6.)
7. Segmental bowl, white ware with red painted stripes on the rim. Gillam 290, Crambeck type 8, late 4th century. (Fig. 3, 7.)

*Unstratified.*

8. Mortarium, orange ware with white grit. Gillam 261, late 2nd century. (Fig. 3, 8.)
9. Mortarium, pink with a grey core, traces of colour coat on the rim. 150-200. (Fig. 3, 9.)
10. Mortarium, buff ware. 250-350. (Fig. 3, 10.)
11. White ware mortarium. Gillam type 283, early 4th century. (Fig. 3, 11.)
12. Fragment from near the bulge of a large example of a flask in pink ware; Newstead (1911) type 27 Flavian; Mumrills (1928) Antonine, a closer parallel to the present piece which is probably also of 2nd century date. (Information from Mr J. P. Gillam.) (Fig. 3, 12.)
13. Cooking-pot, burnt orange. Gillam 135, late 2nd century. (Fig. 3, 13.)
14. Rim, fabric now burnt to brick red externally and roughened, but doubtless originally black burnished, from a flat-rimmed dish with a curved side. Gillam 307, mid 2nd century. (Information from Mr J. P. Gillam.) (Fig. 3, 14.)
15. Black, flat-rimmed bowl, the intersecting arc decoration suggests a 3rd-century date, in spite of the flat, ungrooved rim. (Information from Mr J. P. Gillam.) (Fig. 4, 1.)
16. Rim of black-flanged bowl. Gillam 227, late 3rd century. (Fig. 3, 16.)
17. Footstand, colour-coated ware, mid 3rd-4th century. (Fig. 3, 15.)
18. Part of the lid of a Castor-ware box. (Fig. 4, 2.)
19. Part of a Castor-ware box. (Fig. 4, 3.)
20. Rim and wall fragment of a shallow segmental dish in orange-buff fabric with a grey core. While differing in fabric, this vessel is sufficiently close in general shape to Crambeck type 10a to suggest that it is also of late 4th-century date. (Information from Mr J. P. Gillam.) (Fig. 4, 4.)
21. Grey dish. Gillam 333, Crambeck type 2, late 4th century. (Fig. 4, 5.)
22. Imitation Dr. 38, white ware with red-painted decoration. Gillam 208, Crambeck type 5b, late 4th century. (Fig. 4, 6.)
23. Huntcliff ware jar, late 4th century. (Fig. 4, 7.)

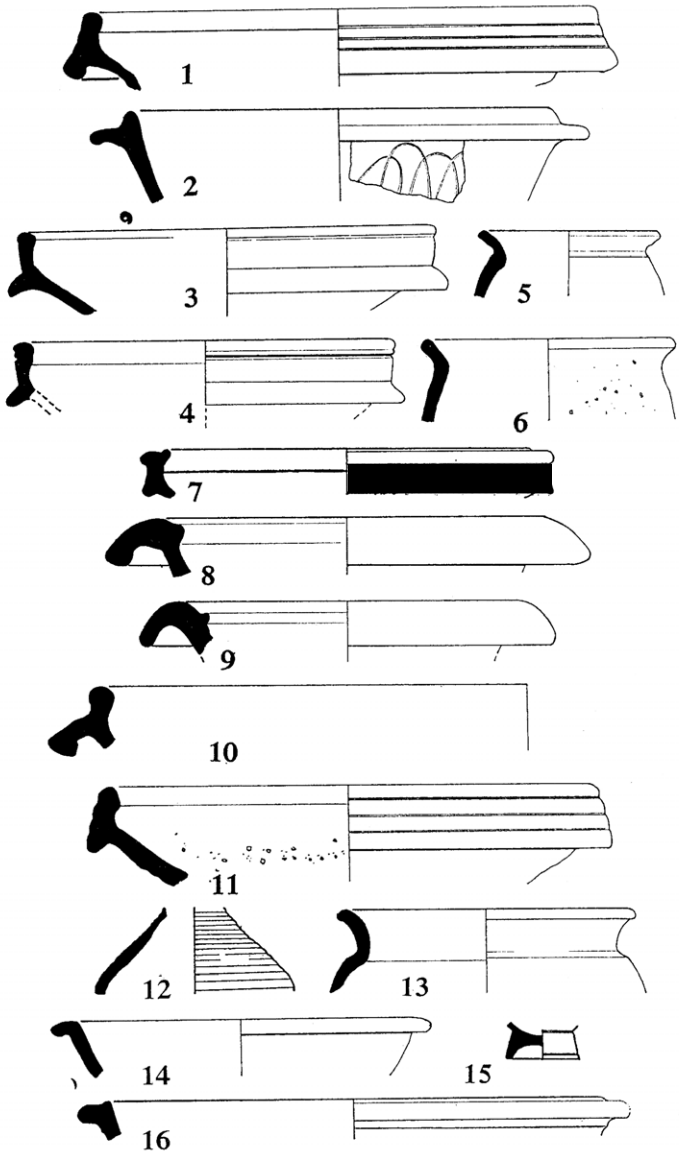


FIG. 3.

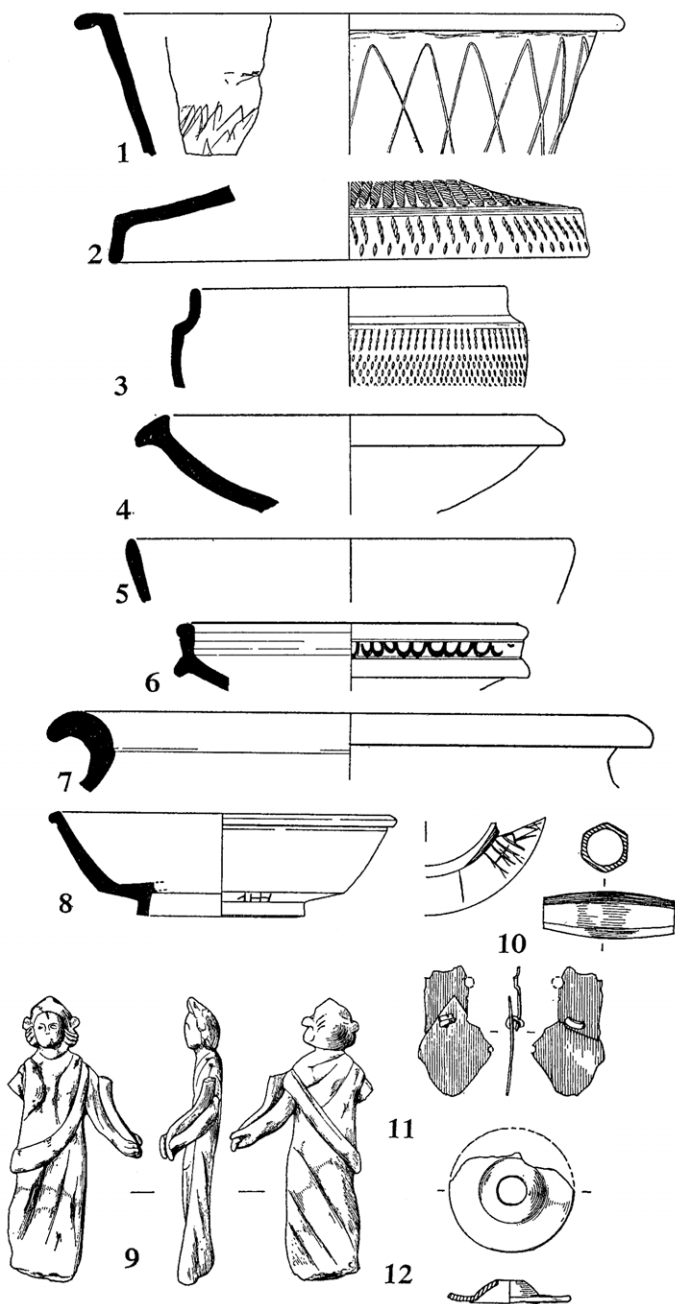


FIG. 4.



*The figured samian.* By ERIC BIRLEY. (Fig. 5.)

The main value of this small collection of pieces is to supplement the still smaller group from R. G. Collingwood's excavations of 1912 (CW2 xiii 136, fig. 1) in demonstrating occupation in the second half of the 2nd century; with the exception of no. 1, none of the pieces here figured would have been out of place in an Antonine II deposit at Corstopitum. Brief notes follow on the individual pieces, unstratified ones being marked with an asterisk. All are Dr. 37.

1. \* Probably Central Gaulish and Hadrianic, the main feature being the basal wreath formed of roped anulets; above, the remains apparently of decoration in panels separated by vertical pillars, but it comes from a worn mould and the state of the surface does not make it easy to interpret.

2. \* Fragment showing the characteristic stamp and the most common ovolo of PATERNVS, probably c. A.D. 150-180.

3. \* Fragment with a distinctive ovolo which I have not been able to assign to any particular potter.

4. \* Part of a bowl with free-style decoration, showing the head of a goat to left, below an ovolo which looks like one used by ATTIANVS.

5. Piece showing the enigmatic figure to front, D.327=O.537. and roped vertical border, both much used by PATERNVS, to whom it may be assigned with confidence. From pit to commandant's quarters.

6. \* Caryatid to front, probably from a bowl by DIVIXTVS.

7. \* This worn piece presents a problem; it seems to show a gladiator to right approaching a large torso to front which I have as yet failed to find anything like.

8. \* Panel decoration showing part of a figure of Neptune to left within a large medallion; the ovolo looks like one of those used by CINNAMVS.

9. Three pieces, probably all from the same free-style bowl, the characteristic leaf-tip in the field marking it as the product of LAXTVCISA. From early barrack block (see p. 103).

### *Graffito.*

Mr R. P. Wright kindly examined the samian sherd (Fig. 4, 8) and reads H I R V [ . . .

It is part of the owner's name.

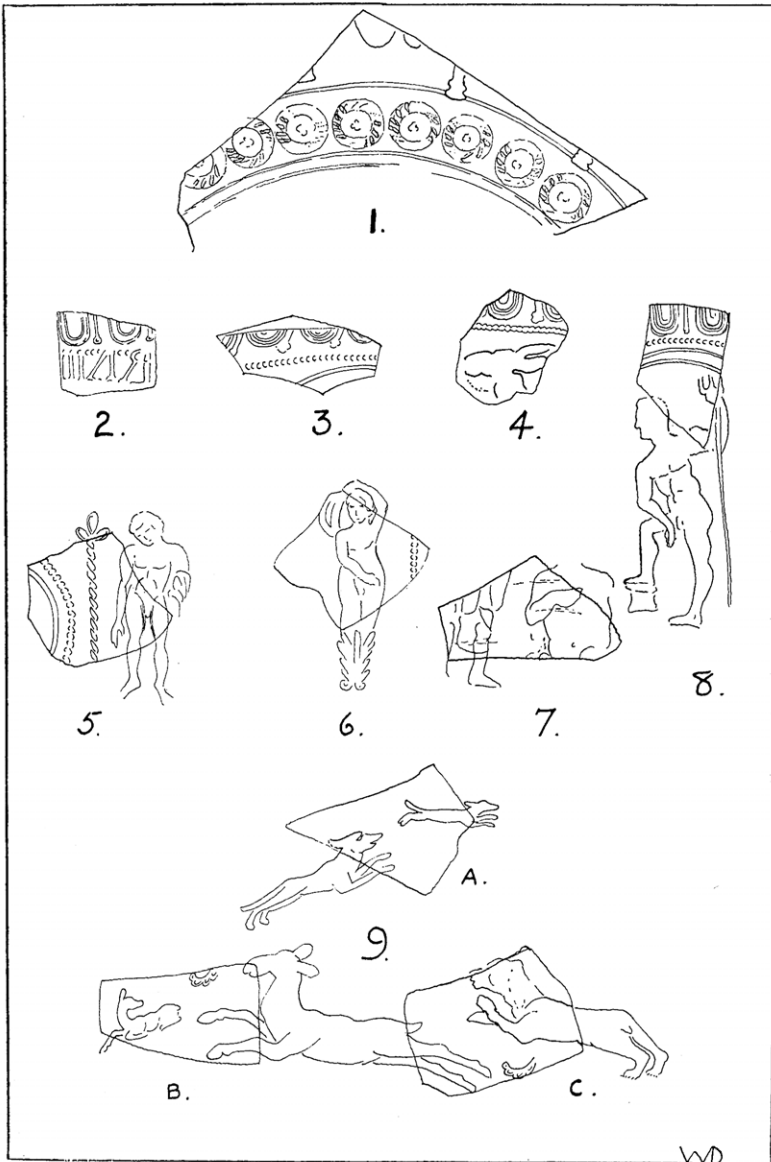


FIG. 5.

*Bronze.*

1. Draped figure holding a cornucopia in the left hand, right arm broken off at the shoulder, probably extended, holding a patera. The figure may be Ceres or a *genius loci*, but normally a *genius* is a half-draped male figure (see J. M. C. Toynebee, *Roman Art in Britain* no. 32 and comments on statue from Carlisle no. 33) and a fully draped figure, as this appears to be, suggests a goddess or other female figure, possibly a personification of an abstract idea. However, the local artist does not always follow the classical model closely. Height 3 in. (Fig. 4, 9.)
2. Incomplete pieces of scale armour, part of a cuirass. For complete examples and a full discussion see J. Curle, *Newstead* (1911) 158 f. pl. xxiv. Found in core of wall of 4th-century barrack block. (Fig. 4, 11.)
3. Two hollow bronze faceted cylinders, both too large and heavy to be beads. Length  $1 \frac{3}{5}$  in.,  $1 \frac{2}{5}$  in. (Fig. 4, 10.)
4. Bronze disc. Diameter  $1 \frac{1}{8}$  in. (Fig. 4, 12.)
5. Small bronze nail. Length  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

*Coins.*

Three coins were found in the excavations. Dr J. P. C. Kent kindly examined them and reported that their condition made full identification impossible.

1. Late 3rd-century radiate copy, found in top of foundation trench near statuette.
2. Constantinopolis  $\frac{I}{\text{TR IIII}}$  330-335. N.W. corner of commandant's quarters.
3. Late 3rd-century radiate, probably irregular. Commandant's quarters.